



**Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP**

Secretary of State

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I would like to update you on the Department for Education's response to coronavirus (COVID-19) and other educational updates between 7 July and 25 August 2021.

#### **Step 4**

In July I wrote to education leaders to thank them for their effort and work over the course of the pandemic. From 19 July, with the move to Step 4 of the Government's roadmap, many of the key restrictions on education and childcare came to an end. We published new guidance for these arrangements covering both the summer period and the autumn term.

Guidance on the use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care published on 15 July can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care>

#### **AS, A level, vocational and technical qualifications**

More than 210,000 18-year-old students in England had their university places confirmed, with 192,000 at their first choice and increases in top grades for students from all backgrounds.

Nineteen per cent of entries were at grade A, with 44.3% at grade A or above – up 4.6 percentage points (ppt) and 6.0 ppt on 2020 respectively. This is lower than the uplift seen between 2019 and 2020, where A's increased by 6.6 percentage points (ppt) and A or above by 12.7 ppt.

The uplift in top grades reflects the fact the grading process gave all students a chance to do their best, only being assessed on what they had been taught across multiple pieces of work.

### **Over 500,000 pupils celebrated their GCSE results**

Over half a million pupils celebrated their GCSE results, with overall grades slightly up on last year.

Results showed 79.1% of entries received a grade 4 or above – equivalent to a pass – increasing 0.3 ppt on last year. Similarly, 80.9% of pupils achieved 4 or above in English and 77.9 in maths, increasing by 0.7 and 0.8 ppt respectively, enabling them to move on to the next stage of education or training despite the disruption of the pandemic.

### **Consultation on proposals for exams and assessments in 2022**

The Department and Ofqual consultation saw more publicity encouraging views from students, parents and teachers on proposed arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels in summer 2022, along with vocational and technical qualifications in academic year 2021-22. The consultation proposed a range of measures to help mitigate the impact of disruption to students' education. It was open for three weeks, closing on Saturday 1 August at 23:45.

### **Majority of schools sign up to boost education over the summer**

New figures show 2,820 secondary schools signed up to host a summer school over the holidays, offering a mixture of academic and extra-curricular activities to boost catch up for children.

More than 500,000 students are expected to have benefited from high quality, face-to-face learning over the summer holiday period, helping pupils catch up on pivotal education lost through the pandemic.

### **Vaccinations for 16 and 17 year olds**

On 15 August the Health and Social Care Secretary announced that all young people aged 16 and 17 would be offered the Covid-19 vaccine before they return to school.

### **Updates to the Contingency Framework for education settings**

On 17 August we published an updated contingency framework for education and childcare settings ahead of the autumn term. The updated framework included new thresholds at which settings might consider seeking public health advice and taking further action to reinforce measures already in place, plus annexed guidance for managing cases in settings from 23 August. Settings can find the updated guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

## **Ventilation**

On 21 August we announced that all schools will receive carbon dioxide monitors. Backed by a £25m government investment, new CO2 monitors will be provided to all state-funded education settings from September, so staff can quickly identify where ventilation needs to be improved. Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can help remove air that contains virus particles and is important in preventing the spread of Covid-19. Special and alternative provision schools will be prioritised given their higher-than-average numbers of vulnerable pupils.

## **Update on the rollout of devices**

The Government has provided 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 July we published the latest figure of 1,352,559 devices having been delivered since the start of the scheme. These are the last figures in the series for the academic year 2020/21.

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**

Due to the end of the summer term the Department's analysis from week 30 data covered early years settings only. It indicated that 727,000 children attended early years settings, down from 875,000 the previous fortnight. 31,000 vulnerable children attended early years settings, down from 40,000 the previous fortnight. This release marks the final publication on absence and attendance in schools for the 2020/21 academic year. Data for attendance in early years settings during the COVID-19 outbreak for week 30 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 29 data indicates that 76.7% of pupils were in school on Thursday 15 July with 99.5% of state funded schools open. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the COVID-19 outbreak for week 29 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-29>

The Department's analysis from week 28 data indicates that 80.4% of pupils were in school on Thursday 8 July with 99.6% of state funded schools open. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the COVID-19 outbreak

for week 28 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-28>

The Department's analysis from week 27 data indicates that 83.4% of pupils were in school on Thursday 1 July with 99.6% of state funded schools open. Data for attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for week 27 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-27>

### **Other key updates**

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

The Department has updated its guidance on:

Parents and carers attending schools, nurseries and colleges in 2021 during COVID-19. 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>

How to find a skills bootcamp. Skills bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks for eligible adults. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/find-a-skills-bootcamp>

Teaching school hubs. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-school-hubs>

School preference data collections. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-preference-data-collections>

The Trust Capacity Fund. The guidance describes how trusts can apply for the fund of up to £24 million to help develop their capacity to grow and take on underperforming schools in higher need areas. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-to-the-trust-capacity-fund>

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

How to access remote education webinars. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-webinars>

School leaders writing a pupil premium strategy statement. The guidance can be

found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-strategy-statements>

How school leaders can effectively manage their pupil premium funding. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-effective-use-and-accountability>

