



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Your ref: 2020-00xxxxxPOSoS

23 December 2020

I would like to update you on the Department for Education's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak between 25 November and 21 December 2020.

Testing for school and college pupils and staff

You will be aware that since my last update the Government has made a number of announcements relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) testing in schools and colleges.

As you may recall, earlier this month the Government announced targeted testing for secondary school, college students and staff in parts of north east London, Essex and Kent to combat a rapid increase in cases among the 11-18 year-olds by identifying asymptomatic cases and helping to break chains of transmission.

From 11 December mobile testing units were deployed, home test kits were distributed and staff, students and their families were urged to get tested.

This additional testing capacity underlines our commitment to ensuring that education is a national priority, because that is in the best interests of students' progress, development and wellbeing.

Following the announcement, the Department also published a set of questions and answers which can be accessed at: <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/11/testing->

[in-north-east-london-kent-and-essex-your-questions-answered/](#)

In addition to the above, the Health Secretary and I announced that from January staff and students will have access to lateral flow rapid testing to help keep them in school and college from the start of the spring term. This programme will include special schools and alternative provision.

We strongly believe that this approach will help identify asymptomatic cases limiting the spread of the virus and staff and students who are close contacts of positive cases will also be eligible for daily testing, preventing the need for self-isolation. Only if a daily test returns a positive result will the staff member or student need to isolate.

We are determined to support all schools and colleges with the roll out of mass testing as quickly as possible over the spring term. This huge expansion of rapid testing for those working in education is a milestone moment in our work to keep schools and colleges open for all.

Training materials and webinars will be made available to secondary schools and colleges so they can start to use the new testing capacity as soon as possible.

Guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges including latest information about how they can start to test pupils and students from January is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-asymptomatic-testing-in-schools-and-colleges>

Further to the above, on 17 December the Government confirmed that all secondary schools and colleges in England will be able to test more of their staff and students in a round of free coronavirus testing from the first week of January.

Students in exam year groups, vulnerable children and children of critical workers will all attend school or college in person from the start of term, as will all students in primary, special and alternative provision schools and colleges. Vocational exams scheduled for the week of 4 January will go ahead as planned.

Secondary schools and colleges will operate a staggered return, offering all non-exam year groups full-time remote education, as close as possible to that which students would get in class, during the first week of term, with face-to-face education for all starting on 11 January.

Schools and colleges will be able to establish testing to offer students two rapid tests three days apart, with positive results confirmed by a lab-based PCR test. Guidance will shortly be provided to schools and colleges on how to set up and staff the testing sites. Armed forces personnel will support directly through planning with schools and

colleges. Reasonable workforce costs will be reimbursed. Those students attending face-to-face education in the first week of term will be offered the first testing dates.

I understand that it has taken a phenomenal effort from everyone to ensure 99% of schools have been open each week since the start of term and I am confident that testing on this scale will bring real benefits to education, meaning more children, teachers and staff can stay in their classes in schools and colleges without the need to self-isolate.

End of term arrangements

As mentioned in my previous correspondence to you, the Government is clear that it is vital for all children to be in school where possible. The Chief Medical Officer has highlighted the damage caused to children's education, development and mental health from not being in school.

We are aware however that teachers and staff have worked tirelessly over the last term. Crucially this has included their important role in contact tracing, to help in the national effort to limit the spread of the virus, which we know has led to additional work over weekends and holidays.

We have worked closely with NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England to understand the public health requirements on school and college leaders over the Christmas break and in our attempt to limit the impact of the extra contact tracing work over the Christmas holidays, we made clear that from 6 days after the final day of teaching, schools are not asked to play a role in any contact tracing. This is to ensure staff get the time off they need and deserve.

On 8 December we announced that schools may wish to use an INSET day, to make Friday 18 December a non-teaching day, bringing the last day children are in school to 17 December, and the six-day window to an end on 23 December. Colleges could use their existing flexibilities to the same effect. We recommended schools make use of this day for staff training.

Where schools chose to make Friday 18 December a non-teaching day, they were asked to communicate this to parents and carers as far in advance as possible. In all circumstances, teaching time must be made up at another point in the academic year and schools should not limit attendance at school before Friday 18 December.

I fully recognise that schools and colleges across the country have worked hard to remain open, implementing safety measures and scaling up remote education provision for those children who are self-isolating. Using an INSET day in this way ensures no in-person education is missed, as the time will be caught up at another point in the year.

Importance of exams

You may have noted in recent weeks an increased media interest in the Government's plans for next year's exams, including calls for exams to be cancelled due to the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

I strongly believe in the value of exams as the best and fairest way of giving young people the opportunity to show what they know and can do which is why it's so important they take place next summer.

Since the easing of the first national restrictions, getting children back to school has been a national priority, with 99% of schools open, and legislation in place to ensure all self-isolating pupils receive an education at home.

But I do recognise that this year isn't business as usual and I know that students are facing unprecedented disruption to their learning. That is why exams will be different next year, and why we are taking exceptional steps to ensure they are as fair as possible.

You will know that in preparation for next year's exams, we have already built in three weeks of extra teaching time for most exams in 2021, providing catch-up support, and continued work on a further package of pressure-reducing measures for students and staff.

In addition to that I announced that in recognition of the challenges faced by students this year, grades will be more generous, students will be given advance notice of some topic areas, and steps will be taken to ensure every student receives a grade, even if they miss a paper due to self-isolation or illness. This will include additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if the main exams or assessments are missed due to illness or self-isolation. For some subjects, students will be given support material in the exams, such as formulae and equations. The exact approach will vary by subject.

We are also forming a new expert group to look at differential learning and to monitor the variation in the impact of the pandemic on students across the country.

I would also like to assure you that students taking vocational and technical qualifications will also see adaptations to ensure parity between general and vocational qualifications. Some vocational qualifications will require more varied adaptations due to the different qualification types.

All of these measures recognise that while teachers have gone above and beyond to support their pupils during a difficult period, some young people have had their

teaching disrupted more than others and will need extra support to catch up on the curriculum and achieve their potential in exams.

These steps follow extensive engagement with Ofqual, exam boards and senior leaders across the education sector and, as ever, I am determined to support students, parents and teachers in these unprecedented times and hope the above measures will give young people the clarity and confidence they need to achieve every success.

The Department's guidance on what schools, colleges and students need to know about taking GCSEs, AS and A levels and other qualifications in summer 2021 can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-support-the-summer-2021-exams>

Following the announcement, the Department also published a set of questions and answers on what these measures mean for students, teachers, and parents. The Q&A can be accessed at: <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/04/exams-2021-your-questions-answered/>

Following the decision to make exams in 2021 less daunting for GCSE, AS and A level students, Ofqual sought views about advance information that will be given to students to help them focus their revision before exams next summer and has launched an open consultation on how the proposed changes should be used.

In particular, Ofqual was seeking views on the broad principles that:

- advance information should not be so detailed that a student is able to memorise answers to write in an exam;
- the information provided before an exam should not encourage students to overly narrow their learning; and
- the qualifications should differentiate between students on the basis of their performance

A short survey was open until 11:45pm on Sunday 20 December. Additional information about the consultation can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/support-materials-and-advance-information-in-2021-gcse-as-and-a-level-exams>

Ofsted's return to inspections

Following the exams 2021 announcement, Ofsted has begun to set out plans for its return to inspection in schools and further education providers, as well as plans for inspections and regulatory work in early years and social care. This will be a phased return, with no graded inspections for education or social care providers planned

before the summer term.

The key development is that from January, Ofsted will resume monitoring inspections of maintained schools and academies judged inadequate at their previous inspection and some schools graded as requires improvement. These monitoring inspections will not result in a grade.

Similarly, in January Ofsted will resume monitoring visits to further education providers that would be monitored in normal times, in particular those graded requires improvement and inadequate, and new providers.

Over the coming months, Ofsted will discuss the approach to routine inspection in 2021 with sector representatives and test it through a series of pilot visits, where necessary.

Return to universities

In November I wrote to you with an update on mass testing arrangements at universities to enable students to return home safely over the festive period. Earlier last week the Government announced further plans for student return to universities after Christmas to help protect those around them and to reduce transmission of Covid-19.

The new guidance published by the Department sets out how higher education providers should manage student returns over a five-week period between 4 January and 7 February. For example, medical students on placements or practical courses with a need for in-person teaching should return in line with their planned start dates whilst the remaining courses should be offered online from the beginning of term so students can continue their studies from home. The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/students-returning-to-higher-education-from-spring-term>

We have also outlined that all students should be offered Covid-19 tests when they return to university to help identify and isolate those who are asymptomatic but could spread the virus. All universities will be offered testing facilities to give students two lateral flow tests, three days apart, with results turned around within an hour to help control the spread of the virus. These measures will be crucial to manage returns carefully and protect students, staff and local communities while reducing disruption to education.

To help students most in need of support in these exceptional circumstances the Government has also announced a one-off fund of up to £20 million.

