



# Coronavirus: Education during the emergency

RESEARCH PAPER

ISSUED 08/06/2020

*This paper was originally published by the Public Accounts Committee as part of its Emergency Scrutiny inquiry ([PP No. 2020/0134](#)).*

*Request: A background briefing paper on issues relating to education during the pandemic.*

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## BACKGROUND

### TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS AND DECISIONS

Date	Event/decision
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020	Dr Allinson MHK becomes Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, replacing Mr Cregeen
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	<a href="#">State of emergency declared on Island</a>
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	Reported meeting with Government, head teachers and teacher union representatives to discuss the Covid situation.
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	<a href="#">Statement made by Minister for Education, Sport and Culture</a> . No school closures announced.  <a href="#">Learning Disability Day Services provided by Adult Social Care closed</a>
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2020	Announcement that schools will close from the end of the next day, 23 <sup>rd</sup> March
Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020	<a href="#">All regular Learning Disability Respite Care provided at Hollydene Unit suspended</a>
Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	<a href="#">Schools closed (except for the children of key workers and vulnerable children)</a>  <a href="#">Minister makes statement to Tynwald</a>
Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	<a href="#">Everyone required to stay at home except for limited reasons</a>
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	<a href="#">Statement by Minister of Education, Sport and Culture on COVID-19</a>
Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	<a href="#">Pre-school voucher scheme to be extended for children of key workers</a>
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	<a href="#">State of emergency extended</a>
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2020	<a href="#">Announcement that parents will receive food vouchers of equivalent value of 10 free school meals every two weeks</a>
Friday 24 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	<a href="#">Limited return to work for specified sectors, such as construction, with strict social distancing</a>
Saturday 2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2020	<a href="#">Announcement that schools would close completely over the TT holidays</a>
Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	<a href="#">The Government published its Medium Term Response</a>
Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	<a href="#">UCM to start a phased return where safe to do so</a>
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	<a href="#">Schools roadmap on going back to school released</a>
Saturday 16 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	<a href="#">State of emergency extended for the second time</a>

Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	<a href="#">Children of workers in construction, trades and horticulture sectors allowed to go to a hub school</a>
Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	<a href="#">Nurseries allowed to accept the children of workers in construction and related trades</a>
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> May 2020	<a href="#">Remote learning plans accelerated to support home schooling</a>
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2020	<a href="#">Local firms offer help with returning students' belongings from the UK</a>
Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	<a href="#">Educational Institution Regulations</a> rejected by Tynwald
Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	School sites to reopen
Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	Children attending hub school to be <a href="#">allowed to return to own school</a> <a href="#">Bus services to restart</a>
Monday 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2020	Children in years 2, 6, 10 and 12 <a href="#">to be allowed to return to school full-time</a> on a voluntary basis

## ISSUES

### THE SCHOOL HUB SYSTEM

Announced in a [press briefing on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020](#), the decision was made to close schools to most pupils from the end of the next day, Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020. [It was also stated](#) that all secondary schools and nine primary schools would remain open to offer care for vulnerable children and those whose parents are classed as "[key workers](#)". These schools would become known as "school hubs".

Along with all the secondary schools, the nine primary schools that remained open are:

- Ballacottier
- Bunscoill Rhumsaa
- Henry Bloom Noble
- Onchan
- Peel Clothworkers
- Phurt Le Moirrey
- St John's
- Cronk-y-Berry
- Rushen

The extent of dedicated government support and guidance to schools on managing and arranging the hub set-up is unclear. [The Department has said](#) that it 'has held regular meetings with teachers and unions which have allowed for concerns and ideas to be shared around how more pupils could be accommodated in hub schools'.

[The Department has said](#) that its key priority 'is, and will always be, the safety and wellbeing of staff and pupils'. It was announced that staff members may be self-isolating due to illness or may be unable to come to work because a pre-existing condition makes them vulnerable to coronavirus. As such, the Department has also stated that 'careful workforce planning and modifications to usual school practices will be essential during the process of allowing more pupils to attend the Island's schools'. Physical distancing guidelines have been [outlined in the Roadmap](#).

[The Department has stated](#) that it would not permit a 'sudden, uncontrolled' wider opening of schools. Instead it would propose an 'incremental, iterative process' in which provision is opened up to different groups. The proposed phasing for the different groups is [outlined in the Roadmap](#).

