



Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards

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Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair, Education Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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27 July 2020

Dear Robert,

I am responding to your letter of 1 July regarding the educational implications of lockdown on children and young people, particularly on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and the £1 billion Covid catch-up fund.

Targeting catch-up funding

You asked about the potential prioritisation of the £1 billion catch-up fund. We know that the educational impact of Covid-19 will be felt by all children and young people – though most particularly by those from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds. The Government's catch-up package therefore includes both a universal offer, and a specific programme to provide additional support for those who need it most:

- A one-off £650 million universal catch-up premium to help all pupils catch-up for lost teaching time.
- A £350 million National Tutoring Programme which will be specifically targeted at disadvantaged or vulnerable children and young people who we expect to have been disproportionately impacted by closures.

Distribution of funding

With regard to your question on the distribution of funding, the universal catch-up premium will be paid as a grant to all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in England in the 2020/21 academic year.

Schools' allocations will be calculated on a per pupil basis, providing each mainstream school with a total of £80 for each pupil in reception through to year 11. This means a primary school of 200 pupils will receive £16,000 while a secondary school of 1,000 pupils will receive £80,000.

Special, AP and hospital schools will be provided with £240 for each place for the 2020/21 academic year. We have applied additional weighting to specialist settings, recognising the significantly higher per pupil costs they face.

Though funding has been calculated on a per pupil or per place basis, schools should use the sum available to them as a single total from which to prioritise support for pupils according to their need.

Given the catch-up premium has been designed to mitigate the effects of the unique disruption caused by Covid-19, the grant will only be available for the 2020/21 academic year. It will not be added to schools' baselines in calculating future years' funding allocations. It will sit alongside the core schools budget paid out through the National Funding Formula (NFF), which is increasing by £2.6 billion in 2020/21.

Although all children have had their education disrupted by the Covid-19 outbreak, it is likely that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups will have been hardest hit. That is why, alongside the universal catch up premium, we are launching a £350 million National Tutoring Programme to provide additional, targeted support for those children and young people who need the most help. The fund will comprise of two parts in the 2020/21 academic year:

1. A **5-16 programme** that will make high quality tuition available to 5-16 year olds in state-funded primary and secondary schools from the second half of autumn term 2020.
2. A **16-19 fund** for school sixth forms, colleges and all other 16-19 providers to provide small group tutoring activity for disadvantaged 16-19 students whose studies have been disrupted as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). Guidance setting out further detail of this element will be issued shortly.

The 5-16 programme will increase access to high quality tuition for disadvantaged and vulnerable 5-16-year olds. The programme will have two pillars:

- **Tuition partners:** schools in all regions will be able to access heavily subsidised tuition from an approved list of tuition organisations. These organisations – which will all be subject to quality, safeguarding and evaluation standards – will be given support and funding to reach as many disadvantaged pupils as possible. We will be working in partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation to deliver this part of the programme. Tutoring organisations will be invited to apply from September 2020 and the offer will be available to schools from November 2020.
- **Academic mentors:** schools in the most disadvantaged areas will be supported to employ in-house academic mentors to provide small group tuition to their pupils. Teach First will be supporting the recruitment, training, and placement of the first cohort of academic

mentors and their salaries will be heavily subsidised by the Government. Some academic mentors will start working in schools from October half-term, with the remainder starting in spring term 2021.

Across both pillars of the programme, tutors will be a powerful tool to support the delivery of the school's curriculum plan for the next academic year. Schools will be able to use their catch-up premium to cover the subsidised cost of the programme.

Allocation of funding to disadvantaged children

You also asked what bearing the pupil premium formula and those who qualify for free school meals will have for schools when allocating the £1 billion of catch-up funding. Allocation of the £650 million catch-up premium is universal. However, we expect schools to target the £650 million catch-up funding they receive towards pupils according to their need, and children who receive funding from the pupil premium formula and receive free school meals are likely to have suffered most as a result of school closures.

While all pupils have missed out on time in the classroom, it is likely that disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils will need additional catch-up support. That is why the tuition partners pillar of the 5-16 National Tutoring Programme is set up specifically to support disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for pupil premium support based on free school meal eligibility) and those who are vulnerable (because they have contact with a social worker or have special educational needs or a disability (SEND)).

The Government will heavily subsidise both the tutoring through the tuition partners pillar, as well as the salaries of in-school academic mentors. Further guidance for schools on how to access both pillars of the 5-16 programme will be made available later in the summer.

In reference to your question about the Year 7 premium, this premium was always due to end following the introduction of the NFF, because the NFF includes a weighting for low prior attainment, which replaces the need for a separate premium. This is not a new position and the funds have not been put towards our £1 billion catch-up package.

