



PRESS RELEASE

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SCHOOL SERVICE TO CHANGE RADICALLY AS FROM MONDAY

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar notes the decision announced this evening by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education to close schools in the United Kingdom.

Additionally, and as a result, the UK examination bodies have determined that they should cancel all GCSE and A-Level examinations for the spring/summer term 2020.

These decisions remove an important fetter which have been a key consideration for the Gibraltar Department of Education and NASUWT Gibraltar in deciding how to continue to impart education in Gibraltar in coming months in the context of the measures being implemented to slow the spread of the COVID 19 virus.

Importantly, in Gibraltar, the advice of the Director of Public Health REMAINS that schools are a safe place for children and for teachers.

However, today, school attendance is already down to 35%.

The Department for Education has already made clear it will not enforce the requirement for children to attend school.

In the circumstances, and given the announcement by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education in the United Kingdom, it is likely that school attendance in Gibraltar will be reduced even further from tomorrow.

This will likely especially be the case given that examination classes have now found that external examinations are not going to go ahead this spring/summer term.

As a result, in Gibraltar, the Government and the NASUWT have agreed that it will not be practically possible for schools to remain open to impart the National Curriculum beyond this week.

Government schools will therefore operate in a different way as from Monday.

In the light of this, we have decided that, as from next Monday, schools will continue to provide a service to the community primarily by providing a safe environment for children of all workers who



are not otherwise able to make suitable childcare provision without involving relatives over the age of 70 years.

We will extend the times when these facilities will be available for extended hours and additional days to be agreed between the Department and the NASUWT and potentially for extended age groups. The Department and NASUWT will be working on the details together in the coming days.

We will review in the next 48 hours whether all schools are required to provide this facility. This will depend on the numbers of children. We will consider, in particular, which schools will be used for this purpose. These will include schools which have the facility to provide lunches for children.

We would like to reassure all students of examination year groups, that we will be keeping a close eye on the latest information provided by OfQual, to ensure that students' ability to obtain their qualifications is not compromised.

It would be helpful to the Department of Education to have an idea of the number of children who will be making use of these facilities.

There has not been a change in the medical position, but we are taking a necessary pragmatic approach in the developing circumstances.

Key workers will include ANYONE in our economy who is at work and needs the assistance of the Department of Education with their children as they continue to provide their services at this difficult and sensitive time.

Whoever wishes or needs to avail themselves of this service should please register for this service by informing the Department of Education by a note from the parents to the teachers tomorrow morning or Friday.

Additionally, parents can also communicate with the Department of Education on queries arising from these issue on the email COVID.education@gibraltar.gov.gi will be available as from tomorrow

The Government has made this decision in the closest possible consultation with the Minister and Director of Education, key representatives of the committee of the NASUWT, the Director of Public Health and the Acting Medical Director.

All factors have been weighed carefully in reaching these determinations.

"We have been conscious that matters have been changing by the hour in this sensitive area of education. The decision by the UK to cancel GCSEs and A-Levels relieves decision makers of the important concern we had about those children were sitting exams. It means we are now free to remodel how school buildings are used during this Pandemic. We envisage continuing to provide facilities for all key workers who need their children to be looked after whilst they are at work. We envisage longer hours of operation, opening earlier and closing later, and we envisage being able to feed children in those periods by rationalising the use of school buildings down to those that already have kitchens or serving facilities for hot meals.



I want to thank the Director of Education, the representatives of the committee of the NASUWT, the Director of Public Health and the Medical Director for their help as we have made this difficult decision. They continue to work in structuring the way in which we will continue to operate for key workers and for those who wish to send their children to school next week and in coming weeks.

I especially want to thank the representatives of the committee of the NASUWT for their hard work with us on this issue and the teachers and all the staff of our schools. Every single one of them is a key worker too and they are a hugely important part of how we are going to get our community through this pandemic crisis. We are changing the shape of our society and in doing so we are going to rely on our teachers and our school staff – at every level – as much as we are going to rely on our GHA staff, our utility workers, our law enforcement staff and everyone in Gibraltar. This is a #TeamGibraltar effort. Our school buildings will be transformed to provide a different service and our teachers will need the support of all of us as they will be assisted by many volunteers and others in a manner designed and agreed between the Department of Education and the NASUWT.

We will now review this decision weekly. Our aim is to continue in this way for at least the next two weeks, which would have been the end of this term, and the two weeks of what would have been the Easter break, and see how things are progressing then.

The situation is however so fluid that it is difficult to provide more certainty at this time.”