Ensuring a smooth transition back to education

25 August 2020

Dr Michael Sanders

Chief Executive
What Works for Children's Social Care

About this webinar

- Young people are expected to return to school in the coming weeks

- This poses a vast challenge for people working in education, and for the families of children

- The government argues that there is a moral duty to ensure young people are able to return to school

- This does not provide any practical assistance

Speakers

Michael Sanders, Chief Executive, What Works for Children's Social Care

Tina Russell, Director of Social Care and Safeguarding, Worcestershire Children First

Simon Cox, Content Specialist for Mathematics, Education Endowment Foundation

Andy Elvin, CEO, TACT

Housekeeping

- We're recording the webinar

- We have an hour and a half

- We'll have time for questions at the end

- Please type your questions into the chat box

- We'll do our best to get to as many as possible, and may group similar questions

- If your question is for a particular panelist, please include this!

About WWCSC

IMPROVING EVIDENCE
FOR BETTER OUTCOMES

How?

- Pulling together what we already know
- Supporting the good work that is already happening
- Commissioning new research
- Giving practitioners, young people and families a platform to share their experience
- Improving the accessibility and relevance of the evidence

Why?

To ensure the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families

Background

You all know this...

- Schools have been closed since March this year, except for `vulnerable' children and the children of key workers, with some limited reopening

- Attendance in this vulnerable group has been low

- A huge amount of work has been done by schools and children's services to ensure that young people are able to learn, and be kept safe, through the pandemic.

- Government has asked for children to return from September

Context

- Research by Lindsey Macmillan at UCL shows that half of social immobility flows through disparities in access to education

- Young people from less fortunate backgrounds, and/or those who are living in vulnerable or precarious situations, are less likely to have been able to access education during lockdown

- Analysis by the EEF and others suggests a widening of the attainment gap, brought about by missed school during the lockdown.

- Research by the Royal Society's DELVE group finds that opening schools risks a rise in cases, but that the cost to young people of missing education is larger.

Young people with a social worker

- The information we have is murkier for young people with a social worker.

- There are strong suggestions that these young people, who may have a less strong relationship with school, have found reduced stress and anxiety during lockdown

- The work of schools, virtual schools and social workers, as well as foster carers, parents and others, has been focused on safety and education during this time

- Because of the age profile of foster carers, there are more secondary risks associated with young people in care returning to school

Social Care Outcomes

- Referrals to social care reduced during the lockdown, in part because of the reduction in contact with professionals

  This is expected to lead to a surge in need, referrals, and intervention, when young people return to school and contact with professionals

- This could potentially further disrupt the learning of young people.

How do we navigate through this?

- What Works for Children's Social Care is launching with Third Space Learning a large online maths tuition programme for young people with a social worker - to help support learning while minimising any additional risks

- We're funding supervision for DSLs in secondary schools in Greater Manchester

- We're placing embedded social workers into 168 secondary schools across the country.

- We don't have all the answers, but handily, we have help from our speakers...

Tina Russell

Director of Social Care and Safeguarding
Worcestershire Children First

Back to School

Tina Russell

Director Social Care & Safeguarding

The covid19 context

- March 20 schools closed as physical buildings to all "non vulnerable children and those of critical worker" and a programme of home supported learning began to develop

- Vulnerable children "those open with a social work plan" were able to attend school if the parent/carer wanted them to. During "lock down" the community message was "stay at home if you can"

- Our Covid working protocol phase 1 and 2 took the message back to parents from "encourage" to "expect" your child to attend their school place

School plays an essential part of safety and outcomes

- Prior to the summer holidays we saw 37% of our children on plans attending school

- Child Protection 48%

- Children in Need 33%

- Children Looked After 32%

Vision, Mission and Values

OUR VISION

Worcestershire to be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up.

WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST

OUR MISSION

Supporting children and young people to be happy, healthy and safe.

OUR VALUES

CHILDREN AT OUR HEART

VALUE FAMILY LIFE

GOOD EDUCATION FOR ALL

PROTECTION FROM HARM

Back to School Project

- Some children and parents will experience barriers and challenges with returning to school.

- A child/young person not returning to school will not, on its own, be a reason for Children's Social Care to undertake an assessment at level 4.

- "Hidden Harm" and to ensuring we get a timely and proportionate response into families to identify any risks and to minimise further delay and impact of non-school attendance is also important to us.

