

Department for Education

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

Update on national voucher scheme for schools providing free school meals

The free school meal voucher system has been upgraded over the bank holiday weekend. We are working closely with our supplier Edenred to resolve any outstanding issues quickly. We thank schools for their patience while the system is expanded to meet the high demand.

All schools have been issued with their free school meal activation email by Edenred. You should check your junk email folders in the first instance and ensure that the contact details the Department for Education are up to date. If your contact details need updating, you should email Edenred at freeschoolmeals@edenred.com to have the code resent.

Guidance on the free school meals scheme can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance>

Guidance on awarding vocational and technical qualifications this summer

We recognise students taking vocational and technical qualifications, alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, urgently need to know what arrangements will be put in place for them. Ofqual has confirmed that these qualifications will be awarded a calculated result. Students due to take assessments for Functional Skills

qualifications before the end of the summer will also receive a calculated result.

Ofqual's announcement can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/awarding-vocational-and-technical-qualifications-this-summer>

Guidance on awarding qualifications in summer 2020 can be found here:

· <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2020>

Coronavirus (COVID-19) adoption support fund scheme to help vulnerable families

The Secretary of State for Education has announced that up to £8 million will be available for therapeutic support for families whose adopted children may have already suffered trauma and may be made more anxious owing to the uncertainty of the effects of the virus. Adoptive families will be offered emergency support including online counselling and couples therapy as the government expands the scope of the Adoption Support Fund to meet needs arising from the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Further details of this scheme can be found here:

· <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-adoption-support-fund-scheme-to-help-vulnerable-families>

Updated guidance for schools about temporarily closing

We have updated our main guidance on the temporary closure of schools to include information on supporting children with mental health issues, advice for educational staff from overseas, primary school offer day, and advice for governors on reinstating excluded

pupils.

The guidance can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures>

Handling school complaints during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

The guidance for local authority maintained schools about setting up and reviewing complaints procedures has been updated to include best practice guidance about handling complaints during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The Department for Education does not expect schools to handle new or existing complaints while they are closed. Schools should, however, still engage with parents and pupils where they can. Complaints should be considered once schools have reopened.

The guidance can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures>

Coronavirus (COVID-19) business support hub now live

The new coronavirus (COVID-19) business hub on gov.uk provides business users with a clearer user journey, signposting to the most important information for them.

This hub is now live and can be found here:

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

The information below has not changed since yesterday.

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 and Sunday

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

Updated handwashing advice

It is essential that everyone washes their hands more often, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand washing with soap employs mechanical action that loosens bacteria and viruses from the skin, rinsing them into the drain. Drying hands afterwards makes the skin less hospitable to the virus. Hand sanitiser can be effective if soap is not available or the situation makes using soap less feasible (i.e. when outside) but using hand sanitiser provides none of the virus-destroying friction that rubbing your hands together and rinsing with water provides.

The latest guidance and video on hand washing can be found at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

The e-Bug project is led by Public Health England and has a dedicated webpage for learning resources on hand washing and respiratory hygiene.

Resources are currently available for KS1, KS2 and KS3 and can be used in various settings including schools and at home:

- <https://e-bug.eu/>

Collection of guidance for educational settings on GOV.UK

All of the Department for Education's coronavirus guidance for educational settings can now be found in one place on GOV.UK at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>

Our main guidance for schools, the 'school closures guidance', will be regularly kept up-to-date. Any new advice for schools on specific issues, such as food, exams or safeguarding, will be linked from it:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures>