



Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards

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Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
House of Commons
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15 March 2021

Dear Robert,

During my appearance before the committee on 9 February, I committed to providing additional information regarding careers advice and the pupil premium.

Careers information, advice, and guidance

The 2017 Careers Strategy has laid strong foundations for an effective national careers system, supported by our investment in the Careers & Enterprise Company and National Careers Service. There is now a clear definition of what good careers guidance looks like in the form of the Gatsby Benchmarks, based on rigorous national and international research. We expect schools and colleges to adopt the benchmarks to develop and improve their careers programmes and support their statutory careers duties. Evidence shows that our investment in careers is delivering improved outcomes for pupils. Overall performance against the Gatsby Benchmarks has doubled since 2016/17, whilst 73% of pupils say they are more aware of different careers as a result of careers provision.

Through the Skills for Jobs white paper, published on 21 January, the department announced careers reforms in four key areas that will build on our achievements to date and give pupils a genuine choice between high-quality technical and academic routes.

We will introduce a range of measures to incentivise schools and colleges to prioritise careers guidance and hold them to account for the quality of their careers programmes. This will include a strong statutory framework, tougher enforcement (including Baker Clause) and an Ofsted review of provision. As part of this, we are amending the duty on maintained schools, special schools,

and alternative provision to provide independent careers guidance to year 8-13 pupils, extending it down to all year 7 pupils. This brings coverage into line with the Gatsby Benchmarks which begin at year 7.

We will also take steps to create greater cohesion between the Careers & Enterprise Company and National Careers Service, improve the National Careers Service website and complete the national rollout of the careers infrastructure (Careers Hubs, Enterprise Adviser Network, Careers Leaders training, digital support). This will continue to accelerate the progress of all schools and colleges towards achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks, so that all pupils are equipped to make informed career and educational decisions.

Pupil Premium

The committee requested further information on the switch to using the October census for the pupil premium.

On 17 December the Government announced that Pupil Premium will continue in 2021-22 with the same per pupil funding rates as in 2020-21. The rates are £1345 per eligible primary pupil, and £955 in secondary. For mainstream and special schools, we will use the October 2020 census to calculate individual school-level allocations. In previous years, we have used the January census to determine pupil premium eligibility. Moving to the October census brings the administration of the Pupil Premium in line with the rest of schools' core budgets (most notably the national funding formula, and local school funding formulae), which calculate schools' budgets for the coming year on the basis of the October census. The move to the October census simplifies the school funding system, and provides both schools and the Department with greater certainty around future funding levels earlier in the year.

Alternative Provision and Pupil Referral Units will continue to be funded based on the January census, since there is no census for alternative provision in October, and the October census is not representative of the number of pupils in PRU across a full academic year.

We will confirm pupil premium allocations for the financial year 2021-22 in June 2021. Overall, pupil premium funding is expected to increase to over £2.5 bn in 2021-22 as more children have become eligible for free school meals.

Data on the number of pupils who have become eligible for free school meals since 2 October 2020 – which is necessary to calculate any financial implications associated with the move from the January to October census – is being collected as part of the spring school census and is not yet available. This is particularly uncertain in 2021 in the context of Covid. The department publishes information annually from the January school census on the number of children eligible for free school meals and the number who claim a meal on school census day. The figures form part of the 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics' release and are usually published in June.

The publication series, including the most recent publicly available figures for January 2020, can be found via this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers>.

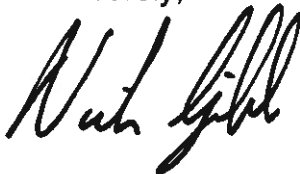
The department also publishes information on pupil premium allocations and the number of pupils eligible annually. The most recent publicly available figures can be found via this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>.

As you will be aware, the further £700 million package announced on 24 February includes a one-off Recovery Premium worth £300 million, which will be allocated to schools based on the same methodology as the pupil premium. In this way, schools with more disadvantaged pupils will receive larger amounts.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Gibb', with a stylized, cursive script.

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