COVID-19 SUPPORT GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS

Education
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Foundation

About the Education Endowment Foundation

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent charity supporting teachers and school leaders to use evidence of what works—and what doesn't—to improve educational outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children and young people.

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FOREWORD

For educators, coronavirus has created the test of a generation. When pupils start the new school year in September, most will be returning to the classroom for the first time in almost six months.

Thanks to the heroic efforts of teachers across the country, many children have been able to keep learning while staying at home. The resourcefulness and range of responsibilities taken on by teachers and school leaders during the pandemic has been inspiring.

But there is no shame in acknowledging what teachers know best: children learn less when they are not in school. The consequences of the pandemic will be far reaching—for all children, but particularly for those from socially disadvantaged families. There have been wide disparities in engagement.

This guide is designed to help teachers and school leaders support their pupils, by equipping them with an overview of relevant evidence. It is designed in particular to support and inform decisions about how to use catch-up funding announced in June 2020.

The circumstances created by the Covid-19 pandemic are unique. However, in common with the Pupil Premium, the way funding is used will determine what difference it makes. An evidence-informed approach gives us the best chance of maximising impact.

Research conducted by the EEF and others around the world strongly suggests that compensating for the negative impact of school closures on the gap will require a sustained response. School leaders will need to make difficult decisions about what to prioritise in the coming months, recognising the tremendous strain the pandemic has already placed on teachers and children.

This short guide aims to provide evidence and signposts to additional resources that support those decisions.

Professor Becky Francis
Chief Executive

INTRODUCTION

Teachers and families across the country have provided extraordinary support to help children learn at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, for many children, the disruption caused by school closures will have had a negative impact on learning and wellbeing.

This guide is designed to help teachers and school leaders support their pupils effectively. It summarises support strategies that school leaders may consider including as part of their response to the pandemic.

Every school will have been affected by Covid-19 differently and school leaders are best placed to understand the needs of their school communities. The right way to support pupils will differ between schools and must be informed by the professional judgement of teachers and school leaders.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to have been affected particularly severely by school closures and may need more support to return to school and settle back into school life. While the recommendations in this guide relate to all pupils, it is likely that some forms of support will be particularly beneficial to disadvantaged children.

For many pupils, compensating for the negative impact of school closures will require a sustained response. It is highly unlikely that a single approach will be enough. It is also likely to be beneficial to consider how to align chosen approaches with Pupil Premium spending and broader school improvement priorities.

Using this guide

The guide has been written with a focus on supporting teachers and school leaders in primary and secondary schools in England. Further audiences who may find this guide relevant included school governors and trustees, local authorities and multi-academy trusts. Some elements of the guide, for example related to high-quality teaching, literacy and numeracy programmes and supporting transitions, may also be relevant to professionals working in early years settings and further education colleges.

The guide has been compiled by drawing on a wide range of evidence from research and resources published by the Education Endowment Foundation. Signposts to suggested further reading, more detailed evidence summaries and practical resources are provided throughout.

It is not anticipated that schools will adopt all of the suggestions included. Rather, it is assumed that schools might prioritise a small number of approaches best suited to their context, balanced with the strength of evidence.

As with the EEF's *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*, some approaches covered in the guide are included because they have been widely discussed as possible responses for schools to

consider, while other approaches have been included because a strong existing evidence base suggests they are likely to be particularly promising.

In all cases, it should be acknowledged that it is very challenging to bridge from the existing evidence base to provide guidance to support schools responding to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. For this reason, it is essential that schools, policymakers and researchers continue to evaluate and monitor the impact of different approaches.

Strategies in this guide are grouped into three categories:

- Teaching and whole-school strategies

- Targeted support

- Wider strategies

Teaching and whole-school strategies

Supporting great teaching

Great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for their pupils.

Ensuring every teacher is supported and prepared for the new year is essential to achieving the best outcomes for pupils. Providing opportunities for professional development—for example, to support curriculum planning or focused training on the effective use of technology—is likely to be valuable.

