



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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I would like to update you on the Department for Education's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak between 29 September and 6 October.

Remote Education

The best place for children and young people to learn is in the classroom. The Government made it a national priority to get all pupils back into schools and colleges full-time and I have been so pleased to see millions of them returning over the past few weeks.

The weekly attendance data published by the Department continues to show over 99% of state-funded schools are open. However, small numbers of students have been self-isolating in line with public health advice. It is vital these students have access to high quality and consistent remote education, and I will do everything I can to support our schools, colleges, and young people in making sure that is the case. Week 40 data for attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2020-week-40>

On the 1 October, the Department announced further remote education support for schools, colleges, teachers and pupils across England to help children and young people learn at home if they have to self-isolate. The support package will be available over the coming months to schools or FE providers seeking additional support and details of the package can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

For schools, the support package includes an additional 100,000 laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and development resources for staff including a good practice guide and school-led webinars. The support package for FE providers includes 80 grants of £1,000 to Further Education (FE) providers across England, providing additional training and support for mentors and coaches specialising in assisting teachers with remote education.

The package is designed to help schools and colleges build on and deliver their existing plans where individual or groups of pupils are unable to attend school because of coronavirus in line with guidance and the law. This adds to existing support including the resources available from Oak National Academy. The Department has published guidance on remote education good practice which should be used by staff who are responsible for the curriculum and its delivery in schools; it can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-good-practice>

I also want to make clear that schools have a duty to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children who are unable to attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19). I have therefore issued a continuity direction which provides an express legal duty on schools to provide remote education in these circumstances. The Government wants to ensure that there is no doubt about the roles and responsibilities within the system for providing remote education. The Direction provides greater certainty for all involved in the education sector, including parents, teachers, and schools themselves. It provides no additional expectations of quality, beyond those published in guidance and can be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923539/Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction - Explanatory Note.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923539/Remote_Education_Temporary_Continuity_Direction_-_Explanatory_Note.pdf)

Other key updates

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

The Department has updated the guidance on what all schools will need to do during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak from the start of the autumn term which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

The Department has announced dates for new remote education webinars on 6 October for primary teachers and 8 October for secondary teachers; full details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-webinars>

The Department has updated the guidance on how schools, colleges, academy trusts and local authorities can access digital devices for children who are learning remotely and also the guidance for local authorities, academy trusts and schools on managing Department for Education (DfE) devices provided for children, families and young adults most in need. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-laptops-and-tablets-for-children-who-cannot-attend-school-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19> and here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-provided-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

The Department has updated the guidance for educational settings, and their students and staff, who are travelling or planning to travel during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The latest advice can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-advice-for-educational-settings/coronavirus-travel-guidance-for-educational-settings>

The Department has updated the guidance transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020 which sets out what local authorities will need to do during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak from the start of the autumn term. The guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>

The Department has updated the guidance for schools and colleges on who should enter students for autumn exams, the health arrangements for exams and the support DfE is providing. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responsibility-for-autumn-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-series>

The Department has updated the policy paper detailing the range of opportunities to gain new skills, undertake work placements, additional learning and career development support for students who have to defer their studies which can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/package-of-support-for-students-who-have-to-defer-their-studies>

The Department has updated the guidance for higher education providers in England on when and how to reopen their campuses and buildings which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>

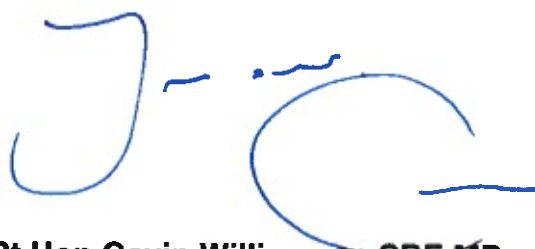
Ofsted has published the first report in a new series of briefing looking at how schools are managing pupils' return to education under the current COVID-19 restrictions. Key findings from 121 pilot visits to schools and the 70 children's homes visited during September found that school leaders are working hard to make sure pupils are catching up with their education in difficult circumstances and homes are finding new

ways to support children. Full briefing notes from the Ofsted COVID-19 series can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-covid-19-series>

Ofqual has updated the exam system contingency plan for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland which is in place to deal with any major disruption that may affect exam candidates. The updated document now include links to coronavirus (COVID-19) related contingency, health and support pages published by the Department for Education, Welsh Government and government in Northern Ireland and can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

Ofqual has updated the extraordinary regulatory framework: General Qualifications, COVID-19 Conditions and Requirements which sets out their regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering general qualifications during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The regulation can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extraordinary-regulatory-framework-general-qualifications-covid-19-conditions-and-requirements>

I hope you find this information useful.

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

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education