



Education Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From Robert Halfon MP, Chair

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

25 March 2020

Dear Gavin,

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you for your statement to the House last week. We appreciate the steps that the Department is taking to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the nation and we are grateful for the clear direction on how schools and colleges should be responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We would like to join Members from both sides of the House in putting on record our sincere thanks to all those who work in our education and children's social care systems at this most difficult time.

However, we are left with a number of questions and concerns, and therefore we would like to know what action the Department is taking, and to seek clarity, on the following points:

- **Out of school learning:** when can we expect updates on resources which will help schools and families continue their children's education away from school?
- **Capacity of the social care system:** Other than emergency registration for social workers, what is the Department doing to ensure the children's social care system can meet the increased pressure it will likely now face?
- **Critical workers:** Can the Department clarify how critical workers will be consistently defined throughout the country, and should schools be requesting confirmation from parents/carers of their key worker status? What support will schools receive to ensure they can continue to open for the children of key workers?
- **The effect on disadvantaged groups:** What is the Department doing to minimise the disproportionate effect these measures will have on disadvantaged groups? We are particularly concerned about the fairness of any grading system for children and young people who would have taken formal exams this year
- **Financial impact on organisations and individuals:** When will the Department provide details on:
 - The financial support available (and mechanism for accessing it) for providers, particularly early years and childcare providers and training providers

- Support for staff, including those on non-permanent contracts such as supply teachers
- **Long-term effects:** What work does the Department plan to undertake to evaluate the long-term effects of these measures?

We look forward to your response.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert Halfon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Robert Halfon MP
Chair of the Education Committee