

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
BY DEPUTY C.S. ALVES OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 30th JUNE 2020**

Question

Will the Minister advise what work, if any, will be undertaken during the school holidays to invest in better virtual learning materials for schoolchildren, to address the prospect of a second wave of Covid-19 later this year that would further disrupt their education?

Answer

Wide ranging, significant, financial and non-financial investment has already been made to improve virtual learning for school children.

Staff and students at all schools now have Microsoft Teams and all staff email accounts have now been migrated to Office 365 enabling access on any internet enabled device, at any time. Staff training has taken place to increase knowledge and skills with new or current software that enable virtual learning.

The Learning at Home website was launched 30th April and has been accessed by over 4,500 users with over 15,000 unique page views.

<https://learningathome.gov.je/>

Digital Jersey has worked with the local Telecoms companies to enable a free broadband offer for school children, adult learners and those leaving care who do not currently have a broadband connection.

<https://www.gov.je/news/2020/pages/freebroadband.aspx>

From the start of lock down schools were loaning devices out to families and currently have in excess of 300 devices out on loan. Additionally, 300 more devices have been ordered to increase the stock available to loan to children who do not have access to a suitable device.

<https://www.gov.je/News/2020/Pages/OnlineDevicesOrdered.aspx>

A second wave is seen internationally as likely to happen during the winter, however, with our current test and trace approach we are following a strategy of very low active cases and interrupting any spread of new infections through the contain strategy. Any mitigation measures will be considered based on the nature of a new outbreak, the location and numbers. Based on international research and studies, it has been shown that generic school closures and indeed the opening of schools, did not have a considerable impact on the spread of the infection as children are unlikely to get infected and to pass the infection on if infected.

Schools are welcoming all year groups of children back last week and this, with a focus on their well-being. Once returned to school, teachers and staff are also assessing any learning loss that may have occurred and will be planning to address this with officers in my Department. Due consideration will be given here, once we can fully assess our children and young people.