Almost all schools will also have made significant adjustments to organisational and logistical aspects of school life. Ensuring teachers have training and support to adjust to these changes is likely to improve the quality of teaching as all pupils return to school.

Early career teachers, who may have had opportunities to develop their practice curtailed by school closures, are particularly likely to benefit from additional mentoring and support.

Additional information about effective approaches for supporting great teaching is included in the EEF's *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*.

Pupil assessment and feedback

Assessment can help teachers determine how to most effectively support their pupils. Every pupil will have been affected differently by Covid-19.

Setting aside time to enable teachers to assess pupils' wellbeing and learning needs is likely to make it easier for teachers and other school staff to provide effective support.

For example, subject-specific assessments might be used to identify particular areas where pupils have forgotten or misunderstood key concepts, to ensure that new material being covered builds on secure foundations. Standardised assessments in literacy or numeracy might be used to identify pupils who would benefit from additional catch-up support.

Providing pupils with high-quality feedback, building on accurate assessment, is likely to be a particularly promising approach.

Additional information about this is included in the EEF's guidance on *Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress*.

Transition support

All pupils will need support to transition back to school. However, there are particular challenges for pupils starting a new school after the disruptions caused by Covid-19.

Planning and providing transition support, such as running dedicated transition events—either online or face-to-face, as restrictions allow—is likely to be an effective way to ensure pupils start the new year ready to learn.

Transition events might focus on sharing information about school with children and their families or running activities designed to make pupils feel comfortable in their new school, for example by introducing pupils to their new teachers and classmates.

Additional transition support might include using assessment to identify areas where pupils are likely to require additional support or creating opportunities for teachers to share information about pupils' strengths and areas for development with colleagues, including between primary and secondary schools where possible.

Targeted Support

One to one and small group tuition

There is extensive evidence supporting the impact of high-quality one to one and small group tuition as a catch-up strategy.

To be most effective, creating a three-way relationship between tutor, teacher and pupils is essential, ensuring that tuition is guided by the school, linked to the curriculum and focused on the areas where pupils would most benefit from additional practice or feedback.

As a rule of thumb, the smaller the group the better. However, both small group and one to one tuition can be effective catch-up approaches.

Tuition delivered by qualified teachers is likely to have the highest impact. However, tuition delivered by tutors, teaching assistants, or trained volunteers can also be effective. Where tuition is delivered by teaching assistants or volunteers, providing training linked to specific content and approaches is beneficial.

Intervention programmes

In order to support pupils who have fallen behind furthest, structured interventions, which may also be delivered one to one or in small groups, are likely to be necessary.

A particular focus for interventions is likely to be on literacy and numeracy. For example, there is extensive evidence showing the long-term negative impact of beginning secondary school without secure literacy skills. Programmes are likely to have the greatest impact where they meet a specific need, such as oral language skills or aspects of reading, include regular sessions maintained over a sustained period and are carefully timetabled to enable consistent delivery.

Interventions might focus on other aspects of learning, such as behaviour or pupils' social and emotional needs, or focus on particular groups of pupils with identified special educational needs or disabilities.

Effective intervention follows assessment, which can be used to ensure that support is well-targeted and to monitor pupil progress.

Additional information about high-quality programmes that have undergone rigorous evaluation is available on the EEF's *Promising Projects* list.

Extended school time

In some cases, schools may consider extending the length of the school day; for example, to provide additional academic or pastoral support to particular pupils after school. There is some evidence that extending school time can have a small positive impact on learning as well as improving other outcomes, such as attendance and behaviour. However, to be successful, any increases in school time should be supported by both parents and staff.

Additional evidence related to extending school time is available in the EEF's *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*.

Wider strategies

Supporting parents and carers

Parents have played a key role in supporting children to learn at home and it will be essential that schools and families continue to work together as pupils return to school.

Schools have provided extensive pastoral support to pupils and families throughout the pandemic. Additional support in the new school year could focus on providing regular and supportive communications with parents, especially to increase attendance and engagement with learning. There is a risk that high levels of absence after the summer pose a particular risk for disadvantaged pupils.

