



2021-0051156RWPO

Robin Walker MP

Minister of State for School Standards

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Mr Geoff Little OBE
Chief Executive, Bury Council
By email: g.little@bury.gov.uk

Your ref: GL/HM/Council

13 December 2021

Dear Mr Little,

Thank you for your letter of 29 November, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding education recovery. I am replying as the Minister of State for School Standards.

The Government is grateful to all teachers and leaders who have worked incredibly hard throughout the pandemic, including in their remarkable commitment to keeping the public safe and the dedication they have shown in enabling schools to remain open and supporting pupils with remote education.

Every child and young person in the country has experienced unprecedented disruption to their education as a result of COVID-19, and those from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds will be amongst the hardest hit. Over the past year, we have made several major announcements to support education recovery. Each has been a step in our efforts to make sure children and young people are supported through their ongoing education recovery, using evidence-based practice.

In February 2021 the Government announced the recovery premium, a new one-off grant worth over £300 million for state-funded schools in the 2021-22 academic year. Building on the pupil premium, the recovery premium will help schools to deliver evidence-based practices to support the most disadvantaged pupils.

We recognise that educational loss is significant and widespread. However, we also know that disruption has been more acute for some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable. The one-off recovery premium allocations will reflect disadvantage funding eligibility. In this way, schools with more disadvantaged pupils will receive larger amounts.

We have included a 'floor' to ensure that no eligible primary school will receive less than £2,000 and no secondary school, special school, pupil referral unit or hospital school will receive less than £6,000.

Schools have flexibility in how they choose to spend the recovery premium, and they are encouraged to consider using it to support a wider cohort than the pupils who attract the funding. The premium for the academic year 2021-22 is being paid as a grant to all eligible schools in England in four payments over the course of the year.

The Department has updated the Using Pupil Premium guidance with a short guide to help schools make best use of their pupil and recovery premium, alongside their pupil premium funding, which is available at: tinyurl.com/22k6ae5v.

On 2 June, the Government announced an additional £1.4 billion to support education recovery for children ages 2 to 19 in schools, colleges and nurseries. This includes £1 billion for tutoring, which, combined with the funding for tutoring we have already announced, will allow us to provide up to 100 million tutoring hours for children and young people across England by 2024.

In October, the Government announced that schools will receive an additional £4.7 billion in core funding in 2024-25, including £1.6 billion in 2022-23. This is in addition to the previously planned increases from the 2019 spending review, equating to a total increase of £1,500 per pupil between 2019-20 and 2024-25. This additional investment will also support the delivery of a £30,000 starting salary for all new teachers.

This funding sits alongside a further £1.8 billion dedicated to supporting young people to catch up on missed education, following on from the existing investment in catch up for early years, schools and colleges, including for tutoring and teacher training opportunities.

The funding takes the Government's direct investment in education recovery to almost £5 billion, building on the high-quality tutoring for millions of pupils and world-class training for thousands of teachers and early years staff, already being provided. This additional investment in recovery will mean every school and college will have extra dedicated funding to support those who most need help catching up.

Primary schools will continue to benefit from the same per pupil rate as this year's recovery premium, while secondary schools are expected to receive nearly double that amount, meaning an average secondary school could attract around £70,000 a year. This extra support at secondary level reflects evidence showing the larger gaps in older pupils' learning and the amount of time those pupils have left in education.

The dedicated education recovery funding will complement the significant expansion of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP), with millions of children set to benefit from high quality tutoring over the next three years, alongside world-class training for thousands of teachers and the summer schools that took place up and down the country through the school holidays.

There is extensive evidence that tutoring is one of the most effective ways to accelerate pupil progress. The NTP is an ambitious scheme which supports schools to access targeted support for disadvantaged pupils who need the most help to catch up. The NTP is comprised of three elements: a tuition programme for 5 to 16 year olds, a 16 to 19 tuition fund, and a targeted early language support programme for reception-aged children. In order to maximise the impact of tutoring and to support schools, the Education Endowment Foundation has provided a guide on how to get the best out of tutoring, available at: [tinyurl.com/Y4Jv2Glr](https://www.tinyurl.com/Y4Jv2Glr).

We will build on the successful NTP by introducing an additional school-led approach to tutoring from 2021-22. Schools will be provided with £579 million of funding to develop this localised school-led tutoring. Working alongside the scaled-up existing NTP pillars, this will mean that from 2021-22 we will vastly expand the reach of tutoring. This will help ensure more disadvantaged pupils benefit from tuition support.

We are also investing £253 million to help provide 500,000 teacher training opportunities, which includes £69 million to extend the rollout of the Early Career Framework reforms and £184 million for middle and late-career National Professional Qualifications. Additionally, we are providing £153 million for training for early years staff to support the educational development of the very youngest children.

Regarding free school meals and breakfast clubs, the continuing provision of free school meals to children from households that are out of work or on low incomes is of the utmost importance to the Government. This means these children receive a healthy, nutritious meal, and helps to ensure they are well nourished, develop healthy eating habits and can concentrate and learn. Under the benefits-based criteria, there are currently around 1.7 million pupils eligible for and claiming a free school meal. This saves families around £450 each year.

We introduced a number of immediate measures to ensure children who usually receive benefits-related free school meals still had access to this support while they were not attending school due to COVID-19. Now schools are fully open, all children should be able to access a nutritious meal at school, free to those that are eligible for free school meals. Where pupils eligible for benefits related free school meals are required to stay at home, schools should work with their school catering team or food provider to offer good quality lunch parcels. This is the same arrangement that was in place in the last academic year.

Alongside our national approach to supporting free school meal pupils, we are committed to supporting schools and children who also benefit from our breakfast club programme. The Government is committed to continuing support for breakfast clubs and will support approximately 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas, including opportunity areas which will be targeted by the programme. The Government is funding up to £24 million into the programme from 2021-2023.

Our suppliers, Family Action, along with Magic Breakfast, are in contact with schools on the programme, where possible, and are working closely with them to target the children most in need to continue to provide them with a healthy breakfast.

With regard to your concern for students' mental health following the COVID-19 outbreak, I would like to assure you that mental health and wellbeing are a priority for the Government. We hope that our package of measures for examinations in 2022 will help to relieve some stress, however the Government is also providing significant mental health support to schools.

We are providing more than £17 million this year to build on existing mental health support in education settings, including £9.5 million to enable up to a third of schools and colleges to train a senior mental health lead, as part of our commitment to fund training for leads in all schools and colleges by 2025.

In September, we invited state-funded schools and colleges to begin booking the Department's quality-assured training courses for their senior mental health lead, to support them to implement an effective whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. The guidance on this training is available at: tinyurl.com/J99n8JYb.

We are committed to working with parents, teachers and schools to develop a long term plan that ensures pupils are not further disadvantaged by the disruption to their education and are able to catch up.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Wallace'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'W'.