



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair of the Education Committee
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5th May 2021

I would like to update you on the Department for Education's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak between 21 April and 4 May 2021.

New law to make school uniform costs affordable for all

A new Act, which received Royal Assent on 29 April will require schools to follow new statutory guidance on uniform costs, instructing them to keep prices down.

The cross-party support for the Bill recognised the costs parents face for school uniform, particularly for branded items, and the statutory guidance will tell schools to consider high street alternatives. The new law will also include measures on encouraging second-hand uniform, schools' arrangements with suppliers, and ensuring parents have access to clear information about uniform policies.

My vision for multi academy trusts

In my speech to the Confederation of School Trusts annual conference, I set out my vision for the school system to continue to move decisively towards a single model built on strong multi-academy trusts as its foundation, bringing the current pick-and-mix system of local authority maintained and standalone academy schools to an end.

The pandemic has brought to the fore the benefits of strong multi-academy trusts in providing outstanding support for both children and staff, through their collaborative approach and being able to pool resources and knowledge.

I also want to bring schools with a history of long-term underperformance, which have had three consecutive Requires Improvement or worse judgements by Ofsted, into strong multi-academy trusts.

Summer schools programme to help students recover lost learning

Schools in England can now register to offer a summer school to help children recover learning they have lost during the pandemic.

Schools are encouraged to bid for a share of £200 million in government funding to design summer schools for students who have experienced the most disruption.

Incoming Year 7 students will predominantly be encouraged to get involved, to help them navigate the important transition between primary and secondary school following a year of disrupted learning.

School visit

On the 22 April I visited Hatch End High School, seeing first-hand how pupils are benefiting from the [National Tutoring Programme](#). The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) aims to support schools in providing a sustained response to the coronavirus pandemic and to provide a longer-term contribution to closing the attainment gap. Through [NTP Tuition Partners](#), schools will be able to access subsidised high-quality tuition from an approved list of providers.

Update on the rollout of devices

The government is providing over 1.3 million laptops and tablets to help schools, colleges and other FE institutions throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The scale of deliveries was increased following the announcement on 5 January 2021 about a national lockdown and restricting attendance in schools and colleges but has since decreased following the return to schools on 8 March.

On 13 April we published the latest figure of **1,295,752** devices having been delivered since the start of the scheme.

We are reducing the frequency of the publication of the device statistics from weekly to monthly now that pupils have returned to school. The monthly publication means we are still reporting on progress in delivering services to schools, colleges and other FE institutions. The latest 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 18 data indicates that 93% of pupils were in school on Thursday 29 April with 100% of state funded schools open. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for week 18 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>

The Department's analysis from week 17 data indicates that 94% of pupils were in school on Thursday 22 April with 100% of state funded schools open. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for week 17 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-17

Other key updates

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

I have issued the thirteenth notice about changes to state-funded school inspection requirements during the COVID-19 outbreak. The decision can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disapplication-notice-school-inspections-legislation-changes>

The Department and Crown Commercial Service has published a case study on its Get Help with Technology programme. The full case study can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/the-department-for-education-dfes-get-help-with-technology-programme>

The Department has published information on the attainment of young people aged 19 in 2020, based on matched administrative data. The statistics can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/level-2-and-3-attainment-by-young-people-aged-19-in-2020>

The Department has published guidance on what improvement support schools and trusts can get in the 2021 to 2022 academic year. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/trust-and-school-improvement-offer>

The Department has published information for schools and candidates on how their personal data is collected and used for the International teacher acclimatisation service. The notice can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-teacher-acclimatisation-service-privacy-notice>

The Department has sent our enforcement letters to independent schools who have persistently failed to meet the independent school standards. The correspondence can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enforcement-letters-to-independent-schools>

The Department has published updated guidance on the latest common basic data set (CBDS) and version control log for use by software suppliers developing management information systems. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-basic-data-set-cbds-database>

The Department has published updated guidance providing a directory of subject knowledge enhancement courses for lead schools and initial teacher training (ITT) providers. The guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-knowledge-enhancement-course-directory>

The Department has published guidance on applying to become a Local Skills Improvement Plan trailblazer or Strategic Development Fund pilot as part of the Skills Accelerator. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/skills-accelerator-apply-now>

The Department has updated its guidance on how business professionals working in schools can find, join or create a network of local school business professionals. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/join-or-create-a-network-for-school-business-professionals>

The Department has updated its guidance on data protection and how we share pupil and workforce data. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/data-protection-how-we-collect-and-share-research-data>

The Department has updated its guidance on flexible working ambassador schools and how to contact the ambassador school in your region. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flexible-working-ambassador-schools>

The Department has published updated guidance on how the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education should carry out its functions for the 2021 to 2022 financial year. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/institute-for-apprenticeships-and-technical-education-strategic-guidance>

The Department has published updated guidance for schools, colleges and exam centres 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 published updated guidance 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 updated guidance providing an overview of school capital funding, who it's for, current and past allocations, how it's calculated and spending guidance. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capital-funding>

The Department has published an update to its policy on the offer available to early career teachers and how this will be developed for national roll-out. The full policy can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-career->

[framework-reforms-overview](#)

The Department, Ofqual and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has published updated guidance on how Ofqual is regulating the technical qualification component of T Levels. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/technical-qualifications-within-t-levels>