Providing additional books and educational resources to families over the summer holidays, with support and guidance, may also be helpful—for example, offering advice about effective strategies for reading with children.

Additional information about supporting and communicating with parents has been published by the EEF in its guide for schools on *Communicating effectively with families*.

Access to technology

Pupils' access to technology has been an important factor affecting the extent to which they can learn effectively at home. In particular, lack of access to technology has been a barrier for many disadvantaged children.

As all pupils return to schools, technology could also be valuable; for example, by facilitating access to online tuition or support. Some schools might find it helpful to invest in additional technology, either by providing pupils with devices or improving the facilities available in school.

To support learning, how technology is used matters most. Ensuring the elements of effective teaching are present—for example, clear explanations, scaffolding, practice and feedback—is more important than which form of technology is used. In addition, providing support and guidance on how to use technology effectively is essential, particularly if new forms of technology are being introduced.

Additional information about supporting effective remote learning, including using technology, has been published in the EEF's *'Best evidence on supporting students to learn remotely'*.

Summer support

Summer programmes can benefit pupils socially and academically, helping to ensure that they return to school ready to learn.

Summer support can also focus on a wide range of outcomes, such as confidence and wellbeing, and include a wide range of activities such as sports, music and drama that children might have missed out on during lockdown.

One challenge for summer programmes is achieving high levels of attendance, particularly from children from disadvantaged families. Communicating with pupils and their families to assess levels of engagement and barriers to attendance is likely to be important. In addition, staffing is a key challenge, recognising the extensive demands placed on teachers and schools in recent months and the challenges created by public health requirements.

For summer programmes to improve educational outcomes, they need to include high-quality academic support, such as small group tuition delivered by teachers or trained tutors.

Teach First-trained teachers have published their experiences and tips on running summer programmes.

FURTHER READING AND SUPPORT

Evidence

The EEF's *Teaching and Learning Toolkit* is an accessible summary of educational research designed to support teachers and school leaders who are making decisions about how to improve learning outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children and young people.

The EEF also produces Guidance Reports, offering clear and actionable recommendations on high-priority topics, including literacy, mathematics, special educational needs and disabilities, social and emotional learning, behaviour and parental engagement.

Putting evidence into action

Many of the approaches suggested in this Covid-19 guide can involve adopting new approaches under challenging circumstances. As such, careful attention to implementing change is likely to increase the impact of any approach. We recommend this guide be read in conjunction with the EEF guidance report, *Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation.*

The challenge of implementation often means that less is more: selecting a small number of priorities and giving them the best chance of success is a safer bet than creating a long list of strategies that becomes hard to manage.

Further support

BBC Bitesize

Resources for learning from home created with teachers and other educational experts, featuring a mix of videos, animations, practice activities, quizzes and games. Available for free at:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/dailylessons/

Oak National Academy

A sequenced plan of video lessons and curricular resources to use flexibly, to complement existing teaching and planning. Available for free at:

https://www.thenational.academy/information-for-teachers/

The Chartered College of Teaching

The Chartered College of Teaching has collated a wide range of resources and articles designed to support teachers' and school leaders' planning. These are available at:

https://my.chartered.college/2020/06/catch-up-and-recovery-approaches-selected-reading/

Public Health England

Public Health England and the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families have published a toolkit for measuring and monitoring young people's mental wellbeing, available at:

https://www.annafreud.org/media/4612/mwb-toolki-final-draft-4.pdf

What Works for Children's Social Care

What Works for Children's Social Care have published a summary report, designed to identify promising approaches for improving the educational outcomes of children who have had social workers. The report is available here:

https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WWCSC_what_works_education_children_SWs_Feb20.pdf

Teach First

Teach First have complied a wide range of resources designed to support schools, focusing on particular on supporting disadvantaged children and young people, available here:

https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/shut-in-not-shut-out/school-resources/

Education Endowment Foundation

The EEF has produced:

- tools for schools to help support home learning and maximise the impact of work set;

- resources to share with parents on how to support home routines;

- rapid evidence assessments on remote learning and the impact of school closures on the attainment gap.

These are all available at:

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/

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