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Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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5 July 2020

I would like to use this letter as an opportunity to update you on the Department for Education's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Since my last letter two weeks ago, you will be aware that I announced the £1 billion Covid catch-up package for schools and will know that we plan to welcome all children and young people back to school in September, further details of which I will set out later this week.

Every child and young person in the country has experienced unprecedented disruption to their education as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). Those from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds will be amongst those hardest hit, which is why on 19 June I announced a £1 billion catch-up package to support pupils who may have fallen behind due to lost teaching time as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. This package includes:

- A universal catch up premium for schools of £650 million, paid as a grant to all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in England over the 2020/21 academic year to help them make up for lost teaching time; and
- A new £350m National Tutoring Programme to increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people to help accelerate their academic progress and tackle the attainment gap between them and their peers.

As you know, it is absolutely essential that schools use this additional funding to catch-up for the learning that has been lost due to the outbreak. That is why the Education Endowment Foundation have published a Covid-19 support guide to advise school leaders and staff decide on how to best use this funding to support their pupils and their outcomes. This provides information on the most effective strategies to catch up lost learning, including summer schools, transition support, and access to technology. The guide can be found here: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/covid-19-support-guide-for-schools/>

Further information on the Covid catch up package can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/billion-pound-covid-catch-up-plan-to-tackle-impact-of-lost-teaching-time>

Due to coronavirus (COVID-19), there is increased pressure on household budgets and I recognise families will face particular challenges over the coming months. That is why I am providing additional funding for a Covid Summer Food Fund which will enable children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals to claim vouchers for the 6-week summer holiday period.

In addition to the measures outlined above, we are rolling out the £9 million Holiday Activities and Food programme, ensuring that thousands of children will be able to benefit from free nutritious food and enriching activities this summer. This programme builds on the success of 2018 and 2019 and is reaching disadvantaged children in more areas across England. Each organisation will deliver at least four weeks of free activities and healthy food during July and August 2020. All the successful coordinators have confirmed that their programmes will adhere to relevant government public health advice and are committed to providing free food and activities for as many disadvantaged children as possible.

In September, the Department plans to welcome all children and young people, in all year groups, back to school. We are working towards this because school is the best place for children to learn, and because we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers, carers and teachers.

We are going to be publishing further guidance this week so that schools have the maximum amount of time to prepare for the next phase of welcoming children back, and we will work continuously with the sector during this period to consult on how we make sure wider opening – both now and in September – works in the most successful way possible.

In addition to the above, please see below some recent key updates from the Department.

We have updated our guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). The guidance has been updated to reflect recent changes on eligibility and access to testing, clarify PPE requirements for first aid and complex care, and confirm that guidance on cleaning non-healthcare settings applies following a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) and not in relation to regular, routine cleaning. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care>

We have published revised the keeping children safe in education guidance for schools and colleges. This guidance is for information only and will come into force on 1 September 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

We recognise the impact that coronavirus (COVID-19) is having on providers and candidates for further education initial teacher education (ITE) programmes, particularly regarding meeting the eligibility criteria for financial incentives where it has not been possible, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, to provide the required evidence of qualifications. We are therefore extending the deadline by which all prior qualifications must be in place for an applicant to be eligible for further education ITE funding in 2020-21. Details on the bursaries and grants funding available for further education initial teacher education be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fe-funding-initial-teacher-education-ite-academic-year-2020-to-2021>

We have updated our guidance for parents and carers on what they need to know about early years providers, schools, and colleges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak to align with policy announcements already made, for example, the flexibility for primary schools to welcome back additional pupils where they have the capacity to do so. We have also changed the layout of the page in response to user feedback to help parents and carers navigate to the information they need. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

We have updated our guidance for educational settings supporting children and young people with complex special educational needs and disability (SEND). The update includes a new section with information for settings on the of re-admission of pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable or with education, health and care (EHC) plans. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance>

We have updated the guidance for local authorities, health commissioners, parents and young people on the 2-year trial to extend powers of the special educational needs and disability (SEND) tribunal. The trial was due to end on 31 August 2020, however, given the pressures local areas are under as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we have decided to extend the trial until 31 August 2021. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extended-powers-send-tribunal-national-trial>

We have updated our guidance for schools on writing statutory end of year reports for parents. This guidance has been updated to confirm that regulations have been laid to remove the requirement to report on national curriculum assessments and attendance. The guidance for headteachers on reporting to parents on pupil performance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-reports-on-pupil-performance-guide-for-headteachers>. The guidance for schools on reporting to parents at the end of key

stages 1 and 2 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-to-parents-at-the-end-of-key-stages-1-and-2>

With the Home Office, we have published a clarification document on the Vulnerable Children National Charities Strategic Relief Fund to answer questions raised by applicants. The clarification document and application form can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vulnerable-children-national-charities-strategic-relief-fund>

We have updated the guidance that sets out the financial support available to alternative provision (AP) schools and colleges to support current year 11 students into post-16 education. The funding will help schools and colleges pay for tailored support to help students stay in education or training. The guidance for this can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/alternative-provision-year-11-transition-funding>

We have added information on the impact of schools' financial reserves on eligibility for this funding and details of what support schools can access for the loss of self-generated income, as it is not covered by this fund. We have also amended the content to confirm that schools should proceed with the phased wider opening and any measures associated with it within existing resources, as any costs incurred as part of that process cannot be claimed through this fund. Updated guidance on funding available to schools to support them with costs associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools>

We have published instructions for educational settings on how to claim exceptional cost related to coronavirus (COVID-19). The instructions can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claiming-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19>

We have updated the online resources for schools and parents to help children to learn at home during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The latest resources can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources>

We have updated the guidance for childcare services, early years settings, childminders and local authorities. This includes updating the guidance to reflect that early years providers are now able to open for all children, an update on funding and flexibility for parents, further details on managing school pick-ups and drop-offs and new information on childminder agencies and carrying out quality assurance visits. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>

We have published information on the Early Career Framework which includes:

- the professional development available to early career teachers at the start of their careers, underpinned by the Early Career Framework
- how selected schools can sign up for early roll-out from autumn 2020
- how the offer will help all early career teachers and schools to respond to the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19)

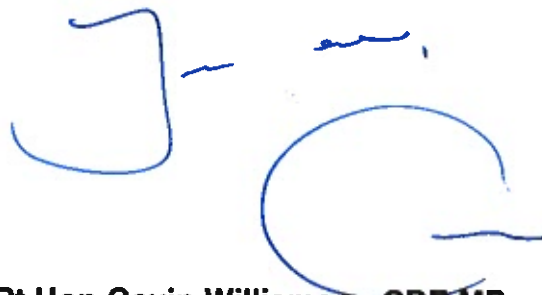
The information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-career-framework-reforms>

We have updated our advice and guidance to help parents and carers to keep children safe online during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online>

We have jointly published new guidance with the Home Office, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and Public Health England on keeping children safe from abuse and harm. This guidance brings together sources of information about the main risks children may be vulnerable to during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and signposts you to help and support available. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-from-abuse-and-harm>

We have updated guidance on the support available for post-16 training providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak advising that applications can now be made to the ESFA post-16 provider relief scheme (July to October 2020), which is available to support providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. This scheme is now open. Eligible post-16 training providers, including providers co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) should read our policy and guidance before making an application for supplier relief. The ESFA post-16 provider relief scheme (July to October 2020) guidance and link to apply can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-post-16-provider-relief-scheme>. The ESFA ESF provider relief scheme 2 (July to October 2020) guidance and link to apply can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-esf-provider-relief-scheme>

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