

20.11.02

**7 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Education regarding the testing of school staff for Covid-19 (OQ.304/2020)**

Given the recent incidences of COVID-19 in schools, will the Minister advise whether all school staff will be offered regular P.C.R. (polymerase chain reaction) or antibody testing, both for reassurance and to track any possible transmission of the virus; and will she further advise whether class or year group bubbles are permitted to visit other schools and colleges?

**Senator T.A. Vallois (The Minister for Education):**

Yes, I am pleased to advise that all staff in schools, nurseries and other early years' staff will be able to access the P.C.R. test every 8 weeks starting from today. Tests will be available at the harbour testing facility on an appointment basis for drive-in or walk-through. The facility will be open from 11.30 a.m. until 7.00 p.m. Monday to Friday and 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. at weekends. I can also advise that these tests will be sent to a U.K. laboratory and the expected result turnaround time is up to 48 hours. Plans are also being developed for a mobile testing team to come to schools and test groups of staff on site. With regards to class groups or other small bubbles accessing other schools, this is permitted for their visiting for specific educational reasons where it is risk-assessed and appropriate measures are in place to avoid contact with other bubbles.

**4.7.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Would it be advisable that all open days should really be conducted virtually as the risk of parents and children in groups of 40, for example, travelling around schools is a risk that we do not want to take as the pandemic takes hold elsewhere?

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Yes, I can reassure the Deputy the measures that are in place are regularly assessed and considered by our facilities team who do a very good job of working directly with the schools. If there are any particular concerns, and with what is happening at present with regards to COVID in the Island, we keep on top of that particular situation and will consider whether the necessary changes need to be put in place sooner rather than later.