



**Children's Commissioner for Jersey**  
Promoting and Protecting Children's Rights

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**Office of the Children's Commissioner**

Brunel House  
Old Street  
St Helier, Jersey  
JE2 3RG

18 December 2020

Tracey Vallois  
Education Minister

Jeremy Macon  
Minister for Children

Dear Ministers,

I fully support the Government's efforts to keep islanders, especially children, safe during this pandemic. I fully acknowledge the challenges that our Head Teachers and school staff have faced, along with the challenges that our children, young people and our families have endured.

I urge the Government to ensure that there are no delays to the start of the new term in January except in instances where individual schools need to close to groups of pupils as a matter of last resort, or where advice from STAC suggests it is necessary to keep schools closed.

We have heard clearly through the survey that learning from home does not enable all children to access their right to an education. Indeed, we have seen that learning from home disadvantages those young people who already have multiple barriers to their learning.

We know that children and young people are feeling anxious and some, following multiple periods of isolation, will be worried about returning to school in January. Pupils will need reassurance and support to ensure that they can return to school in January and feel safe to return to classroom-based learning. Clear messaging to pupils and families over the Christmas period will help to alleviate anxiety, and a focus on their wellbeing on return to school must be a priority. We would advocate that children living in situations of vulnerability are contacted during the Christmas break as a safeguarding check.

I remind you of my formal advice published last week that is still relevant and should support you with your decisions. Here is the link to that advice:

<https://www.childcomjersey.org.je/media/1430/advicecypesschoolclosure.pdf>

Yours sincerely

**Deborah McMillan**  
Children's Commissioner for Jersey