## REMOTE LEARNING

Many schools have initiated remote home learning programmes to enable students to continue with their studies.<sup>1</sup>

There has been some criticism of the lack of consistency in the approach taken by schools. On 9<sup>th</sup> May 2020, [it was reported that an anonymous parent](#), who contacted Dr Allinson about her concerns, said:

*My main cause of concern is the lack of actual teaching. There are currently no online classes, where the students can be taught by the teachers. Children are expected to teach themselves, which is very difficult if they don't understand the initial concepts. Chemistry, physics, maths, etc are impossible for many children to learn without a teacher explaining and teaching first before they are expected to do the work.*

The parent also said that some schools were providing live remote teaching and suggested students in year 10 and 12 are prioritised so they are not disadvantaged in their GCSE and A level exams next year.

A petition has [reportedly been launched](#), calling for more face-to-face teaching.

[On Thursday 21st May 2020](#) it was announced that the Department was 'accelerating new ways to deliver online teaching and remote learning'. Schools have been encouraged by the Department to loan devices such as iPads to households who may be struggling to access the teaching and resources being made available. The Department has said that it is also exploring how it can enable greater broadband coverage for disadvantaged families.

In response to a [written question in the Keys on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020](#), the Minister said that the Department's Education Improvement Service (EIS) is 'aware that there are varying types, styles and amounts of remote/online learning being provided by schools, and has offered substantial support and guidance to ensure a greater degree of consistency over the past eight weeks'.

## FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Initially, the Department continued to provide free school meals by [distributing packed lunches from the school hubs](#). However, the Minister [explained to Tynwald on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020](#) that take-up had been low because some families had been unable to collect the meals. After consultation with head teachers, the Department decided to introduce a voucher scheme.

On Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020 it [was announced](#) that all eligible parents would be sent food vouchers every fortnight equivalent to the value of 10 free school meals. These would continue to be sent out every two weeks to all eligible families during the current health emergency.

The value of the vouchers is £23 for each primary school child and £29 for each secondary school child. The vouchers can be exchanged at any Shoprite store on the Isle of Man. They can only be used for the purchase of groceries, excluding alcohol, lottery tickets, tobacco and non-food products. They may be exchanged for articles of a higher price than the face value on payment of the difference. No change is given. All vouchers are dated and sequentially numbered. The vouchers expire at the end of each fortnightly period.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. the approach taken by [Dhoon and Laxey primary schools](#) and [St Ninian's high school](#).

On the choice of supermarket [the Minister said that](#), 'it was essential that the government responded quickly to introduce the scheme and we are grateful to Shoprite for all their assistance. Shoprite is a local company with the island coverage that we needed.' On [21<sup>st</sup> April 2020 in Tynwald Court](#), the Minister confirmed that he had spoken to other retailers on the Island about joining the scheme, and said that the scheme would be reviewed after two weeks.

[Guidance](#) has been produced to explain to schools how the free school meal programme would operate.

Free packed lunches have also been provided for those attending hub schools. Once the definition of key workers has been widened to include construction, horticulture and trades workers, the Department has [proposed to revert to the usual arrangements](#).

## EXAMS

With the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak expected to continue having a significant impact on the education system, it was [announced by the Minister on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020](#) that exams would be cancelled to give pupils, parents, and teachers certainty, and enable schools and colleges to focus on supporting vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

[Guidance](#) produced by the Department states that students who were due to sit A level, AS level, BTEC, IGCSE or other exams this summer will receive a calculated grade. [This is in line with the approach adopted by the UK](#). The calculated grade process will take into account a range of evidence including non-exam assessment and mock results, and the approach will be standardised between schools and colleges by examination boards and regulatory bodies.

This summer's calculated grades are not predicted grades. The Government [has claimed](#) that each examination board and their regulator is developing 'a fair and robust process' that takes into account a broad range of evidence, including assessments by schools and colleges of the grades that students would have been likely to attain if exams went ahead.