Supporting vulnerable children and those with additional needs

As mentioned above, teachers and school leaders will be able to exercise their professional judgement to direct support from the catch-up premium and National Tutoring Programme to pupils who need the most help, and this may include children with a social worker or those with SEND.

The National Tutoring Programme will aim to work with a range of tutoring organisations so that as many pupils as possible can be supported - including those with SEND - and we will work with the school system to make the offer as inclusive as possible.

We expect that the needs of students in mainstream schools can be met by the mainstream tutoring programme; however, we know that tutoring will not be the right answer for every child. As such, the catch-up premium can be used by schools to develop and deliver tailored solutions where necessary. Schools can choose to target the universal catch-up funding towards vulnerable groups including pupils with SEND, and can use the funding to pay for interventions they think are needed for them to catch-up (for example, additional speech and language therapy). For pupils with complex needs, we strongly encourage schools to spend this funding on catch-up support to address their individual needs.

Where schools need additional support, such as to improve behaviour, we have an extensive package of support available through our Behaviour Hubs programme.

A national tutoring service

You asked about the role the Department for Education will have in driving momentum and in coordinating and quality assuring the National Tutoring Programme.

The Department takes seriously its responsibility to drive effective and efficient programme delivery across both pillars of the National Tutoring Programme, so as to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils and the best value for money for taxpayers.

We will work very closely with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) on the partners pillar, taking all appropriate steps to ensure that they secure engagement from high-quality tutoring organisations, generate and manage demand from schools for tutoring services, and commission a robust and independent evaluation of the programme. This will meet the dual aims of increasing access to high-quality tutoring for disadvantaged pupils (which evidence tells us offers an excellent return on investment) and increasing schools' appetite in the longer-term to prioritise such interventions when taking decisions about how to spend pupil premium funding to best effect.

We will also work closely with Teach First as they recruit, train and place high-calibre academic mentors in schools serving disadvantaged communities, supporting them to manage the dynamics of supply and demand by facilitating access to networks of qualified teachers and other graduates, and helping to create the conditions for schools to access the offer in the least burdensome way possible.

Throughout the programme, we will work with both organisations to monitor provision carefully. This will involve thorough and regular scrutiny of management information, routine monitoring and management of risks through robust governance arrangements. We will take swift remedial action should any concerns arise in the delivery of tutoring on the ground, and will prioritise day-to-day collaboration with delivery teams to create strong working

relationships.

We already have in place strong safeguarding guidance for those who work with children and any tutors recruited through the programme will have to adhere to the same stringent safeguarding checks. We will work closely with our delivery partners to ensure that tutors adhere to these safeguarding standards across all parts of the programme, including where volunteers are used for tuition.

We will heavily subsidise the cost of tutoring, and schools will be able to use their universal catch-up premium, or other budgets including the pupil premium, to pay the remaining cost – a small proportion of the total. Provision of tutoring services by charitable organisations would be VAT exempt. This is based on [HMRC VAT Notice 701/30](#) which sets out that the supply of education by an eligible body is exempt from VAT. Charities or not for profit organisations are classed as eligible bodies (section 4.3), and section 4.4 and beyond sets out what this means for their supplies of education. However, it is for individual suppliers to understand the VAT position of the services they offer and if they do not believe their service qualifies for exemption, they will charge VAT.

Early years and 16-19 education

We appreciate that all children and young people will have been affected by lost time in education.

On 20 July, the Government confirmed that the National Tutoring Programme would include a **16-19 fund** for school sixth forms, colleges and all other 16-19 providers to provide small group tutoring activity for disadvantaged 16-19 students whose studies have been disrupted as a result of Covid-19. Guidance setting out further detail of this element will be issued shortly and we will continue to work with the sector to establish the best way to support students in making up for time away from the classroom.

The most effective intervention Government can take to address the missed education for children aged 0-5 at a crucial period of cognitive and behavioural development is for children to be in school or nursery. Since 1 June, nurseries have been able to welcome back children of all ages, and from 20 July nurseries will no longer be required to keep children in small, consistent groups. This should make it simpler for nurseries to operate, enable them to be at full capacity, and ensure they can focus on children's wellbeing and development while still keeping children safe. This is based on the scientific advice, and nurseries should still consider how they can minimise mixing. Government is providing an additional £1.15 million grant funding over 6 months to enable our existing Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners to broaden the scope of their Early Years Disadvantage grants to support disadvantaged and vulnerable children transition back into early education, improve their outcomes and focus on parent and child mental health and wellbeing.

