



**Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP**  
Secretary of State

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30<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear all,

I want to start by thanking each and every one of you for all your work during the last year. You and your dedicated staff have acted with unparalleled dynamism and commitment during the past 18 months, and I thank you for your ongoing efforts to keep students safe and in receipt of the education they deserve.

However, we need to continue to focus our efforts to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of COVID-19. The use of vaccines is significantly reducing the link between infections and severe disease and death from COVID-19. With a sufficiently high proportion of the population vaccinated, the country can learn to live with COVID-19 without the need for the stringent economic and social restrictions which have been in place since March 2020.

Young people are now eligible for the vaccine and, whilst many have taken up the offer, we want to go further so that everyone who can benefit from the vaccine, does. I am writing to you today to ask for your support in ensuring our students are vaccinated.

As you will already know, vaccines are now available to everyone aged 18 and over (and those within 3 months of turning 18) and to some younger people with specific underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious COVID-19 complications. In addition, all 12 to 17-year-olds who are healthy but are household contacts of individuals who are immunosuppressed are also eligible. Students aged 16 to 17 years who are employed in, studying or in training for health and social care work will continue to be eligible for the vaccine.

It is fantastic that almost 88 per cent of adults have taken up the vaccination offer to give themselves increased protection against the virus. We want as many people as possible to have this protection and so are keen to increase the uptake of the vaccine amongst 18 to 30-year-olds.

I know that a lot of work has already been done and I am encouraged and thankful to see that, through your actions and communications, the success of the government's 'grab a job' and social media partnerships, approximately 2 in 3 18 to 30-year-olds have received their first dose of the vaccine.

There are 3 million people in this age bracket still to be vaccinated. We need to persuade this age group to book their slots now if they don't want to miss out on the things they love, like travelling and clubbing.

With students making up a large section of this age group, I am keen to minimise further disruption to their learning by encouraging them to take up the vaccine and receive both doses.

We are making it as easy as possible for students to find information about the vaccine through a comprehensive advertising campaign, initiatives like 'vaccine information street teams' and pop-up sites in places like Primark, Alton Towers and Thorpe Park. Today, to keep the momentum going, I ask that you continue to share the benefits of vaccination with your new (where you are already starting to communicate with them) and existing students.

I am aware that many institutions have strengthened their relationships with local public health teams over the last 18 months and, where practical, I would like you to consider the possibility of partnering with them to set up 'pop up' temporary clinics at locations convenient for students to access. I appreciate that this will not be practical for all institutions. In these cases, as you may have done already, please signpost the most convenient [local vaccination sites](#) to your students.

There are various resources to support you to encourage uptake. Please make use of [Public Health England's vaccine communications assets](#) when considering vaccine messaging. These include posters that can be displayed in your physical and virtual spaces, voice clips that can be included on student radio channels and short video clips you can include in your start of term and enrolment packs.

I welcome your creative approaches to ensuring students receive strong, positive vaccination messages. I know, for example, that some universities are collaborating with their students' unions to plan widespread communications. Please also take advantage of the NHS England vaccine [FAQ's for students](#) which contain student-specific information such as clarifying that students can access their first and second doses in different locations. These resources will also be useful in communications to your international students who can all access the vaccine in England for free. Where possible and if available before travel, international students should be encouraged to access the vaccine in their home country and remember to bring documentation with them so they can receive the corresponding top-up in England if required.

Your support in ensuring students are vaccinated is helping to keep the country safe and I appreciate all your hard work in these challenging and unprecedented times.

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

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**Secretary of State for Education**