



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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I would like to offer my thanks to the Education Select Committee for the invitation to attend the Committee's session on our response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) last week. I will write to you separately on the specific issues raised during the session, but I would like to use this letter as an opportunity to update you on the latest developments regarding the Department for Education's response to the outbreak. Please see below an overview of activity over the last week.

We understand the pressure that higher education settings are under at this time and on 4 May I announced a range of measures to protect students and universities from the impact of COVID-19. The measures draw on proposals from the universities sector, to stabilise university admissions this autumn and to help make sure universities and students are safeguarded at a time of unprecedented uncertainty:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-package-for-universities-and-students>

The Students Loans Company (SLC) has confirmed that its application service will remain open to students as part of its response to the COVID-19 outbreak and is encouraging students in England to apply for student finance as soon as possible to ensure their finances are in place for the new academic year. New students are being asked to submit their applications before 22 May 2020. The SLC is also contacting returning students to remind them to reapply for their next year's student finance with an application deadline of 19 June 2020. Student finance applications can be made here: <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

Guidance on new temporary changes to the law on education, health and care needs assessments and plans due to COVID-19 was also published to give local authorities, health commissioning bodies, education settings and other bodies who contribute to these processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by the outbreak:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus>

The government recently announced £76 million extra emergency funding to support the most vulnerable in society during the pandemic, including survivors of domestic abuse and vulnerable children and their families:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/emergency-funding-to-support-most-vulnerable-in-society-during-pandemic>

We have also extended testing eligibility to help protect the most vulnerable. We have announced that anyone in England showing symptoms of COVID-19 who must leave their home to go to work, or who is aged 65 or over, is eligible for testing along with members of their households with symptoms. This is in addition to previous guidance that all essential workers with symptoms were eligible for testing. Testing can be booked through a new online system.

Guidance on testing, and testing eligibility, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

Regarding the free school meals scheme, McColl's joined the list of supermarkets that will redeem vouchers secured through the free school meals national voucher scheme. Other supermarkets participating in the scheme are Aldi, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose, M&S, Asda and Morrisons. Further guidance on providing free school meals during the outbreak is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance>

In addition to the developments mentioned above, we have also updated some of our current guidance as listed below:

- On 1 May, the Government updated existing guidance for the induction of newly qualified teachers to reflect new regulations around absences related to the COVID-19 outbreak:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-induction-for-newly-qualified-teachers>

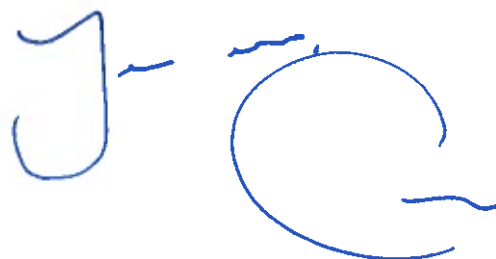
- We have also updated our guidance on actions for schools during this time. The update includes information on testing for education and childcare workers, provision of education on the 8 May Bank Holiday and the continuation of recruitment. Guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures>

- For households with grandparents, parents and children living together where someone is at risk or has symptoms of COVID-19, Public Health England has updated their guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

I hope you find this information useful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Williamson', with a large circular flourish at the end.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education