The Department has published updated guidance on the college collaboration fund, a peer-support programme to help FE colleges share good practice and develop quality improvement priorities. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/college-collaboration-fund-ccf>

The Department has published information on the successful applications for free schools and university technical colleges (UTCs) in the pre-opening stage. The information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-successful-applications>

The Department has updated its guidance for schools and local authorities on school meals arrangements during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance>

Ofqual has published guidance about the role of an external expert and how to apply to become one. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-be-an-external-expert-with-ofqual>

Ofqual has published its results of an annual survey of heads of schools, teachers, general public, parents, students, employers and higher education institutions in England about their perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications. The statistics can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/perceptions-of-a-levels-gcses-and-other-qualifications-wave-19>

Ofqual has updated its suite of documents setting out our regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering vocational and technical qualifications affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The full regulation can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vocational-and-technical-qualifications-contingency-regulatory-framework>

Ofqual has published an update to the consultation outcome for the arrangements for an autumn 2021 exam series. The consultation outcome can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-arrangements-for-an-autumn-2021-exam-series>

Ofqual has published guidance on confirmed apprenticeship end-point assessments (EPAs) for standards where Ofqual provides external quality assurance. The guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/external-quality-assurance-of-end-point-assessments-status>

Ofqual has published an update to the consultation outcome on autumn assessment opportunities for VTQ and other general qualifications. The update can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-autumn-assessment-opportunities-for-vtqs>

The Student Loans Company has published updated guidance on how students should contact them during the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-contacting-the-student-loans-company>

The Student Loans Company has published statistics about student support for Higher Education in Wales 2020. The statistics can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/student-support-for-higher-education-in-wales-2020>

The Student Loans Company has published statistics about student support for Higher Education in England 2020. The statistics can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/student-support-for-higher-education-in-england-2020>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published guidance on the allocations and conditions of grant for schools and local authorities for the teachers' pay grant for 2021 to 2022. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-grant-allocations-for-2021-to-2022-financial-year>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published guidance on the teachers' pension employer contribution grant allocations and conditions of grant for 2021 to 2022 financial year. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pension-grant-2021-to-2022-allocations>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published updated guidance to help academy trusts and diocesan users submit their land and buildings collection tool to the ESFA. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-land-and-buildings-collection-tool>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published updated guidance to provide information to help academy trusts submit their budget forecast returns to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-budget-forecast-return>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published updated guidance for academy trusts and auditors to complete their accounts return. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-academy-financial-returns-accounts-return>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published updated guidance which sets out the funding bands that will apply for existing apprenticeship frameworks and apprenticeship standards. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-bands>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published updated guidance on how it will intervene with apprenticeship training providers that are graded inadequate by Ofsted. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/removal-from-register-of-apprenticeship-training-providers>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published updated guidance on the terms and conditions that local authorities, maintained schools and academies must follow for the PE and sport premium. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pe-and-sport-premium-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published updated guidance on the details of the monitoring work for providing financial assurance for the apprenticeships, adult education budget including traineeships and advanced learner loans funding systems. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/esfa-financial-assurance-monitoring-the-funding-rules>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has published guidance for local authorities to gain assurance that institutions are administering the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund correctly. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-audit-guide-for-local-authorities-2021-to-2022-academic-year>

The Education Skills and Funding Agency has updated its guidance for post-16 providers on the next steps towards delivery of T Levels. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/t-levels-next-steps-for-providers>

Ofsted has published a review of research into factors that influence the quality of science education in schools in England. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-science>

Ofsted has published guidance outlining what Ofsted will look at during an inspection of an initial teacher training partnership. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-initial-teacher-education-leaflet-for-providers>

Ofsted has published updated guidance with advice notes from pre-registration inspections of proposed free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges that Ofsted carried out in 2020. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-registration-advice-notes-for-free-schools-studio-schools-and-university-technical-colleges-2020>

Ofsted has updated the independent school's inspection handbook on inspecting non-association independent schools in England. The handbook can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-schools-inspection-handbook-eif>

Ofsted has updated its guidance on inspections for independent schools that are not members of associations. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/being-inspected-as-a-non-association-independent-school>

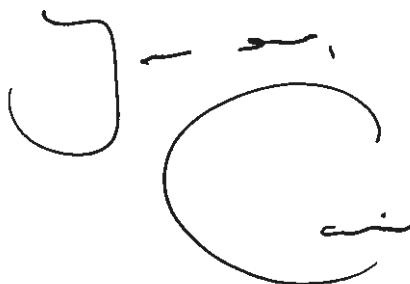
Ofsted has updated its Education Inspection Framework which sets out Ofsted's inspection principles and the main judgements that inspectors make. The updated guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>

Ofsted has updated its guidance for Ofsted inspectors on talking to pupils during school inspections. The updated guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspectors-talking-to-pupils-on-inspection>

Ofsted has updated its guidance for inspectors on inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics during school inspections. The updated guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-teaching-of-the-protected-characteristics-in-schools>

The Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency have published information on characteristics of students gaining qualifications from UK and NI higher education institutions, in the 2019/20 academic year. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/qualifications-gained-at-uk-higher-education-institutions-ni-analysis-201920>

I hope you find this information useful.

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

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education