



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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1 January 2021

Dear Council Leaders,

I am writing to you to inform you that, in light of coronavirus (COVID-19) case rates rising rapidly across the capital, today, we have taken the decision to extend the application of the Contingency Framework to the whole of London.

These decisions have not been based on case rates alone, but also on rates of change, and understandings of NHS pressures (including any local arrangements in areas). It is also important – given what we know both about the possibility of areas' situations changing over time (both for better and for worse) and the variety of circumstances within each region – that decisions are made on a targeted, localised basis.

We are continuing to work closely with PHE, the NHS, with DHSC and across government to monitor the number of new infections, positivity rates, and pressures on the NHS. Decisions have been made by Ministers on this basis whilst balancing a desire to keep as many children as possible in school.

The areas affected are listed in the annex to this letter and guidance can be found here: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) contingency framework for education and childcare settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

In these areas primary schools will move to remote education for the first two weeks of term, except for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. We will keep these areas under review, taking steps to return to face-to-face education for all as soon as possible. Early years settings (including nurseries and childminders) should continue to allow all children/pupils to attend as normal. School-based nurseries in primary schools have discretion to follow arrangements for the primary school.

We are balancing the clear objective to safeguard children's education during this national crisis with recognition that in these unprecedented times we need to respond quickly to the evolving public health position. Decisions on the Contingency Framework will be regularly reviewed with the first review occurring in the week beginning 11 January.

Vulnerable children and the children of critical workers in secondary schools and colleges will be provided with face-to-face education as normal from 4 January. Exam years will receive remote education from 4 January and return to face-to-face education during the week commencing 11 January, being prioritised to receive tests on their return. All externally-marked vocational exams scheduled for January will go ahead as planned. Subject to review of the areas in the contingency framework, all students should then return to face-to-face education on 18 January.

All children and young people can return to face-to-face education in special schools, alternative provision settings and special post-16 settings from 4 January. Special schools and colleges are being offered greater flexibility on face-to-face attendance of secondary-aged pupils/students in the first week of term to enable them to appropriately mobilise the mass testing programme.

In universities, students doing medical, clinical and healthcare related subjects, including nursing, social care, dentistry and veterinary studies can return as planned, along with those on teacher training courses. All other students should access learning online and remain at their vacation address wherever possible. Plans for the return of remaining students will be kept under review, with the first review point to take place in the week of 18 January.

Support

Regional School Commissioners and local REACT teams are available to answer any questions from local authorities, and schools and colleges can direct any questions to the DfE helpline on: 0800 046 8687.

These measures will help to reassure students, parents and teachers about returning to school and college, minimising disruption during the spring term, and helping to identify positive cases. Thank you once again for your ongoing work and perseverance during this unprecedented period. Your support will remain critical in the weeks and months ahead.

Yours sincerely,

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

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education

Annex A: Updated list of local authorities where the contingency framework applies from 4 January:

Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Brent
Bromley
Camden
City of London
Croydon
Ealing
Enfield
Greenwich
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Kingston upon Thames
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton
Newham
Redbridge
Richmond upon Thames
Southwark
Sutton
Tower Hamlets

Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Westminster
Brentwood
Epping Forest
Castle Point
Basildon
Rochford
Harlow
Chelmsford
Braintree
Maldon
Southend on Sea
Thurrock
Dartford
Gravesham
Sevenoaks
Medway
Ashford
Maidstone
Tonbridge and Malling
Tunbridge Wells
Swale
Hastings
Rother
Milton Keynes
Watford
Broxbourne
Hertsmere
Three Rivers