



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
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I would like to update you on the Department for Education's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak between 3 and 9 March 2021.

Children and young people returning to schools and colleges on 8 March

This week millions of children and young people across England reunited with their teachers and friends as schools and colleges opened their gates in the first step of the roadmap for leaving lockdown.

Throughout the pandemic the Prime Minister and Chief Medical Officer have been clear of the benefits that being in school brings to the physical and mental health of children and young people. Getting children back to face to face education has remained the national priority throughout lockdown.

Primary school children have all returned as they are much less likely to have or transmit the virus and therefore do not need to be tested. Many secondary schools and colleges have begun inviting their students in for their first rapid test, with students able to return to the classroom from 8 March, or in a staggered approach over the first week. University students on practical courses are also returning to face-to-face learning.

The actions for schools to take during the coronavirus were updated on 8 March: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

Update on the rollout of devices

On 18 January 2021, the House resolved that I should keep Parliament updated on work the Department is undertaking to ensure that every learner has the resources required to learn remotely.

As of 7 March, I can confirm that 1,250,738 devices have been delivered since the start of the scheme. We have also partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

We are publishing information weekly and I will include further information in future updates. Full data on laptops and tablets is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data>

Attendance

The Department's analysis from week 10 data indicates that 187 pupils out of every thousand were in school with over 99% of state funded schools open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the COVID-19 outbreak for week 10 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/2021-week-10>.

The Department's analysis from week 9 data indicates that 183 pupils out of every thousand were in school with over 99% of state funded schools open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the COVID-19 outbreak for week 9 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/2021-week-9>.

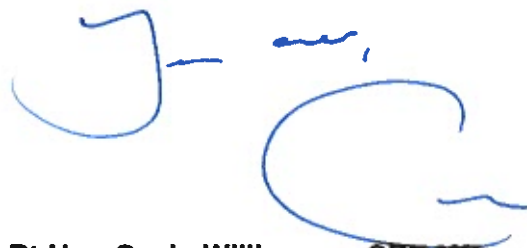
From 5 January 2021, schools were asked to provide on-site education for vulnerable children and children of critical workers only. This remained in place until 5 March 2021. Data from 8 March, reflecting wider opening of schools, will be published on 16 March.

Other key updates

On 8 March the Department celebrated the launch of Social Work Week 2021. A weeklong event to explore the impact of social work on society which is more important than ever during the pandemic.

This work forms part of the department's wider strategy to recognise and celebrate the social work profession. The event is led by Social Work England, the regulator for both adult and child and family social workers. Education providers are invited to join a series of events of the week at: <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/social-work-week>.

I hope you find this information useful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Williamson', with a large, stylized flourish underneath.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education