[In an article published in the Guardian on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020](#), it was reported that experts have cautioned that relying on teacher assessments is likely to penalise students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Jo Grady, the secretary general of the University and College Union, said: 'Our primary concern is that disadvantaged students are the ones most likely to miss out. Research shows that they fare badly when it comes to predicted grades and they are less likely to be able to put life on hold and delay sitting exams, or have access to the tools required to navigate any appeals system'.

## VULNERABLE CHILDREN

It is unclear whether the Department has provided detailed guidance for supporting vulnerable children during the coronavirus outbreak. In [response to a written question](#) in the House of Keys on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020, the Minister referred to an inclusion and safeguarding guidance website.

[The UK Government has published guidance](#) for supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The document addresses identification of vulnerable children, the attendance of vulnerable children and safeguarding concerns, along with staffing, transport and logistics.

## SCHOOL/GOVERNMENT COOPERATION

Despite claims of cooperation between island teachers and the DESC, the Government has faced criticism from teaching unions. The teaching unions—the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), National Association of Schoolmasters, Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), National Education Union (NEU), Prospect, University and College Union

and Unite the Union—have said that [plans made by the Department to reopen schools have not been endorsed by them](#).

They stated that they 'wish to see schools/University College Isle of Man return to normal working' but school leaders and parents must have 'full confidence that schools are safe before any consideration to re-open for more pupils is acted upon'. It was reported that Ramsey Grammar School head teacher Annette Baker said:

*The "road map" was issued to head teachers last Sunday (May 3) and to all teachers last Monday via email. There had been one set of meetings with hub head teachers previous to its publication, no mention was made of the existence of this document or of the intention to issue it.[...] There had been a meeting of joint unions the Friday previous to its publication, no mention of a "road map".*

The unions of NASUWT, NAHT, ASCL, NEU, Prospect and Unite [issued the following joint statement](#) on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2020:

*The first meeting held on 6 May, was attended by representatives from ASCL, NAHT, NASUWT, NEU, Prospect, UCU and Unite. The Minister was invited, however, he was unable to attend due to a prior engagement. He requested the feedback from the meeting and we have now forwarded that to him. We have provided him and the DESC with a set of questions to be addressed as a starting point for discussion on initial proposals for the phased reopening of educational establishments. The Minister has been invited to attend our next meeting scheduled for next Wednesday, 13 May.*

*As far as we are aware, schools will not be opening soon beyond the current hubs supporting key workers' children. There are a lot of H&S considerations and logistical issues to be resolved before there can be any expansion of the current provision. The unions are keen to work together with DESC to make sure that all of these are properly planned and in place so that students and staff are safe. Parents need to have confidence that when schools/UCM do admit more students, this can be done safely.*

*The aim and purpose of the group is to help provide a centralised agreed response to the challenges facing us all in attempting to implement a way forward re the expansion of educational establishments to both staff and students. We share a common belief that we need the combined expertise of the professionals involved in all of the relevant unions to contribute towards safe systems of work during this pandemic.*

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## PAY DISPUTE

The teachers' pay dispute remains ongoing. Speaking on [Manx Radio on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020](#), Geraldine O'Neill of the NASUWT said that, 'the situation has improved, despite talks being on hold during the coronavirus emergency'. In response, the Department said:

*During the current state of emergency, any pay negotiations with the teacher unions have understandably been put on hold. The Department for Education, Sport and Culture is engaged in regular weekly meetings with teachers and their representatives on how we face the coronavirus challenges together. We remain committed to an open dialogue with all the teaching unions and to working together to find positive outcomes for the benefit of the Island's children and young people and all our teaching staff.*

The NASUWT-The Teachers' Union [has expressed concern at proposals](#) to stop paying supply teachers during the emergency. [In the House of Keys on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020](#), the Minister said that discussions

were underway with the unions and staff about the use of supply teachers. It is unclear whether this issue has been resolved.

## GUIDANCE FROM NGOS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

### WHO: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL-RELATED PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

On 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 the WHO published a paper on [considerations for school-related public health measures](#) in the context of COVID-19.