The college collaboration fund. The fund is 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>

National professional qualifications providers. The list can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-npqs-list-of-providers>

Condition Data Collection 2 programme. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-data-collection-2-cdc2-programme>

How to find a free level 3 qualification. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/find-a-free-level-3-qualification>

How to recruit teachers from overseas. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recruit-teachers-from-overseas>

Teachers' standards. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards> The Department has updated its guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

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 guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-skills-fund>

How schools can recruit teachers from overseas. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recruit-teachers-from-overseas>

Breakfast clubs programme 2021-2023. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/breakfast-clubs-programme-2021-2023>

Common basic data set. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-basic-data-set-cbds-database>

Local authorities completing returns for the 2022 special educational needs

survey. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-person-level-survey-2022-guide-and-technical-specification>

Helping schools choose a phonics teaching programme. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/choosing-a-phonics-teaching-programme>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has updated its guidance on:

16-17 traineeships. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/delivering-traineeships-through-efa-funding>

The framework for traineeships that sets out who they are for, what they provide and their funding. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-young-people-to-develop-the-skills-for-apprenticeships-and-sustainable-employment-framework-for-delivery>

Apprenticeship funding bands. The guidance 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>

How to use the Funding Information Service to check your individualised learner record. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/check-how-accurate-your-ilr-data-is-with-fis>

Apprenticeship assessment for employers. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-assessment>

Academy trust financial management and assurance. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-financial-management-good-practice-guides>

Learning Records Service organisational portal. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lrs-organisation-portal>

Learner Registration Bodies and Awarding Organisations on how to use the Learning Record Service and manage event data challenges. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learner-registration-bodies-user-guide>

Calculating funding allocations for 2021 to 2022. The guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/19-funding-allocations-guidance-2021-to-2022>

Funding claims and reconciliation. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-funding-claims>

How it measures the performance of FE providers it funds. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-the-esfa-measures-the-performance-of-fe-providers-it-funds>

How institutions claim funding for students repeating part or all of final year programme following the impact of COVID-19. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-guidance-for-young-people-2021-to-2022-repeat-of-part-or-all-final-year-of-programme-for-16-to-19-students>

DSG deficit management plan template. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-deficit-management-plan>

Adult education budget funding rules 2021 to 2022. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adult-education-budget-aeb-funding-rules-2021-to-2022>

Accountability framework for all apprenticeship provision for the academic year 2021/22. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-training-provider-accountability-framework-20212022>

Course directory. The directory contains information on courses offered by learning providers who are contracted with the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-course-directory>

How apprentices in England are assessed using end-point assessment. The information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-assessment>

Apprenticeship funding bands. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-bands>

How to register, manage and allocate user roles for the Identity and Access Management System. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-register-for-an-idams-account>

Advice about post-16 funding regulations. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision>

Academies planning calendar. The planner can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-planning-calendar>

College financial planning. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-planning-handbook>

College corporation financial management and assurance. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-corporation-financial-management-good-practice-guides>

Section 251. It provides information for local authorities, schools and the general public about local authority education funding and expenditure plans for 2020 to 2021. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/section-251-2020-to-2021>

16 to 19 data and management information reports. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-data-and-management-information-mi-reports>

Workforce data collection for further education providers. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-workforce-data-collection>

Ofqual has updated its guidance on:

How GCSEs, A levels, vocational and technical qualifications will be graded and awarded in summer 2021. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-guide-to-awarding-summer-2021>

Formats and timings for submitting data to Ofqual. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/submitting-data-to-ofqual>

How it conducts reviews of exam procedures. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/casework-process-and-terms-of-reference-for-exam-procedure-reviews>

Apprenticeship standards it provides external quality assurance for. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/external-quality->

[assurance-of-end-point-assessments-status](#)

The recognition gateway. The guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/using-the-recognition-gateway-how-to-guide>

Ofsted has updated its guidance on:

Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-early-years-education-and-skills>

Arrangements for gathering further evidence if an inspection is incomplete. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gathering-additional-evidence-to-secure-an-incomplete-inspection>

Schools and registered early years providers on what they need to know about delivering the current and revised early years foundation stage. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-eif-inspections-and-the-eyfs>

Its handbook for Ofsted inspectors of further education and skills providers. The handbook can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-eif>

EIF inspections and the EYFS. The guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-eif-inspections-and-the-eyfs>

COVID-19 for schools, early years, children's social care and further education and skills providers. The guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofsted-coronavirus-covid-19-rolling-update>

Education inspection framework. The guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>

The conduct of Ofsted inspectors and Ofsted's expectations of providers during inspection. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conduct-during-ofsted-inspections>

The Student Loan Company has updated its guidance on:

The living cost funding available while studying at university or college. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-living-costs-while-studying-at-university-or-college>

The terms and conditions for students taking out a student loan in academic year 2019 to 2020. The guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-loans-a-guide-to-terms-and-conditions-for-2019-to-2020>

Public Health England has updated its guidance on flu vaccinations in schools. The guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-in-schools>

I hope you find this information useful.

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

**Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP**  
**Secretary of State for Education**