



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

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**To all MPs in England**

3 July 2020

Dear Colleague,

### **FULL OPENING OF EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE**

Over the past few months, every child and young person in the country has experienced unprecedented disruption to their education as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). What has been achieved by the education sector to make sure that all children and young people are kept safe and can continue to learn during this period is remarkable.

As we continue on the road to recovery, returning to normal educational routines as quickly as possible will be critical for our children's and young people's education and for their wellbeing. The balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children and young people returning to education and childcare. The prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased, the NHS Test and Trace system is up and running, and we are clear about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments.

This week, the Government has announced its plans for schools, colleges, specialist settings and local authority adult education services to fully reopen to all children, young people, apprentices and adult learners from the beginning of the autumn term for full time education. Current restrictions on attendance will be lifted to allow all children and young people to return. For early years providers, from 20 July current restrictions on group sizes in nurseries, childminders, and other early years settings will be lifted, increasing capacity from the start of the summer holiday.

My Department has produced detailed guidance for [schools](#) and [further education providers](#) (mainstream and alternative provision) to support them to prepare for this, which also covers expectations for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are attending mainstream schools and colleges. We have also produced specific guidance for [special schools and other specialist SEND settings](#). Guidance for [early years providers](#) has been updated. I recognise that you will receive queries in relation to these matters and I would appreciate it if you could share the guidance in response to those requests. Links to all pieces of guidance are included as an annex to this letter.

In March when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was worsening, we made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. Now the circumstances have changed and it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. As set out in the further education guidance, from September, I am asking colleges to remind learners that they have a duty to attend if they are not ill or guidance states otherwise.

It is critical to ensure that the education we provide to our children and young people in these challenging times is not just a safe education but also an excellent one. For the autumn term, we are asking schools to resume teaching a broad and balanced curriculum, with some adaptations to help pupils catch up, alongside the financial support provided through the Government's £1 billion COVID catch-up package.

Attending childcare, school or college can be an important lifeline for vulnerable children and young people. It is important that this message gets to vulnerable children and their families and carers in particular, so they know that they are eligible to attend and do not miss out. My Department has launched a campaign to encourage all those who are eligible to return to education or childcare for the remainder of this term. [Public Health England resources](#) are available to help support those conversations and to reassure children and families about the safety measures put in place.

Keeping children and young people safe from harm and supporting their wellbeing over the summer holidays before they go back to school is particularly important this summer. Following the Prime Minister's confirmation that holiday clubs will now be allowed to reopen during the summer holidays, my Department has published two pieces of guidance on community activities, holiday and after-school clubs and other out-of-school provision for children over the age of 5. The [guidance for providers](#) informs providers of the protective measures that need to be in place to ensure they can open as safely as possible. Alongside this, [guidance has been published for parents](#) and carers on the precautions they should be taking if they are thinking of sending their child to any provision over the summer period. Links are included in the annex to this letter.

Finally, we have also updated the [guidance for universities](#) on reopening buildings and campuses ahead of next term. This includes guidance for students returning to shared accommodation or halls of residence, advice on reopening libraries, and rules around self-isolation for international students on arrival to the UK. A link is provided in the annex to this letter.

I want to thank colleagues for your continued support of schools, colleges, nurseries and other education and care providers in your own constituencies through this incredibly difficult time. Our education and care sector is central to the country's continued response to and recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. I know you will join me in thanking all those who work in the sector for their efforts, both over the past months and in those ahead, to ensure that all of our children and

young people are kept safe from harm and can continue to access an excellent education.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Williamson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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