Encouraging take up

We will use marketing channels operated by the Department and our delivery partners to drive take-up across the country. We think it unlikely that a Government-led campaign will resonate with pupils and parents, and that school-led targeting of provision will be much more effective both in engaging pupils and sustaining that engagement. However, we will continue to keep this position under review as we go through the summer and into the autumn term.

Schools know their pupils best, and will be most able to identify those who have not engaged with remote education. As such, the department will use its communication channels to engage with schools who will then provide local 'on-the-ground' advocacy for catch-up programmes. This will be the most effective mechanism for engaging pupils and sustaining their engagement over time.

Summer schemes

We appreciate the value of summer holiday programmes and activities for children. Providers who run community activities, holiday clubs, after-school clubs, tuition, and other out-of-school provision for children are able to operate over the summer holiday with safety measures in place.

Our holiday activities and food programme (HAF) is integral to our approach to provide healthy food to children over the summer. It will ensure thousands of disadvantaged children in particular areas of the country have access to healthy meals and holiday activities in summer 2020, building on the success of the 2018 and 2019 programmes.

We are not asking schools to open over the summer holidays as teachers, support staff and headteachers deserve a break, to recharge and rest. However, we are aware that some headteachers may be considering using their catch-up premium to provide summer school activities for their pupils. Where this is the case, they have the flexibility, discretion, and autonomy to decide how they want to do this. To support schools in planning how to use the catch-up premium to best effect, the EEF has produced a guide which includes advice on summer schools and contains a link to a Teach First toolkit specifically focused on summer schools.

The National Citizenship Service (NCS) will be providing a new support offer for 16-17 year olds including the most vulnerable and marginalised young people in particular areas of the country. This will be free to FE colleges and schools and delivered in late summer and throughout autumn for up to 30,000 young people in England. NCS will offer a menu of Life Skills programmes over the summer and into the autumn and sessions will include employability, health and wellbeing, careers guidance, citizenship and skills for independent living.

Tackling the attainment gap

It is widely predicted that the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers will widen – perhaps significantly – as a result of school closures. In practice, this means that, for disadvantaged pupils, the road to academic recovery will be even steeper than for other pupils. The National Tutoring Programme offers a focused source of support throughout the next academic year and we will be encouraging schools to take full advantage of the programme on their pupils' behalf.

Sustained investment through the pupil premium will continue to play a role in improving the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils, alongside the one-off catch-up funding. To support schools in making the greatest impact with the funding available to them, it will be important to equip them with the best possible evidence and the tools to embed it within classroom practice.

That is why we asked the EEF to publish their Covid-19 recovery guide mentioned above, which provides information on the most effective strategies to catch-up on lost education, including delivery of summer support, transition support, supporting great teaching, and supporting parents and carers and access to technology.

To provide further support to schools as they develop and implement their catch-up plans, the EEF will publish additional guidance – the *Catch-up Implementation Guide for Schools* - in August 2020. This document will offer advice for schools on how to implement effective catch-up strategies when they return in September and provide supporting case studies to highlight effective practice.

As with all Government funding, school leaders must be able to account for how this money is being used to achieve our central goal of getting back on track and teaching a normal curriculum as quickly as possible. Given their role in ensuring schools spend funding appropriately and in holding schools to account for educational performance, governors and trustees should scrutinise schools' approaches to catch-up from September, including their plans for and use of catch-up funding. This should include consideration of whether schools are spending this funding in line with their catch-up priorities and ensuring appropriate transparency for parents.

Ofsted will conduct a programme of non-graded visits to some schools during the autumn, during which inspectors will discuss how the school is bringing pupils back into full-time education. These visits may offer an opportunity to discuss how schools plan to spend their catch-up funding. Ofsted plans to resume routine inspections in January 2021, with the exact timing being kept under review. When routine inspections restart, Ofsted will make judgements about the quality of education being provided, and that will include how leaders are using their funding (including catch-up funding) to ensure the curriculum has a positive impact on all pupils.

Because of the universal nature of this additional funding, there are challenges in evaluating the impact of the catch-up fund in isolation from other

funding received by schools. We are currently exploring options, including whether it will be possible to evaluate the impact of the catch-up funding using existing data collection routes. Although we will need to be mindful of placing additional burdens on schools in the next academic year, we are also exploring whether we should proceed with new data collection, for example through an external evaluation which would provide further insight into how this additional funding has supported catch-up.

On the National Tutoring Programme specifically, the EEF will commission a full externally led impact evaluation.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nick Gibb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N" and "G".

Rt. Hon. Nick Gibb MP
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