

Education Secretary urges remaining schools to participate in National Tutoring Programme

Parents in England will be given access to data revealing how their school is using the National Tutoring Programme, the Education Secretary has announced today (2 May 2022).

The programme is central to the Education Secretary's pledge to parents, ensuring that any child who falls behind in English and maths will receive tailored support to help them get back on track, and parents will be kept up to date on their progress. This will support the government's Levelling Up mission for education, for 90% of primary school children to achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths by 2030.

The National Tutoring Programme is part of the Government's ambitious Covid recovery plan, offering Government funded, high quality catch-up tutoring, world class training for teachers and early years practitioners, additional funding for schools, and extending time in colleges by 40 hours a year, backed by an additional £5bn investment.

In a letter to all schools, sent today, the Education Secretary confirmed his intention to publish the data of each school's involvement this Autumn, helping parents to understand how their school is taking up the offer of Government-funded support to help pupils catch up on lost learning. The data will also be shared with Ofsted, with the department working with Ofsted over the coming months on the best use of that data.

Since the tutoring programme's launch in November 2020, around 1.2 million high quality tutoring courses have been started by pupils, including just under 900,000 this academic year. The department estimates that 40% of schools are yet to offer any tutoring sessions on the National Tutoring Programme this academic year.

Within the letter, Secretary of State, Nadhim Zahawi, will write:

I appeal now, in particular to those schools that have not yet started to offer tutoring, to make sure that you do so as soon as possible this term – do not miss out on an opportunity to help pupils who could benefit now.

Starting this week, my department will contact those schools yet to offer tutoring support to discuss their plans and offer further support to ensure they can offer tutoring to their pupils this term.

As part of my desire to ensure greater transparency of the impact of the programme, I am planning to publish data on each school's

tutoring delivery at the end of the year alongside the funding allocations and numbers of pupils eligible for the pupil premium. I will also share this information with Ofsted.

The Education Secretary's letter encourages the remaining few schools that have not yet used the National Tutoring Programme to do so, as the academic year nears an end. Schools yet to offer tuition through the programme will be contacted individually from this week to discuss their plans and offer support.

The department intends to publish data on schools' tutoring delivery in the 21/22 academic year in the autumn, in addition to the data Government already publishes on national take-up, as well as funding allocations at school level. More details will be made available in due course.

Evidence suggests that small group tuition can boost progress by an average of two months in secondary schools and four months in primary schools.

Current funding for the National Tutoring Programme is enough to provide a course of tuition to every single pupil eligible for Pupil Premium, helping meet the parent pledge to help all children in need of support.

Primary pupils have already recovered around two thirds of progress lost due to the pandemic in reading, and around half of progress lost in maths, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Government's wider, ambitious education recovery programme.

In March, the department announced updates to simplify the programme, including the move to provide all £349 million of tutoring funding for AY22/23 directly to schools. The decision was made following feedback from schools and stakeholders, giving schools the freedom to decide how best to provide tutoring for their children.

The recovery plan, with tutoring at its heart, supports the government's Levelling Up mission for education, for 90% of primary school children to achieve the expected standard in Key Stage 2 reading, writing and maths by 2030 – and for the national average GCSE grade in both English language and maths increase from 4.5 to 5, to the same timeline.

Magistrates to help tackle backlog as sentencing powers doubled

- Magistrates will now be able to issue prison sentences of 12 months for a single offence
- Up to 1,700 extra days of Crown Court time to be freed up annually

- Latest step to drive down the backlog in criminal courts which rose during the pandemic

This is the latest step to tackle the impact of the pandemic on the criminal justice system and is expected to free up around 1,700 extra days of Crown Court time each year.

Previously, magistrates could only issue a maximum of six months in prison, despite often hearing cases that warrant a longer jail term and they would need to be sent to a Crown Court for sentencing by a judge.

The move allows more cases to be sentenced in the Magistrates' Courts, meaning Crown Courts can focus resources on getting through more serious, complicated cases, delivering swifter justice for victims and tackling the backlog.

It follows the launch of the Ministry of Justice's national campaign to recruit 4,000 new magistrates from across all walks of life, as well as a new, streamlined recruitment process to specifically target young people in a bid to boost diversity. Launched in January, it has already resulted in over 34,000 people registering their interest in becoming a magistrate.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice Dominic Raab said:

We are doing everything in our power to bring down the court backlog, and doubling the sentencing powers of magistrates will create more capacity in the Crown Court to hear the most serious cases.

Together with an extra 30 Nightingale courtrooms currently open, digital hearings and allowing the Crown Court to hear as many cases as possible for another financial year, we will deliver swifter and more effective justice for victims.

