



## Education Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From Robert Halfon MP, Chair

Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP  
Minister for School Standards  
Department for Education  
20 Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT

23 October 2020

### **Remote learning and supplementary points**

Dear Nick,

We were grateful for your appearance and time with us this week. We wish to follow-up on one issue raised during the session on remote education provision and also set out below the points on which you undertook to write.

We discussed the recent departmental Direction which makes it clear that schools now have a legal duty to provide remote education for children who are unable to attend school due to Covid-19. You mentioned that the expectations around the quality of remote education have been set out by the Department in guidance. Can you confirm whether the guidance itself has statutory force or if it is merely an expectation of what should be provided? Either way, how will you ensure that schools meet this standard and what is Ofsted's role here?

Can you set out what parents can do if they think their child's school is not meeting these expectations but the school disputes this? Other than involving the regional schools commissioner, what immediate actions can parents take to report such concerns so that a quick investigation and resolution can be found? For instance, is the Department providing a central point of contact for parents wishing to report concerns? What mechanism is in place to ensure schools are meeting their legal duties in this regard?

In addition, you said you would write on the following:

- With information on any assessments taken in respect of pupils with SEND requirements, such as those with dyslexia and dyspraxia, who may be particularly disadvantaged through the cancellation of exams and the use of centre-assessed grades.
- On the numbers of tutors and academic mentors that have been recruited and deployed to schools and a regional breakdown of where these new recruits are based.

- On the support the Department is providing to those local authorities with school deficits which are having difficulty resolving these.
- Information on orphan schools which are unsponsored and not part of a Multi-academy Trust.

Finally, you also said you would write to us after the spending review to set out the position of both components of the catch-up funding, confirming how much is to be spent during the current academic year.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Halfon'.

**Robert Halfon MP**  
**Chair of the Education Committee**