

**Ministry of Education**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**School COVID19 Updates**

**The Hon Diallo V. Rabain, J.P., M.P.**

**Minister of Education**

**Monday, 30 November 2020**

**5:15 p.m.**

Good Evening Bermuda,

Before I begin my press statement, I would like to reiterate that the safety and health of all students and staff is a priority for the Ministry and Department of Education.

As we continue navigate the effects of COVID 19, we do so in concert with the Ministry of Health. Our commitment to our school family is to keep safety and health as a priority; to be transparent; and to keep our school staff, families and the public abreast of any new developments or plans.

These are unsettling times, and we understand the concerns shared by parents, students, teachers and staff. As a parent with a child at Whitney Institute, rest assured that I also understand how the latest COVID 19 testing results are troubling for our schools and families.

When test results are received, we work in sync with the Ministry of Health to communicate information to school staff and parents and with consistently follow their instructions for the actions that are to be taken. Further, it is the Ministry of Health who assesses the risk of any COVID-19 developments in schools and they determine the best course of action to keep our students, staff and community safe.

Now that I have provided some background information, I will provide you with updates regarding the COVID-19 developments at Clearwater Middle School, Dellwood Middle School, Paget Primary, West End Primary, and St. George’s Preparatory.

**Clearwater Middle School**

In the case of Clearwater Middle School, the initial report was that one person, a non-teaching staff, had tested positive, but the school could open today; and an assessment would take place. Last night, I released a press statement and video explaining this information.

The school did open this morning and there were 23 students and 15 staff present. After students and staff had been on site for over two hours, the Department of Health gave instructions for staff and students to exit the premises so that deep cleaning could take place. The Department of Health has reported that this is the current status of the school.

As shared previously, in the event of potential COVID19 exposure, classrooms and any affected areas are deep cleaned and inspected before students and staff are allowed back into the building. The Department of Education’s Facilities team will coordinate the deep cleaning of the Clearwater facilities. A meeting took place at the school today to discuss the deep cleaning plan; and deep cleaning will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday. This will mean that staff and students will not be able to enter the building on these two days.

The Principal will communicate to parents at a meeting planned for tonight at 8:30pm, the process for distributing learning packets to students.

The Department of Health will determine whether any additional action is to be taken and then we will advise our parents, teachers and staff of the date for Clearwater Middle school to reopen.

**Dellwood Middle School**

Dellwood Middle School students, parents and staff have been asked to quarantine.

Teachers and students will transition to a remote learning schedule on Wednesday, December 2nd.

Students who do not have mobile devices will receive non-digital learning packets and the process for collecting the packets will be communicated to parents by the school principal.

**St George’ Preparatory**

Staff and P2 students who were under quarantine returned to school today with high attendance rates for staff and students. Teachers and students jumped right back into the class and the day started with a class meeting held to review class / school rules and protocols.

**West End Primary**

Students and teachers at West End Primary’s P5 also returned to school today. Staff and student attendance rates were high and teaching and learning took place as normal. A wellness check in was carried out for the class and the guidance counsellor remained on standby in the event any students were anxious or worried. Overall the teacher and students were reported as doing fine.

**Paget Primary ASD Class**

The Department of Health also gave clearance for students in the ASD Programme at Paget Primary and the staff to return to work today. Overall attendance rates were high for students and staff and staff were reported to have mixed emotions about their return.

**Travel**

As we approach the holiday season, there is a possibility more people travelling, which may lead to increased positive cases across the island. As a reminder, if you or anyone in your household travels (including family members or guests returning from overseas), your child will need to observe the current quarantine requirements. A student can return to school once the negative Day-8 test results are received by the office.

In addition, if anyone in your household is required to quarantine due to close contact with COVID-19, your child should also quarantine if directed the by the Department of Health. Children who are quarantining at home will receive either electronic or hard copy work packets.

The Ministry of Education appreciates the cooperation of the Department of Health and the teachers throughout our Public School system.

Let me extend my appreciation to the Ministry of Health team who set up the testing at Dellwood Middle School.

In closing, I would like to urge our students, teachers, parents and the general public to understand that the procedures outlined are to be followed in keep our schools safe and healthy.

The critical message that I want to end with is that we need to wear masks, practice social distancing, wash our hands and keep our bubbles small.

We all play a critical role in keeping our island safe. Let’s all do our part.

Thank you