

## Written evidence submitted by Sept. for school's campaign group

**To** Mr Robert Halfon MP, Chair and the Members of the Education Select Committee

**From** Sept. for Schools campaign group

**RE: Proposal for Home Schooling Guidelines**

On 5<sup>th</sup> July, we submitted responses from hundreds of parents across the country, describing their experiences of home schooling during the pandemic and drawing out key themes for the committee to consider (submission ref. LE124228).

At Sept. for Schools, we have continued to be inundated by parents' stories. The key themes are the same:

- the quality of home learning is inconsistent across the country;
- homeschooling is very time consuming for parents, particularly those who are single parents, are in full-time work or have children with SEND;
- homeschooling is expensive, particularly where families have had to invest in stationery, printers or new technologies;
- learning is a passive experience at present for many children, with little or no face-to-face contact with teachers;
- homeschooling is not compatible with learning new topics or concepts;
- homeschooling is taking its toll on parents; and
- homeschooling is taking its toll on the mental and physical wellbeing of children.

The overwhelming conclusion from these reported experiences is that homeschooling by parents needs significant improvement if it is to be part of the government's plan for our children's education while the pandemic lasts. It is currently not sustainable, workable or fair. Moreover, homeschooling can never replace the advantages that school brings beyond learning, such as social interaction, stimulation and structure.

Schools and parents need to be given greater support and resources for remote learning in the event that there is a need for further local lockdowns or the isolation of classes or year groups in individual schools. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged children, single-parent families, and children with special educational needs.

In this submission, we have set out 7 areas where a practical plan for remote learning needs to be developed urgently by the Department of Education, to complement its guidance issued on 2 July:

1. Minimum quality thresholds for remote learning must be set for all schools. These thresholds should incorporate all elements of the national curriculum for all key stages and cover daily learning expectations, in terms of subjects and time commitment.

2. Minimum standards for teacher-pupil interaction must be defined for the delivery of remote learning, including better use of technology, contact time (via phone, online, or socially distanced outdoor activities) and submission of children's work for marking and receiving feedback. This should include safeguarding guidelines for the use of online technology for each key stage.
3. Online learning resources must be provided to address digital disadvantage across our nation, including the provision of more laptops and wifi to access resources before the end of August. Consideration should be given to a greater variety of multi-media learning options, e.g. radio and TV via the BBC, in addition to online resources like Oak Academy.
4. Physical learning resources must be funded to ensure that all schools can provide stationery, hard-copy work sheets, photocopies of textbook pages and similar, whenever a child's home circumstances require it.
5. Targeted support to schools must be given to help parents continuing in paid work, parents of children with SEND, and parents who do not have English as a first language, to ensure that children's learning is not compromised by families' individual circumstances.
6. Pupils' emotional and mental wellbeing support must continue to be accessible in the event of local lockdowns or self-isolation. Further funding must be provided for children to access specialized mental health services and additional local authority support (such as CAMHS).
7. Implementation success must be transparent. Data about children learning in school and at home must be collected, evaluated and published, for as long as the pandemic continues to interrupt schooling.

Like many parents, we celebrate the hard work of teachers across our nation, who have gone to great lengths to keep children learning through lockdown. Without further support and resources, this current situation is not sustainable for families or for schools.

Please help us in holding the Department for Education to account for finding workable solutions that will mitigate the negative impact of future lockdowns on parents and children across our nation. Thank you for considering these suggestions.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these suggestions by phone or a Zoom call.

Sincerely,

*The September for Schools Working Group*

July 2020