

Education Secretary set improving pupil outcomes as top priority

Improving outcomes for young people – wherever they live – has been hailed by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson as central to the Government's plans for building back better from the pandemic today (16 June).

Speaking at the Festival of Education, he explained how the Government will level up opportunity for young people, through strong multi-academy trusts, high-quality teacher training, good behaviour management and investment to help pupils catch-up.

The Education Secretary reiterated the importance of good behaviour, including his calls to ban mobile phones during the school day. He confirmed that a consultation on changes to guidance on behaviour, discipline and exclusions will be set out later this year.

The speech follows the announcement to boost high-quality tutoring to help pupils catch-up on lost learning due to the pandemic, as part of the Government's long-term plans for education recovery, backed by more than £3 billion so far.

Strong multi-academy trusts have proven their ability to secure the best outcomes for young people as they recover from the impact of the pandemic. The department is continuing to strengthen the oversight and governance of trusts, including by reinforcing expectations about the role of parents and carers on boards.

Speaking at the Festival of Education, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We are just as determined as ever to make sure that every child gets the world-class start in life that we expect and that they deserve.

I want to be clear – improving outcomes for pupils is our number one priority and as we build back better from Covid, it's more critical than it has ever been.

He went on to set out the achievements of top state schools rivalling independent schools, saying:

Our leading academy trusts and free schools now deliver an unrivalled education (...) but we must go further and faster if we are to complete the revolution, end the postcode lottery and truly level up the whole nation.

The Education Secretary also confirmed his intention for exams to go ahead in 2022, with plans being developed to ensure grades are fair for students, and restated confidence that grades determined by teachers this summer will reflect the abilities and hard work of young people.

Young children's development has been particularly affected by the pandemic, and Gavin Williamson confirmed plans for an exceptional Year 2 phonics screening check in the autumn term to help ensure all young pupils grasp the basics of reading, as part of the full return of primary assessments in the next academic year.

He also praised the work of teachers and staff during the pandemic, and outlined the Government's ambitious long-term plans and investment in teacher training and development. These include reforming early career development support, providing half a million teacher training opportunities and introducing Teaching School Hubs alongside a new Institute of Teaching.