The Judicial College has provided all magistrates and legal advisers with robust training ahead of the change in law to guarantee they know how to best use these new powers to deliver justice effectively.

Bev Higgs, National Chair of the Magistrates' Association, said:

The Magistrates' Association has long called for this measure; it will lead to more timely justice that can only benefit all court users – defendants, complainants and witnesses.

We are pleased that the government has placed its confidence in the

magistracy and introduced this power, alongside other measures, to ease court delays.

These plans build on the significant action taken since the start of the pandemic to ensure courts can recover from the pandemic and tackle delays. This includes:

- Extending unlimited sitting days for the new financial year, ensuring Crown Courts can operate at maximum capacity.
- Increasing spending on criminal legal aid by £135 million a year, including a fee increase which will see a typical criminal barrister earning nearly £7,000 extra per year.
- Rolling out video technology to over 70 percent of all courtrooms and opening 3,265 virtual court rooms across all jurisdictions. These currently hold around 12,500 hearings per week, compared to just a handful before the pandemic.
- Investing almost £450 million over the next three years into victim and support services.
- Creating 2 'super courtrooms' which can accommodate up to 12 defendants simultaneously; increasing capacity for large, complex trials.
- Raising the statutory mandatory retirement age from 70 to 75 for judicial office holders, estimated to retain an extra 400 judges and tribunal members and 2,000 magistrates per year across all jurisdictions.

Notes to editors:

- In January we launched the largest recruitment campaign in the 650-year history of the magistracy. The 4,000 new magistrates we aim to recruit will play a crucial role in helping us to tackle court backlogs and restore swift justice.
- The Magistrates' Association will be available for broadcast stories. Please contact Alexandra Chitty on media@magistrates-association.org.uk.
- [The Magistrates' Association](#) is a national charity and the membership body for the magistracy. With more than 12,000 members across England and Wales, it is a unique source of information and insight, and the only independent voice of the magistracy.

[UK exposes sick Russian troll factory plaguing social media with Kremlin propaganda](#)

- UK Government funded expert research unveils new tactics of the Kremlin's large-scale disinformation campaign.

- Troll factory is targeting politicians and baiting audiences across a number of countries including the UK, South Africa and India.
- The operation has suspected links to Yevgeniy Prigozhin, founder of infamous bot-farm the Internet Research Agency.

UK-funded expert research has exposed how the Kremlin is using a troll factory to spread lies on social media and in comment sections of popular websites.

The cyber soldiers are ruthlessly targeting politicians and audiences across a number of countries including the UK, South Africa and India.

The research exposes how the Kremlin's large-scale disinformation campaign is designed to manipulate international public opinion of Russia's illegitimate war in Ukraine, trying to grow support for their abhorrent war, and recruiting new Putin sympathisers.

Sick masterminds of the operation are believed to be working overtly from an old factory in St Petersburg, with paid employees, and internal working teams.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

We cannot allow the Kremlin and its shady troll farms to invade our online spaces with their lies about Putin's illegal war. The UK Government has alerted international partners and will continue to work closely with allies and media platforms to undermine Russian information operations.

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

These are insidious attempts by Putin and his propaganda machine to deceive the world about the brutality he's inflicting on the people of Ukraine. This evidence will help us to more effectively identify and remove Russian disinformation and follows our decisive action to block anyone from doing business with Kremlin-controlled outlets RT and Sputnik.

The evidence shows the troll factory is using Telegram to actively recruit and co-ordinate new supporters who then target the social media profiles of Kremlin critics – spamming them with pro-Putin and pro-war comments. Targets include the senior UK ministers' social media accounts, alongside other world leaders.

The operation has suspected links to Yevgeniy Prigozhin, the founder of the most infamous and wide-ranging bot-farm the Internet Research Agency, both of whom the UK has sanctioned.

The UK Government will share this latest research with major social media

platforms. We are already working closely with them to ensure they swiftly remove disinformation and coordinated inauthentic or manipulated behaviour, as per their Terms of Service.

The UK has also created a Government Information Cell (GIC) to counter Russian disinformation. Made up of experts from across the UK Government, the Cell is focussed on identifying and assessing Russian disinformation and both advising on and delivering output to expose and challenge the Kremlin's lies.

Through our unprecedented package of sanctions against Russia, we have already targeted peddlers of Russian disinformation, including Putin's key political allies, regime spokespeople including Putin's Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov and Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, and Kremlin-backed disinformation agencies.

The Government has also directly sanctioned state media organisations, targeting the Kremlin-funded TV-Novosti who owns RT, formerly Russia Today, and Rossiya Segodnya who control news agency Sputnik.

