

This is your daily email to keep you updated on the government's response to COVID-19 (coronavirus). 18/03/2020

Statement from the Education Secretary

Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, will be making a statement to the House of Commons at 5pm. Further updates will be circulated following this statement.

COVID-19 Emergency Bill

Information was released yesterday on the COVID-19 Emergency Bill, which is to be published later this week. The Bill will include:

- a power to remove or relax some requirements around education and childcare legislation in order to help these institutions run effectively in the event of an emergency
- a power to require schools, further education and childcare settings to stay open or re-open, operate in ways to support continued education and childcare such as enable pupils / students to attend different premises, to enhance resilience of childcare and education sector
- a power to close educational institutions or childcare providers. This will happen only where necessary and proportionate, to help minimise disruption to everyday life. The measures would only be put in place for the period of time required to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak
- powers to bring additional social workers onto the register of social workers held by the regulator, Social Work England

The measures in the Bill are temporary, proportionate to the risks, will only be used when strictly necessary and will be in place only for as long as required to respond to the situation.

This Bill will ensure the government has the powers it needs, when it needs them, to allow our vital public services to keep functioning and to save lives.

Further detail will be available when the Bill is published later this week.

Updated advice for non-essential travel worldwide

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) now advises British people against all non-essential travel worldwide. This advice takes effect immediately (from 17 March) and applies initially for a period of 30 days.

The latest travel guidance can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Funding for free childcare offers to continue in the event of coronavirus closures

Yesterday, the Chancellor has confirmed the Government will continue to pay for free early years entitlement places even if settings are closed on the advice of Public Health England or children are not able to attend due to coronavirus. We expect local authorities to follow the Department's position, and to continue early entitlements funding for all childminders, schools and nurseries. We will not be asking for funding back from local authorities.

The Government's advice remains that childcare settings should stay open unless advised otherwise by Public Health England, and yesterday's announcement should help settings to continue to do so. This will minimise both longer-term disruption to parents and any income losses that providers may otherwise experience.

The full statement can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-childcare-offers-to-continue-during-coronavirus-closures>

Handwashing advice

The most important thing individuals can do to protect themselves is to wash their hands more often, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water. Public Health England recommends that in addition to handwashing before eating, and after coughing and sneezing, everyone should also wash hands after using toilets and travelling on public transport.

Watch this short NHS film for guidance:

- <https://youtu.be/bQCP7waTRWU>

Department for Education coronavirus helpline

The Department for Education coronavirus helpline is available to answer questions about COVID-19 relating to education and children's social care. Staff, parents and young people can contact this helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday), 10am to 4pm (Saturday to Sunday)

Please note, we are currently experiencing high volumes of calls. We appreciate your patience at this time and apologise for any wait that you may experience. To ensure that we answer your calls as quickly as possible, we have now extended our opening hours to

cover weekends and are increasing the number of call handlers available to answer your calls.

If you work in a school, please have your unique reference number (URN or UK PRN) available when calling the hotline.

Where to find the latest information

Updates on COVID-19:

- <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Guidance for educational settings:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

Guidance for social or community care and residential settings:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-social-or-community-care-and-residential-settings-on-covid-19>

Travel advice for those travelling and living overseas:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Educational resources:

- <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101-coronavirus-/resources>
- <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools>

Latest Department for Education information:

- <https://twitter.com/educationgovuk>

- <https://www.facebook.com/educationgovuk/>

Please keep your GIAS school contacts up to date

If you work in a school, please take this opportunity to review your contact information in Get Information About Schools (GIAS).

To update your record, please go to the GIAS home page, “Sign in” using your “DfE Sign-in” credentials and select GIAS from your available services here:

- <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>