We are asking universities to tailor plans to best suit the needs of their own student population. They should also consider prioritising those who may need to return to campus earlier for other reasons such as students who do not have access to appropriate accommodation or study space.

We are also asking universities to continue to provide additional support to students who are isolating to ensure they can access food and medical supplies if needed, along with mental health support.

The Department has provided a set of questions and answers for all students regarding testing and guidelines around travelling home for the Christmas holidays available at: <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/03/university-testing-your-questions-answered/>

Spending Review 2020 and commitment to rewarding teachers

At 2020 Spending Review announced on 25 November, the Chancellor confirmed the Government's commitment to increase the core schools budget by £7.1 billion by 2022-23, compared to 2019-20 funding levels. This year's £2.9 billion cash increase in core resource funding for the Department from 2020-21 to 2021-22 represents a 3.2 per cent average real terms increase per year since 2019-20.

You know how passionate I am about reforming further education and I am therefore particularly pleased to say that the Chancellor also confirmed the Government's 2019 settlement to increase school funding and announced plans to invest in Further Education and continue delivering opportunities for lifelong learning, helping those who want or need to reskill to do so at any stage of their life or career.

You will also be aware that the Spending Review announcement included the public sector pay freeze. Whilst I am fully aware that the public sector pay freeze does affect teachers in 2021/22, I wanted to reassure you that pay rises from performance related progression and promotion will continue. In recent years, around a third of experienced teachers who were earning below the maximum of their pay range received a pay rise over and above the pay award due to progression or promotion. Early career teachers are typically eligible for performance related pay progression each year.

In addition, earlier this year we announced the biggest pay rise the teaching profession has seen since 2005, with above-inflation rises to the pay ranges for every single teacher in the country. This September 2020 pay award was worth 3.1% on average, recognising the vital role teachers are playing in protecting children's futures.

We remain committed to achieving a £30k starting salary for teachers. Although a pay restraint means progress towards this salary commitment is slower, this year starting salaries have already increased by 5.5%.

New funding to support schools and colleges during Covid pandemic

In my previous correspondence to you I highlighted some of the financial support the Government has already provided to help schools respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19).

As already mentioned, keeping schools and colleges open is a national priority and I know how hard school and college staff and leaders have worked over the past nine months, which is why last week I launched the Covid workforce fund, to support schools and colleges facing significant budget pressures and staff absences.

This new funding comes on top of our funding for schools facing exceptional costs during the summer months, the £1 billion Covid catch up fund to help all children make up for lost learning, and the core school funding that is seeing the biggest increase in a decade.

The fund which will be backdated to 1 November and cover the current half term is designed for schools and colleges facing significant funding pressure, and will cover the costs of high levels of staff absences over a minimum threshold, to help ensure schools and colleges can remain open. Guidance setting out further detail is due to be published shortly.

I understand that throughout the pandemic, schools and colleges have been rising to the challenges presented by coronavirus, maintaining high quality education and support for their pupils. The Government will continue to review the pressures schools and colleges are facing into next term, and continue to explore how mass testing can play a greater role in keeping them open in the new year for all pupils to attend full time.

Laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people

On 20 December the Government confirmed that over 560,000 devices were delivered to schools and councils in 2020. The further purchase of more than 440,000 devices means that over one million will now be provided, helping schools and colleges throughout the pandemic and making the programme one of the largest of its kind in the world. The programme will also be extended to include 16 to 19-year-olds in schools and further education.

This achievement will help ensure that students have access to high-quality remote education if they need it. I believe that providing one million devices is hugely

significant, not only in the context of supporting children through the pandemic, but an investment in tech for our schools, colleges and children for years to come.

Schools will start being invited to order devices from January, even if they have not had to send pupils home to self-isolate. Laptops and tablets are currently delivered within two working days of orders being placed and that will remain the case going into the first week of January. We will keep schools up to date on delivery times should they be impacted by the level of demand but we expect that the vast majority of devices will be delivered to schools and colleges by Easter.

You may also want to note that almost 70,000 pupils are now confirmed to have enrolled in the National Tutoring Programme, as the government continues to step up work to support young people.

The Government is now investing over £300 million to support remote education and social care, including providing devices and internet access to pupils who need it most. This is alongside work to help young people catch up through the National Tutoring Programme.

High-quality tutoring of the kind offered by the programme has been proven to help young people catch up by as much as 3-5 months lost learning, from just one term's worth of tutoring.