Key findings include

- A new troll farm that is seeking to guide and 'brigade' a wider network of supporters and sympathisers to engage in targeted trolling behaviours.
- This information operation and its associated targeted trolling activities are being directed at senior international politicians and international media outlets.
- Traces of the operation have been detected across eight social media platforms including Telegram, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok.
- Key tactical innovations of the operational methodology include the use of commenting behaviours, use of VPNs and deliberate amplification of 'organic' content supporting the Kremlin's position. All of these methods help to avoid detection and interception by social media platforms.

Troll Tactics

- Calling on subscribers to target the social media profiles of opponents and Kremlin critics, including prominent politicians and world leaders, and spam them with pro-Kremlin comments.
- Asking them to turn on VPNs and spam the comments sections of specific links to Instagram, YouTube, and Telegram.
- Focusing activity on posting comments, rather than authoring original content – a tactic likely to decrease the risks of being detected by social media platforms for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behaviour and/or harmful content.
- Searching for 'organic content' posted by genuine users coherent with the lines they want to push, and then working to amplify these messages, in order that such views are distorted as the norm. This means that, provided the content they post is not too offensive, they are unlikely to be subject to de-platforming interventions.

Platinum Jubilee book to arrive in primary schools from mid-May

Children in state-funded primary schools across the United Kingdom will, from mid-May, begin to receive a free commemorative book to mark Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee.

Designed as an official once-in-a-lifetime commemoration of the Platinum Jubilee and written in collaboration with royal experts and historians, the book will tell the story of a young girl, Isabella, visiting her Great Granny Joyce who tells her about the Queen and this year's Jubilee.

In the story, Isabella sifts through Great Granny Joyce's treasure box of souvenirs, which act as introductions to the contents of the book. These include recent and historical events across the United Kingdom and Commonwealth, inspirational people, landmark innovations and inventions, and a selection of the best art, design, and culture.

The book will also include famous quotes from the Queen, facts on the coronation ceremony, content on the lives of famous Commonwealth figures such as Nelson Mandela, notable kings and queens and a timeline of Queen Elizabeth's life.

Children will be invited to personalise their individual copies of the illustrated reference book, by signing a 'this book belongs to' section at the beginning of the book. The page reads: 'During [the Queen's] reign, the world has changed in so many ways... [This book] will help you understand the amazing life and times of our Queen and the magic of the unique, unshakable bond she shares with the people she serves.'

The book will also help children understand how the four nations came together as one United Kingdom, including details such as Owain Glyndwr's rebellion against the English in 1400 to take the title of 'Prince of Wales', on the journey to the Queen's reign which continues to this day.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

Queen Elizabeth II is the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee and Her Majesty's dignity, commitment and grace continues to inspire people all over the world.

Millions of children will soon receive their own commemorative Jubilee book, celebrating and showcasing the Queen's incredible living legacy. I hope all our pupils are as excited as I am to read about Her Majesty's amazing life and the people and events that have shaped history during the last 70 years.

On the request of the Scottish and Welsh Governments, schools in Scotland and Wales will be asked to opt-in to receive copies of the book, which will then be delivered in late September.

'Brilliant bookmarks' from the Reading Agency are to be distributed with every book, to support and encourage reading for pleasure amongst children at school and over the summer. The book is also featured within the National Literacy Trust's Platinum Jubilee Royal Reading Challenge.

The book goes on private sale from 23 June.

Schools can expect to hear from the Department for Education (in England) or DK Books (in Northern Ireland) in the coming days about delivery details, and those in Scotland and Wales should already have had information on how to place their book orders.

The book was commissioned by the UK Government and is being published by DK Books. It has been designed for a reading age of nine to 10 years, but will be accessible to all primary school age children, for example if parents, carers or teachers read with them.

It forms part of the wider programme of events and activities planned for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, including a concert, street parties, and an extra bank holiday for the Jubilee weekend itself from Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 June 2022.

[PM call with President Zelenskyy: 30 April 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as part of their regular dialogue.



The Prime Minister spoke to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy today, as part of their regular dialogue.

President Zelenskyy updated on the fierce fighting in Eastern Ukraine and ongoing siege of Mariupol. He set out the equipment needed for the defence of Ukraine.

The Prime Minister reiterated that he is more committed than ever to reinforcing Ukraine and ensuring Putin fails, noting how hard the Ukrainians are fighting for their freedom.

He confirmed that the UK will continue to provide additional military aid to give the Ukrainians the equipment they needed to defend themselves.

The leaders also discussed progress of the UN-led effort to evacuate Mariupol and concern for the injured there. The Prime Minister offered the UK's continued economic and humanitarian support.

The Prime Minister and President Zelenskyy agreed to remain in close contact on next steps, in coordination with international allies and partners.

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