

Health and Community Services

General Hospital

Peter Crill House, Gloucester Street
St Helier, Jersey, JE1 3QS



3rd December 2020

Dear Senator Vallois

Health Advice on the Continuation of Physical Schooling

I am writing to you in my capacity as chair of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC). I have been asked if in my opinion there are any medical reasons, at this point in the pandemic and taking into account the rising number of cases of COVID-19 cases on the island, why schools should not remain open.

This letter is to confirm that in my opinion and having sought views of colleagues in public health and STAC that there is no medical reason why schools should be shut early before the Christmas break nor is there any reason to move learning on-line.

The advice given by STAC earlier in the year to you and summarised in my letter to staff and parents dated 17th of June 2020 therefore still stands and is based on the facts that:

- There is limited effectiveness on the spread of the virus by closing schools. Whilst there has been some spread of the virus to children on the island the majority of this was from adults to children and most likely did not take place in the school environment but rather through household contact or outside of the school environment.
- The vast majority of other jurisdictions, particularly in Europe, which have actually gone into a second lockdown have kept schools and educational establishments open throughout.
- The evidence continues to show that the health impact of the virus on children is very low.
- There is increasing evidence of harm by keeping children out of school for longer periods both to them and potentially their families. My understanding is that there is also emerging evidence that academic outcomes are directly related to the number of days that children spend in school and the more days missed correlates with poorer outcome. This will potentially affect individual children's life chances and, as a consequence, their health in the longer term.

I hope this gives you the assurance that there is no medical reason to cease physical schooling as is currently being provided on the island at the present time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Armstrong".

Mr Patrick Armstrong MBE
Acting Group Medical Director