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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Answers.....1

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Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Chief Whip
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Baroness Berridge	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
Lord Bethell	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care and Whip
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Baroness Scott of Bybrook	Whip
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Sugg	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord True	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Answers

Friday, 18 September 2020

Assessments

Asked by *Lord Storey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to introducing standardised testing in the autumn to assist schools in identifying any learning and skills gaps among pupils. [HL7825]

Baroness Berridge: The department undertakes a rigorous process to develop standardised statutory assessment. Such assessments allow parents and schools to understand pupils' achievements in relation to the age-related attainment expectations outlined in the National Curriculum.

The department recognises that pupils will have missed a critical period of education due to partial school closures in the 2019/20 academic year and have therefore confirmed our intention to return to a normal standard assessment timeframe in primary schools. The continuation of assessments on this timeframe will help us to understand the remaining impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on this cohort of pupils, allowing us to target ongoing support to those that need it most.

Digital Technology

Asked by *Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to establish a mobile national digital technology support force, in partnership with local authorities and the private sector, to assist those who struggle with digital technology, including (1) the elderly, and (2) economically and socially disadvantaged groups. [HL8020]

Baroness Barran: The Government recognises that, although we live in an increasingly online world, a significant part of the population remains digitally excluded. There are currently no plans to establish a national digital technology support force. There are, however, a number of initiatives that tackle the digital divide in partnership with local authorities and the private sector.

In 2017 the Digital Skills Partnership was established by DCMS to bring together the public, private and third sector to improve digital skills across the spectrum. We have worked closely with Local Enterprise Partnerships and Combined Authorities to establish Local Digital Skills Partnerships in seven regions. These bring together key regional stakeholders to address local digital skills challenges.

The introduction of the Digital Entitlement means that from August 2020, adults with no or low digital skills can undertake new digital qualifications free of charge. The

Government also supports the Future Digital Inclusion Programme. Since 2014, the programme has helped over 1.4 million people to gain the digital skills they need for life and work.

Disability and Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the Children's Commissioner for England on 2 September that children with special educational needs and disabilities could be at greater risk of exclusion unless they receive additional support upon their return to school following the closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL7910]

Baroness Berridge: As my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, set out in her letter of 2 September to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), their families and carers and those who work to support them, we know that it is critical that all pupils and students can once again benefit from a full-time on-site education 5 days a week. Schools and colleges should work with children and young people with SEND and their families and carers so that they receive the education, therapeutic support or specialist support and reasonable adjustments that they need.

The prolonged period of absence from schools and colleges may contribute to pupils' anxiety and disengagement with education, which could lead to increased incidences of poor behaviour. School leaders should be mindful that any disruptive behaviour might be the result of pupils' unmet educational needs or other needs and should consider whether a multiagency assessment is necessary.

Our guidance advises that schools should update their behaviour policy as well any new rules and routines to reflect the new protective measures. The guidance for the full opening of schools is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

The guidance for the full opening of special schools and other specialist settings is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

In the event that a pupil's behaviour warrants disciplinary action, the normal rules apply. The disciplinary powers, including exclusion, that schools currently have remain in place. Headteachers should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding any pupil with an education, health and care plan. Pre-empting that a pupil may commit a disciplinary offence, and thus not allowing a pupil to attend school, is an unlawful exclusion.

Ofsted will continue to consider exclusions, including the rates, patterns and reasons for exclusion, and to look for any evidence of off-rolling, which is never acceptable.

National FGM Centre: Finance

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to reverse their decision to cap the funding of the National FGM Centre. [HL7624]

Baroness Berridge: Female genital mutilation (FGM) is abuse and we want to eradicate this practice once and for all. Between 2015-2020, the department made available over £3.5 million from the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme to Barnardo's in order to establish and run the National FGM Centre. The department's Innovation Programme funding was time-limited with the proportion of costs reducing from year to year. The funding was intended to build capacity in the sector.

The department has committed some further funding to spread good practice and end this abuse. We have also introduced tough safeguarding laws to compel certain professionals to report if they have encountered cases of FGM in under 18s, provided funding for charities to support victims of FGM and, through our new relationships, health and sex education curriculum, we are teaching pupils about the emotional and physical damage of FGM in an age-appropriate way, as well as teaching that it is a crime.

Pupils: Disadvantaged

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to provide support to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. [HL7945]

Baroness Berridge: The government is committed to ensuring that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds can achieve their full potential in education. We have put a number of significant policy measures in place to help nurseries, schools and colleges address the barriers to success that these pupils face, particularly as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. It is a national priority for all pupils to return to full-time education as it is the best place to improve their wellbeing and development, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package provides additional funding to support children and young people whose education has been disrupted by the outbreak as they return to school. It is on top of the £14.4 billion 3 year investment for schools that was announced last year. The package includes the £350 million National Tutoring Programme, which will provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils who are most at risk of falling further behind due to having lost time in education. This investment will give schools in all regions access to subsidised high-quality tuition supplied by a group of

approved tuition partners. Schools in the most deprived areas will be supported to use in-house academic mentors to provide intensive catch-up support to their pupils, in small groups. We have also provided funding to support small group tuition for 16 to 19-year olds, and the improvement of early language skills in reception classes.

In addition, we are allocating £650 million of catch-up premium funding to help schools support all of their pupils. In deciding how to use this funding, schools can give priority to specific groups of pupils in line with their levels of need.

Beyond this package of support, we are continuing to provide schools with pupil premium funding (worth £2.4 billion in the current financial year) to reduce the attainment gap.

Shipping: Investment

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support private investment in the UK maritime industry. [HL7941]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The maritime sector plays a key role in the UK economy, responsible for up to 95% of our imports and exports. As much of the UK maritime sector is privately owned, our world-leading companies are well placed to seek investment opportunities through commercial means.

Nevertheless, my Department, along with our colleagues across government, work closely with all parts of the UK maritime sector to identify the support they need to support their success and growth. In particular, the Department for International Trade works closely with the industry to promote the UK as an inward investment destination for the global maritime community.

Visas: EU Countries

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the EU about allowing UK citizens to visit EU countries for a continuous visa-free 180-day period from 1 January 2021. [HL7620]

Baroness Sugg: The Government has discussed mobility arrangements across a number of areas as part of negotiations on our future relationship with the EU, and these discussions are ongoing.

The EU has already legislated such that UK nationals will not need a visa when travelling to the Schengen area for short stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This will apply from the end of the transition period to all UK nationals travelling to and within the Schengen area for purposes such as tourism.

This is the standard length of stay that the EU provides to the nationals of eligible third countries that offer visa-free travel access for EU citizens, in line with existing EU legislation.

As things stand, stays beyond the EU's 90/180 day visa-free allocation from 1 January 2021 onwards will be for individual Member States to decide and implement through domestic entry rules and visa arrangements for non-EU citizens. UK nationals will need to discuss the specifics of their situation with the relevant Member State authorities and should be prepared to provide any extra documentation that may be required.

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