The paper recommends that the following matters should be considered when deciding whether to open or close schools:

- Current understanding about COVID-19 transmission and severity in children;
- Local situation and epidemiology of COVID-19 where the schools are located, including:
  - Impact on movement and transport in the area
  - Trend in cases, including reliability of data
  - Ability to detect and respond quickly to new cases
  - Ability of school to collaborate and coordinate with local public health authorities
  - Number of staff and children at risk for severe disease
- School setting and ability to maintain COVID-19 prevention and control measures, including:
  - The school resources and infrastructure (e.g. hygiene policies, materials and supplies, size of classrooms, access to a school nurse)
  - Policies for teachers and other school staff (e.g. safety, training, flexible remote learning, capacity of staff)

The paper also makes a number of recommendations for measures for school reopening:

- Hygiene and environmental cleaning to limit exposure
  - Education about prevention measures
  - Schedule and materials for frequent hand hygiene
  - Regular cleaning and disinfection of the school environment
  - Measures to limit risk of exposure during PE
  - Measures to limit risk on school transport
  - Develop a school policy on wearing a mask in line with national or local guidance
- Screening and management of sick pupils, teachers, and other school staff
  - Reinforcing policy of staying home if unwell
  - Creating a checklist to help parents, students, and staff to decide whether to go to school
  - Waiving requirement for a doctor's note to excuse absence
  - Daily screening for body temperature and history of fever
- Effective communication with parents and students
- Ensuring that immunization and vaccination checks are up-to-date
- Physical distancing and tele-schooling
  - Maintaining a distance of at least 1 metre
  - Desk spacing, staggering breaks
  - Limit mixing of classes
  - Moving lessons outdoors or ventilating rooms as much as possible
  - Expanding timetable, increasing number of teachers if possible
  - Initiate or continue tele-schooling, by blended methods where necessary and possible
  - Consider alternates if tele-school is not possible
  - Frequent follow-up and support, and avoid penalising such students
- Monitoring schools after reopening

- Effectiveness of tele-schooling
- Effects on educational objectives and learning outcomes
- Effects on health and wellbeing of students, parents, and staff
- Trend in school dropout after lifting restrictions

## OTHER GUIDANCE

Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action (May 2020): COVID-19: Working with and for young people: <https://www.youthcompact.org/the-compact-response>

UNESCO (13 May 2020): Reopening schools: When, where and how?: <https://en.unesco.org/news/reopening-schools-when-where-and-how>

UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, World Food Programme (Apr 2020): Framework for reopening schools: <https://www.unicef.org/media/68366/file/Framework-for-reopening-schools-2020.pdf>

UNICEF (27 Mar 2020): Family-friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19: <https://www.unicef.org/media/66351/file/Family-friendly-policies-covid-19-guidance-2020.pdf>

UNICEF, WHO, IFRC (Mar 2020): Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/key-messages-and-actions-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-prevention-and-control-schools>

NASUWT-The Teachers' Union: Arrangements for Remote Teaching, Learning and Support: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/arrangements-for-remote-teaching-learning-support.html>

## COVID-19 IN CHILDREN

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020 the UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology [published an analysis](#) of what is known about how COVID-19 affects children and what role they play in the transmission of the virus. The key findings of the article are summarised as follows:

- There is very good evidence that children who have COVID-19 are much less likely to develop severe symptoms and much less likely to die from the disease than people in older age groups.
- There is good evidence that children under 13 years old are less susceptible to developing clinical disease (this means having recognisable signs and symptoms) than adults. It is not yet clear whether this is also the case for older children.
- There is some research indicating that children aged 13 years and under may be less susceptible to infection than adults, but the confidence in this evidence is low. There is insufficient research to say whether this is the case for older children.
- There is some evidence to suggest that children transmit the virus less than adults, but more research is needed to reduce uncertainty.

## FURTHER READING

### ISLE OF MAN

IOM Government (10 May 2020): Roadmap for the gradual expansion of school provision to specific groups. <https://covid19.gov.im/general-information/roadmap-for-the-gradual-expansion-of-school-provision-to-specific-groups/>

Isle of Man NASUWT-The Teachers Union (Apr 2020): Briefing – COVID-19 and Schools update: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/e1fff222-9687-4ae7-8d4916b13849dd2f.pdf>

NASUWT-The Teachers' Union: Isle of Man. <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/isle-of-man.html>

## APPROACHES IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS

BBC News (22 May 2020): Coronavirus: What is a blended model of learning? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-52412171> (Gives an overview of how schools are reopening in the UK, Denmark, Germany, Norway, France, Belgium, elsewhere in Europe, New Zealand, South Korea).

