



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
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9th
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I would like to update you on the Department for Education's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak between 20 October and 4 November 2020.

New national COVID restrictions

The Government continues to prioritise the well-being and long-term futures of children and young people. Schools and Colleges, including special schools, other specialist provision and alternative provision, will remain open for all children and young people to access education as they have since September.

As you know, time out of school leads to both lost learning now and affects children's ability to learn in future. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in the classroom far outweigh the low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) and schools can take action to reduce risks still further. Following the Chief Medical Officer's advice I continue to believe the very best place for children to be is in schools – it is vital for their education and wellbeing, particularly for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

This Government is committed to protecting working parents and our dedicated early years sector. Attending early education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and supports children's social and emotional development. We are keeping early years providers open because we know how important it is for children's wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers and staff, and in supporting parents to work.

Where reasonably necessary to enable parents to work, or for the purposes of respite

care, out of school activities may continue to operate if their primary purpose is providing registered childcare and other childcare activities (including wraparound care). Youth support services, including 1-1 youth work and support groups, may also continue to operate. All other out of school activities should close for the duration of the lockdown.

The Government are also increasing the safety net available to families by ensuring that working parents who are on the extended Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will still be eligible for childcare support even if their income falls below the minimum threshold requirement.

Parents are also able to form a childcare bubble with another household for the purposes of informal childcare, where the child is 13 or under. This will allow informal childcare arrangements to continue with another household as long as they are part of a consistent childcare relationship.

For colleges with 16 to 19-year-old students the Department's guidance remains that on-site delivery should count for the majority of planned learning hours and there is no change in existing arrangements for high needs learners up to age 25. The Department is encouraging adult providers to move more provision online, although there will still be circumstances in which face to face provision is appropriate, particularly where online provision is not feasible.

It has been important to keep universities open during the pandemic in order to provide high quality education to students. The Department is asking providers to review their provision, and identify opportunities for increasing online delivery where appropriate, while recognising the continued benefits of face-to-face learning where possible, particularly in subjects with a practical component. The Department's guidance for higher education (HE) providers on the new national restrictions is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>.

Like everyone, students should remain in their current accommodation, they must not move back and forward between their permanent home and student home during term time, only returning home at the end of term for Christmas. The Department is working with universities and the Department for Transport to make sure that all students are supported to return home at the end of the lockdown period and spend Christmas with their loved ones, if they choose to do so. The Department will be publishing guidance on the end of term shortly and I will update you further at that time.

Both myself and the Prime Minister have been clear that exams will go ahead next summer and we intend for the Autumn series of exams to continue as planned, as exams are the fairest and most accurate way to measure a pupil's attainment.

Vulnerable children and young people have been prioritised since the beginning of the outbreak and will remain a key priority. Children's services and social care provision will continue as they have been in order to protect and support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people. The Department continues to recommend that no one should have to leave care during this period if they do not feel confident to do so. Where young people do leave care during the national lockdown, it should be right for that young person and take account of their wishes and feelings. Settings they are moving into should be safe in relation to risk factors arising from coronavirus (COVID-19).

Since my last letter, the Department's advice to staff, children, and young people who are clinically vulnerable or have underlying health conditions but are not clinically extremely vulnerable remains that they should continue to attend their education settings in line with current guidance. The advice for staff, children, and young people who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves should continue to attend education settings.

The Government's advice to individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable is to work from home where possible and not to go into work. Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are encouraged to stay at home as much as possible but are encouraged to go outside for exercise.

The Department's advice for staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable is to work from home and not to go into work. Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend education whilst the national restrictions are in place. Schools will need to make appropriate arrangements to enable them to continue their education at home. Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend education. Parents of clinically extremely vulnerable children will be receiving a letter shortly confirming this advice.

The PHE and DHSC guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

The Department's guidance on the new national measures can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020#early-years-and-childcare>

Attendance

The Department's analysis from week 43 data indicates that 862 pupils out of every thousand were in school with 99% of state funded schools open. The Department has

not published data for schools in week 44 as most settings were on half term. Some schools were on half term during week 43 which means estimates are not directly comparable to previous weeks. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for week 43 and for early years settings only for week 44 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-43> and week 44 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-44>

Other key updates

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

The Department has published research with childcare providers in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic which can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/survey-of-childcare-and-early-years-providers-and-covid-19-coronavirus>

Ofsted has published the number of registered early years and childcare providers reporting one or more confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19). If there are multiple reported cases at a setting at one time, a notification can include more than one confirmed case. This means that the number of notifications received does not necessarily correlate with the number of confirmed cases in a setting. These reports are published fortnightly and will run until April 2021, subject to review. The latest report can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930654/Reported coronavirus COVID-19 cases by registered early years and childcare settings.csv/preview](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930654/Reported_coronavirus_COVID-19_cases_by_registered_early_years_and_childcare_settings.csv/preview)

The Department has updated the guidance for parents and carers about going back to schools, nurseries, and colleges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak which can be accessed at: <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>

The Department has updated the guidance on actions for early years and childcare providers, and schools during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures> and here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

The Department has updated the guidance on preventing and controlling infection, including the use of PPE, in education, childcare and children's social care settings during the coronavirus outbreak. The updated guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care>

The Department has updated the get help with remote education guidance, the remote education good practice guidance, and the example lessons for remote teaching which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>, here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-good-practice>, and here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-lessons-for-remote-teaching>

The Department has updated the information about how many laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers they have delivered or dispatched to local authorities and academy trusts as at 23 October 2020. The Department does not hold centrally recorded information on the onward distribution to families, children, and young people. This process is managed by the LAs, trusts, and schools themselves. The latest report can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data>

The Department has included a coronavirus (COVID-19) update to the guidance on how much PE and sport premium funding schools receive and advice on how it should be spent. The full guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pe-and-sport-premium-for-primary-schools>

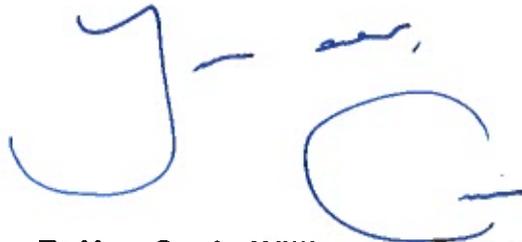
The Department has updated the guidance on the national assessment and accreditation system (NAAS) following the government's announcement that the UK would enter a stricter period of social distancing to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) all NAAS assessment centres will be closed until spring 2021. The updated guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-assessment-and-accreditation-system-naas>

The Department updated the policy paper on higher education restructuring regime (HERR). HERR is a scheme for higher education providers in England who are at risk of insolvency as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). An advisory board was appointed on 12 October 2020. Details of the scheme and board appointments can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-restructuring-regime> and here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-higher-education-restructuring-regime-herr-advisory-board>

The Department has updated the policy paper detailing the package of 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>

I hope you find this information useful.

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

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education