New free adult courses

You may remember that in September 2020 the Government announced a Lifetime Skills Guarantee, aiming to significantly expand post-18 education and training to level up and prepare workers for post-COVID economy. This reform will give adults the chance to take free college courses valued by employers and transform the training and skills system.

Adults without an A-Level or equivalent qualification will be offered a free, fully-funded college course, providing them with skills valued by employers, and the opportunity to study at a time and location that suits them.

I am now very pleased to confirm that this month the Department has announced almost 400 fully-funded courses, ranging from engineering to healthcare, to conservation. They will be available to adults without a full qualification at Level 3 (A-level equivalent) from April 2021 to help them gain sought-after skills and open up further job opportunities.

This announcement marks a very important step in the development of the Government's landmark Lifetime Skills Guarantee and is backed by £95 million from

the £2.5 billion National Skills Fund, which is financing programmes that both support the immediate economic recovery and help meet future skills needs.

Bridging the gap between education and employment for young people with SEND

In November Children's Minister Vicky Ford announced that new research has been published, aimed at helping to bridge the gap between education and employment for young people with educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The rapid assessment review brings together a body of research on assistive technology for the first time, helping schools and colleges better understand how to harness the benefits of existing tools and approaches to raise the outcomes of pupils with SEND.

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic pupils with SEND are benefitting from life changing assistive technology which helps to improve their communication, learning and overall independence. The Minister praised schools, colleges and the technology sector for their response to the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially for vulnerable students with the most complex needs, but also urged companies to make sure all their products and practices are fully inclusive.

The full set of research and analysis papers on insights on the use of assistive technology in educational settings by pupils and students with SEND can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assistive-technology-at-stakeholder-reports>

Package of support for vulnerable families

In early December Minister Vicky Ford has also announced an investment of almost £4.4 million to extend Covid-19 response programmes run by major children's charities, as well as setting out plans to create a National Centre for Family Hubs that will improve families' access to vital services across the country.

Vulnerable families will benefit from a multi-million pound investment in programmes aimed at reaching 'hidden' children and the creation of a national centre to improve early education and health services.

An extra £4.2 million will go to a coalition of charities to continue the 'See, Hear, Respond' programme until March 2021, supporting vulnerable children who fall below the threshold for statutory support and early help, including those in need of crisis support due to the pandemic. This additional funding will reach an estimated 15,000 more children and young people, as well as 11,000 parents and carers in need of extra help.

Recognising the need to improve the long-term support for vulnerable families, Minister Ford has also announced plans to launch the procurement process for a new National Centre for Family Hubs and Integrated Services, to support areas and councils set up new family hubs. This builds on the Government's manifesto commitment to champion these hubs and better serve vulnerable families with integrated health and education services.

In addition to that, the Minister has confirmed a further £190,000 for the NSPCC's helpline which provides advice to adults who have concerns about the welfare of a child.

Minister Ford will also announced an evaluation innovation fund, inviting suppliers to work alongside family hubs to design and deliver robust evaluations of their effectiveness and value for money. This will help national and local organisations understand which models work most effectively and can be replicated, as well as the best way to integrate a range of family services.

Attendance

The Department's analysis from week 50 data indicates that 846 pupils out of every thousand were in school with 99.2% of state funded schools open. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for week 50 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-50>

The Department's analysis from week 49 data indicates that 855 pupils out of every thousand were in school with 99.5% of state funded schools open. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for week 49 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-49>

The Department's analysis from week 48 data indicates that 835 pupils out of every thousand were in school with 99.2% of state funded schools open. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for week 48 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-48>

The Department's analysis from week 47 data indicates that 829 pupils out of every thousand were in school with 99% of state funded schools open. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for week 47 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-47](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2020-week-47)

Other key updates

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

The Department has published contingency framework guidance for local authorities, childcare, and education settings (excluding universities). The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-contingency-framework-for-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings-excluding-universities>

The Department has published further education and skills national statistics on learner participation and achievements in England for the 2019 to 2020 academic year, including additional official statistics covering the coronavirus outbreak. The publication can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-november-2020>

The Department has published official statistics on outcomes of learners completing further education training between 2017 and 2018. The publication can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-outcome-based-success-measures-2017-to-2018>

The Department has published 2020 education and training statistics for the UK, including data on schools, attainment, qualifications gained, education expenditure, further education and higher education in the UK. The publication can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-and-training-statistics-for-the-uk-2020>

The Department has published 'Get help with remote education' guidance on accessing guidance, resources and support for teachers and school leaders on educating pupils and students during coronavirus (COVID-19). The guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>