House of Commons Library (21 May 2020): Coronavirus and schools: FAQs: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8915/> (Gives an overview of the approach in the UK, the Department for Education's guidance, research on home learning environments, how children and young people may be affected by school closures, and how exam grades will be awarded this summer).

House of Commons Library (21 May 2020): Coronavirus: Update implications for the further and higher education sectors: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8908/>

UK Parliament POST (18 May 2020): COVID-19 and international approaches to exiting lockdown: <https://post.parliament.uk/analysis/covid-19-and-international-approaches-to-exiting-lockdown/> (Including information about school openings).

Senedd Research (updated 15 May 2020): Coronavirus: schools and pupils: <https://seneddresearch.blog/2020/04/08/coronavirus-what-has-been-the-impact-on-schools-and-pupils/> (Gives an overview of the position in Wales).

Jourdan, Didier at al (05 May 2020): Coronavirus: There is an urgent need to re-open schools – this is how to make it happen: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-there-is-an-urgent-need-to-re-open-schools-this-is-how-to-make-it-happen-137818>

Financial Times (23 Apr 2020): Ending the lockdowns: experts are divided on school reopenings. <https://www.ft.com/content/79b6c29c-841b-4592-804e-679e3b0b6bab>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (19 Mar 2020): Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>

UNESCO: COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

## REMOTE LEARNING

Nash, Victoria et al (18 May 2020): Coronavirus school closures impact 1.3 billion children – and remote learning is increasing inequality: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-school-closures-impact-1-3-billion-children-and-remote-learning-is-increasing-inequality-138656>

UNESCO (Apr 2020): Some implications of COVID-19 for remote learning and the future of schooling: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373229>

## COVID-19 IN CHILDREN

Stamataki, Zania (28 May 2020): Coronavirus: what we know and what we need to learn as we exit lockdown: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-what-we-know-and-what-we-need-to-learn-as-we-exit-lockdown-138698> (Includes a section on how COVID-19 affects children).

Paulus, Stephane and Bijker, Else (28 May 2020): Coronavirus: is it safe for children to return to school?: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-is-it-safe-for-children-to-return-to-school-139228>

Full Fact (19 May 2020): Can children transmit the new coronavirus to other people?: <https://fullfact.org/health/covid-19-in-children/>

Hicar, Mark (6 May 2020): A mysterious illness is striking children amid the coronavirus pandemic – but is it Kawasaki disease?: <https://theconversation.com/a-mysterious-illness-is-striking-children-amid-the-coronavirus-pandemic-but-is-it-kawasaki-disease-137986>

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND CORONAVIRUS

Senedd Research (11 May 2020): Coronavirus: children's rights: <https://senedresearch.blog/2020/05/11/coronavirus-childrens-rights/>

Maguire, Amy et al (30 Apr 2020): Sending children back to school during coronavirus has human rights implications: <https://theconversation.com/sending-children-back-to-school-during-coronavirus-has-human-rights-implications-137251>

## IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ILO (27 May 2020): ILO: More than one in six young people out of work due to COVID-19: [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_745879/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_745879/lang--en/index.htm)

Manx Radio (22 May 2020): The student experience under lockdown: <https://www.manxradio.com/news/isle-of-man-news/the-student-experience-under-lockdown/>

Bray, Lucy et al (18 May 2020): Children on coronavirus: 'Don't just tell us to wash our hands and say it will be okay': <https://theconversation.com/children-on-coronavirus-dont-just-tell-us-to-wash-our-hands-and-say-it-will-be-okay-138489>

BBC News (28 Apr 2020): Coronavirus: Study looks at pandemic impact on young people (video): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-tyne-52461277/coronavirus-study-looks-at-pandemic-impact-on-young-people>

YoungMinds (March 2020): Coronavirus: Impact on young people with mental health needs: [https://youngminds.org.uk/media/3708/coronavirus-report\\_march2020.pdf](https://youngminds.org.uk/media/3708/coronavirus-report_march2020.pdf)

UK Youth: The impact of COVID-19 on young people & the youth sector: <https://www.ukyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/UK-Youth-Covid-19-Impact-Report-External-Final-08.04.20.pdf>

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