



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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2 September 2020

Thank you for your letter regarding access to online lessons for deaf pupils.

The accessibility of remote education to all pupils is very important to the Department and we expect all schools to have remote education contingency plans in place by the end of September. The Department published guidance on Thursday 2 July that sets out what is expected from schools for their remote education provision, including details of the statutory duty under equalities legislation to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children. This guidance was updated on 28 August, and can be found via the link: <https://tinyurl.com/y858dca8>.

The Government has sought to do everything possible to support schools and families to educate children and young people remotely during the period when schools were closed to the majority of their pupils. We have published a comprehensive range of advice and guidance, including a list of high quality online resources, which have been assessed with support from some of the country's leading educational experts to help pupils learn at home. The list includes resources for those pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), many of which contain activities, games or tasks that would meet the needs of deaf pupils. The full list can be accessed via the link: <https://tinyurl.com/rbxdwml>.

We also recognise the importance of schools learning from each other's practice in their approach to remote learning. Our guidance includes examples of how a range of education settings, including special schools, have adapted their remote offer for SEND pupils.

As part of our commitment to support schools and families to educate children and young people remotely we are also supporting sector-led initiatives such as Oak National Academy, which was brought together in early April by over

40 teachers, their schools and other education organisations. The Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy both for the summer term of this academic year, and then for the 2020-21 academic year to provide video lessons for Reception to Year 11.

Additionally, specialist content for pupils with SEND was launched on 4th May. This covers communication and language, numeracy, creative arts, independent living, occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech and language therapy.

To support pupils with hearing loss, the majority of the lessons supplied by Oak are captioned. For younger age groups, where their reading ability might make captions harder to understand, lessons are also signed in British Sign Language, delivered in partnership with ITV and the National Deaf Children's Society. All lessons are pre-recorded and can be accessed at any time on any internet-connected device. Depending on the lesson, faces of teachers can be seen which may assist pupils with lip reading. Some of these lessons are also supported with slides, quizzes and worksheets that are text based. Oak's provision will be continuing next year, and they aim to caption all new lessons.

Finally, we have also made £37.3 million available to directly support families with children who have complex needs to access essential equipment through small grants administered by the Family Fund. These grants can provide laptops and tablets enabled with the relevant assistive technology packages to assist the learning and education of deaf children and young people, alongside home learning packages for the whole family to train in the use of their child's communication package.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for raising your concerns regarding access to online lessons for deaf pupils with my officials in the Department. I look forward to being able to provide any further help and information that you might require and that you consider this a direct and considered response.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Gibb', written in a cursive style.

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