The Department has published the guidance on National Skills Fund which aims to help adults to train and gain the valuable skills they need to improve their job prospects and support the economy. The publication can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-skills-fund>

The Department has published holiday activities and food programme guidance with information for local authorities who will receive funding to support disadvantaged children during the 2021 Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. The guidance can

be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme>

The Department has published research and analysis on behavioural insights and engagement with technical education. The findings from a one-off behavioural insights study exploring what improves motivation and engagement with technical education can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behavioural-insights-and-engagement-with-technical-education>

The Department has launched an open consultation seeking views on proposed changes to the statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' with a view to making changes for September 2021. The consultation can be accessed at: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-in-schools-team/keeping-children-safe-in-education-schools-and-col/>

The Department has updated the guidance for schools and colleges on who should enter students for exams, the health arrangements for exams and the support DfE is providing. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responsibility-for-autumn-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-series>

The Department has updated the guidance on funding and financial support available for education, childcare, and children's social care organisations. The guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care>

The Department has updated the Initial Teacher Training Guidance with a link to Coronavirus (COVID-19) contingency framework for education and childcare settings guidance. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-initial-teacher-training-itt>

The Department has updated the policy paper on package of support for students who have to defer their studies outlining a range of opportunities to gain new skills, undertake work placements, additional learning and career development support with added information about High Speed 2 virtual work experience opportunities. The paper 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 on approved key stage 4 qualifications, discount codes and point scores for reporting in the 2014 to 2022 school and college performance tables. The latest update includes an added link to national, regional and local authority level statistics, including changes to how key stage 4 discounting is calculated for 2020, after the government announced that all exams were cancelled

for 2020. The guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-4-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores>

The Department has updated the guidance on how to access school-led webinars on remote education to help share good practice. The guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-webinars>

The Department has updated the 'Get help with technology during coronavirus (COVID-19)' guidance with information on how to get a grant and support to use a digital education platform. The guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

The Department has updated its school governance correspondence relating to governance in maintained schools and academy trusts in England which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-governance-update>

The Department has updated the guidance on actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak with updates on Ofsted inspections, parent and child groups, and local restriction tiers and contingency framework, and changed eligibility for 30 hours entitlement and tax-free childcare. The guidance can be accessed at:

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

The Department has updated the guidance on actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak with updated sections on 'Assessment and accountability', 'Contingency planning for remote education' (with a link to the contingency framework) and 'Self-isolation and shielding'. The guidance can be found at:

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

The Department has updated provisional A level and other results for 16-to-18-year olds at the end of their final year. The statistics can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results-2019-to-2020-provisional>

The Department has updated statistics on the achievements of young people at the end of key stage 4 in England, in the 2019 to 2020 academic year which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2020>

The Department has updated the guidance on our approach to school and college accountability, performance tables and data during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak with 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): school and college accountability for the 2020 to 2021 academic year'. The full set of guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-school-and-college-performance-measures>

The Department has updated the guidance on actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak with updates on ensuring access to education on-site for students who need it, the expectations for education provided remotely, examinations and assessments, qualification achievement rates and inspections. The guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision>

The Department has updated the exceptional costs associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance with added details of how schools can claim for funding through the second claims window. The guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools>

The Department has updated a policy paper, setting out how the government will support and intervene to improve financial resilience and quality in colleges. The update covers details of emergency funding and/or insolvency funding given to 7 institutions in the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The paper can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-oversight-support-and-intervention>

The Department has updated the statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The updates include factual changes in relation to information sharing, homelessness duty and references to domestic abuse. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015' and 'Working Together: transitional guidance' has now been removed. The full guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

The Department has updated the early years foundation stage statutory framework (EYFS) on standards that school and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5. The update includes a link to Ofsted's operational notes, which set out in further detail, how providers will be inspected from January 2021 and provided further clarity on the definition of 'reasonable endeavours'. The framework can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework>

The Department has updated the non-statutory guidance for employers and staff in schools who want to make arrangements for flexible working. It includes an updated definition of flexible working and the process for requesting flexible working, including a clearer distinction between statutory and non-statutory requests. Information on the considerations for addressing potential challenges to implementing and requesting flexible working has also been updated. The full guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flexible-working-in-schools>

The Department has updated coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for higher education providers with information on student movements in December 2020, the return of students from January 2021 and NHS Test and Trace channels. The key update covers the latest information on isolation. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>

The Department has updated the guidance on full opening for special schools and other specialist settings. The change includes the updated isolation period from 14 days to 10 days from the day after an individual tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). The full guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>

