

EMBARGOED UNTIL 15:00 Wednesday, 17 June 2020

All children to return to school

All primary and secondary school students will begin to return to school from next Monday 22 June, the Education Minister has announced today.

This follows the first phase safe return to school announcement, two weeks ago, which returned Year 6 pupils full-time and brought Years 10 and 12 back on a reduced timetable.

Senator Tracey Vallois has confirmed that primary and secondary schools and colleges will return in a staggered approach with schools communicating their individual plans to parents and students.

Under the new arrangements, from Monday 22 June, all primary school year groups, from Nursery to Year 5 classes, and including Year 6 who have already returned, will attend on specified days throughout the week. The specific order and frequency of return for each year group will be decided by each individual school.

The aim is for all primary school children to be back in school full-time by the end of June.

Due to the different physical distancing guidelines for secondary schools of 1 metre, students will need to return in smaller than class size groups as they make their phased return. Nonetheless, there is a commitment for them to have as much time in school as possible prior to the start of the summer break. It is a complex task to bring all secondary school children back as the school environment is different to the primary phase due to the numbers of students and teachers who have to move classes to deliver a predominantly subject-based curriculum. It is recommended that the first year groups to return to secondary school will be students who are in transition – e.g Year 9 to Year 10, Year 11 to Year 12. Arrangements will also be made for those in Year 11 and 13 who are leaving school. The specific order and frequency of return for each year group, however, will be decided by each individual school headteacher, based on local priorities, physical set up needs and staff availability.

Nannies are now permitted to deliver their services across families in line with the current advice for nannies and updated public health guidance for schools and nurseries.

Special schools making individual appropriate arrangements given challenges around PD and greater number of adults working together.

The Minister's decision is supported by medical advice from the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC), which states that all students should return to school as soon as practicable, and that a 2-metre physical distance and a 20-person limit no longer needs to be enforced in a school environment.

Special schools making individual appropriate arrangements given challenges around PD and greater number of adults working together.

The STAC has advised that "bubbles" or small groups of children can now increase to full primary class sizes and, further, that primary school children do not need to physically distance as the expert medical review has concluded that there is growing evidence that children are not so-called 'super spreaders' and that risk of transmission from children is low.

Secondary school students will need to observe a narrower, 1-metre physical distance. Furthermore, STAC has affirmed that the health, welfare and education of children and young people are now much more likely to be harmed by a continued absence from education.

In a statement Senator Vallois said: "I am delighted to announce that all remaining groups of pupils and students will start to return to our schools and colleges from next week. Headteachers and Principals will have the discretion to decide the exact arrangements for their return and will communicate the details to parents and carers."

Senator Vallois added: "I would like to thank all of our school and college leaders, teachers, school support staff, nurseries, nannies, childminders, parents, carers and students for their patience, while we have continued our extensive and productive discussions with medical experts, headteachers and trades union representatives over the last two weeks.

"The clear and welcome message from STAC is that children, education and wider wellbeing must come first and that an extended absence from school will only lead to negative effects on mental health of both children and parents.

"Indeed, the evidence continues to grow that the harm in not returning to school outweighs the evidence of risk to harm of Covid-19 by returning to school.

"This has been an extremely complex piece of work and I would like to thank all of my officials across the Department who have been working diligently behind the scenes.

"I am extremely grateful to our headteachers, teachers and trades unions for their understanding and commitment to putting children first. I am also respectful of the commitment and expertise of our schools leaders and recognise that this should drive the detailed arrangements for this next phase of the return because the different environments of our schools and colleges are best understood by those who work in

them regularly. I have listened to them carefully, along with the trades unions and my officials, and have taken their advice to stagger the returns to schools, from 22 June through to 30 June, to allow schools, parents and students to prepare for all children to return to school.

"I have asked headteachers and principals to communicate their plans directly to parents, carers, pupils and students as they know their schools best and I accept that each school will be different in how it manages this return. I realise that some schools may have to do things differently and stagger the return on different dates, particularly secondary schools where they have more students moving around classrooms.

"I expect all primary school children to be back in school full-time by the end of June, and all secondary school students to have meaningful time in school prior to the start of the summer break."

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Notes to Editors

1. For further information, please contact the press office on 01534 440430 or pressoffice@gov.je
2. Attached is a copy of the STAC advice being issued to schools and parents.