The Department has updated the guidance for schools and further education (FE) providers on the initial supply of coronavirus (COVID-19) home testing kits for pupils, teachers and staff. The changes cover the updated isolation period from 14 days to 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive, in the positive and negative result sections. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-home-test-kits-for-schools-and-fe-providers>

The Department has updated the guidance on what parents and carers need to know about going back to schools, nurseries and colleges in the autumn term during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak with the updated isolation period from 14 days to 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive, in the 'self-isolation' and 'actions that nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges will take' sections. The guidance can be found 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 attendance guidance for schools with the updated isolation period from 14 days to 10 days from the day after the individual tested

positive. The guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

The Department has updated its transparency data on vulnerable children and young people survey, summarising local authority survey in England to help understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on children's social care. The recent update includes an addition of 'Vulnerable children and young people survey: waves 1 to 14'. The publication can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vulnerable-children-and-young-people-survey>

The Department and Cabinet Office has updated the critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings guidance to reflect the latest guidance on the contingency framework for education and childcare settings. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published the guidance for schools and other exam centres needing to claim costs for autumn exams. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfes-exam-support-service-claiming-costs>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has published correspondence on latest information and actions from the ESFA for academies, schools, colleges, local authorities and further education providers. The full publication can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-25-november-2020>

Ofsted has published official statistics on further education and skills inspections and outcomes as at 31 August 2020. The full publication can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-inspections-and-outcomes-as-at-31-august-2020>

Ofsted has published an open consultation on changes to the publication of statistics on further education and skills inspections and outcomes. The consultation can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-publication-of-statistics-on-further-education-and-skills-inspections-and-outcomes>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has updated the guidance on how to claim exceptional costs related to coronavirus (COVID-19) with information about how to claim for extra funding during the coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency for costs incurred between March and the end of the summer term. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claiming-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19>

The Student Loans Company has updated the guidance and common questions and answers for students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland related to the COVID-19 outbreak which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-students-from-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

Ofsted has updated the guidance for education providers about Ofsted's phased return to inspection by removing the information about its work during the national lockdown and by adding a link to our plans for January 2021. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-plans-from-september-2020>

Ofsted has updated its guidance and information relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) for schools, early years, children's social care and further education and skills providers. The rolling update can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofsted-coronavirus-covid-19-rolling-update>

Ofsted has updated the guidance for children's social care providers about phased return to inspection by removing information about its work during the national lockdown and by adding a link to plans for January 2021. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-care-plans-from-september-2020>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has updated the guidance for sixth form and FE colleges on preparing and submitting their annual report and financial statements 'accounts' to ESFA with an updated version of the finance record for 2019 to 2020. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-accounts-direction>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has updated the guide and links to further information about financial returns academy trusts should submit to the ESFA. The update highlight that the deadline for academy trusts to submit their school resource management self-assessment tool (SRMSAT) checklist has changed to 15 April 2021. The full guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-financial-returns>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has updated a case study on how employers and businesses are benefitting from the Kickstart Scheme with added examples from South Tyneside Homes, Molinaire, and Tesco. The case study can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/how-employers-are-benefitting-from-the-kickstart-scheme>

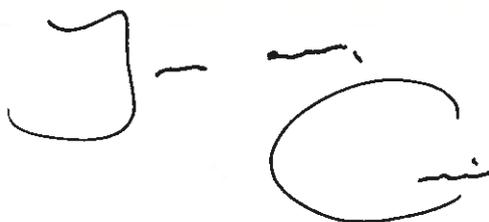
The Education and Skills Funding Agency and the Department for Work and Pensions have updated the 'Plan for Jobs skills and employment programmes: information for employers' guidance with added case studies about how employers are using the sector-based work academy programme (SWAP). The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-for-jobs-skills-and-employment-programmes-information-for-employers>

Ofsted updated 'Further education and skills inspections and outcomes: management information from September 2019 to August 2020' showing in-year and most recent inspection outcomes. The publication can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/further-education-and-skills-inspections-and-outcomes-management-information-from-september-2019-to-august-2020>

Ofqual published statistics on the number of entries by subject for GCSE in the November exam series in England. The statistics can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/entries-for-gcse-november-2020-exam-series>

The Ministry of Defence has updated the guidance on the education provision for service children overseas with added MOD Schools Privacy Notice. The guidance can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-overseas-for-service-children#history>

I hope you find this information useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'G' followed by a horizontal line and a large, circular flourish.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education