Back to School project approach

In scope Criteria

- Less than 70% attendance pre Covid
- Non or very little meaningful contact with school during Covid
- Have not returned or not returned with any consistency Sept 20

- Out of scope
- Looked After Children
- Children with an allocated early help or EWO worker
- Those who don't meet the criteria who can access alternative targeted support
- School responsibilities and Barnadoes "See, Hear, Respond"

Our Back to School Offer

- Referrals will be received directly from schools and be triaged
- We will be using the Signs of Safety model of intervention and a bespoke tool.
- Dedicated workers to each child & parent
- Worcestershire Health & Care Trust have developed a programme of on line sessions covering aspects associated with rejection/fear/anxiety of school return
- Support Mentors – Children & Parents

Outcomes and Evaluation

Attendance
at
school

Sustained
attendance
at school

We will track cases against specific interventions provided as part of the project to identify patterns in what worked and what didn't.

We will also track cases referred to the other 2 pathways to measure our success.

We will seek Child and Parent feedback as part of our evaluation to capture their experience of what worked and why.

Jan 21 we will evaluate impact to see if there is a need for any continuation in two areas
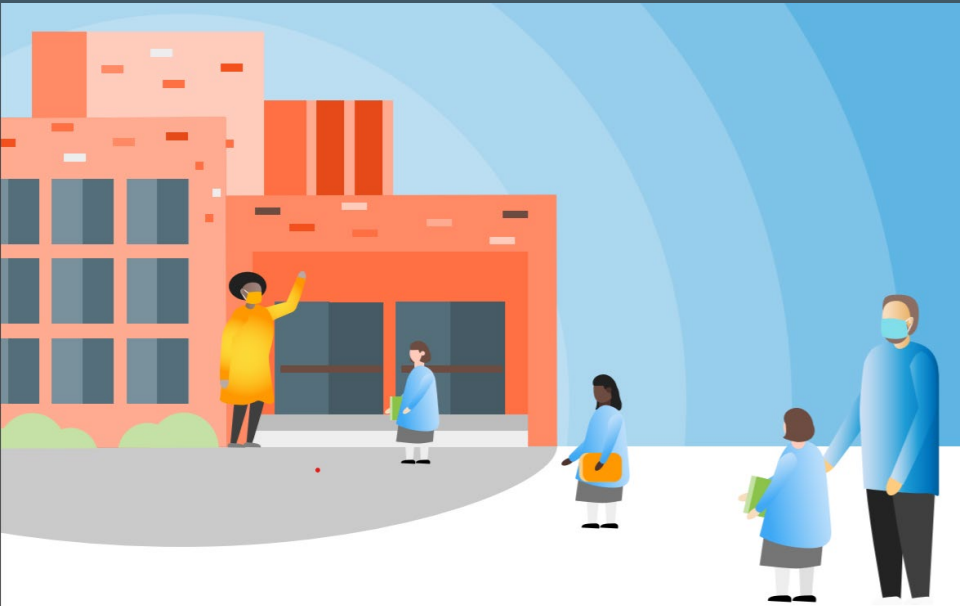
Simon Cox

Content Specialist for Mathematics Education Endowment Foundation

Our mission

The EEF is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement.

Our findings

1. School closures are likely to reverse progress made to narrow the gap in the last decade

2. Supporting effective remote learning will mitigate the extent to which the gap widens

3. Sustained support will be needed to help disadvantaged pupils catch up

Education Endowment Foundation (2020). Rapid evidence assessment: impact of school closures on the attainment gap

@EducEndowFoundn

THE EEF GUIDE TO SUPPORTING SCHOOL PLANNING:
A TIERED APPROACH TO 2020-21

Adopting a tiered approach

The tiered approach is a guide, not a prescription. Many strategies will overlap categories, and the balance between categories will vary throughout the school year as priorities change. However, the idea of tiers of support can offer a useful framework for thinking about how to balance different challenges created by whole school returns. Schools can also use a tiered approach to help focus on a small number of strategies that are likely to make the biggest difference.

Figure 1: The tiered model for school planning

1 Teaching
For example
- Professional development programme
- Supporting Early Career teachers
- Assessment
- Effective remote learning

2 Targeted academic support
For example
- Structured interventions
- Small group tuition
- One to one support
- Effective deployment of Teaching Assistants
- Reading interventions

3 Wider strategies
For example
- Sustaining parental engagement
- Social and emotional learning
- Reinforcing behaviour routines
- Breakfast clubs

1 Teaching

- Implement a 12-week curriculum cycle to place cultural context, retrieval practice, formative assessment and rich summative assessment at the top of the agenda.

- Support the cycle with sustained CPD, ensuring this is subject-specific where necessary.

- Support student (and staff) knowledge through the departmental construction of knowledge organisers for each cycle.

- Frequent low-stakes testing to ensure all students, and in particular disadvantaged students, experience success and celebrate the acquisition of knowledge.

- Deliberately reduce workload (eg. reduced meetings) during the assessment cycle to aid staff wellbeing and enable high-quality responsive teaching.

- Monitor and evaluate outcomes and quality of implementation, creating a new implementation cycle for next year.

- Maintain our existing CPD focus on developing metacognition and the quality of teacher modelling and explanation.
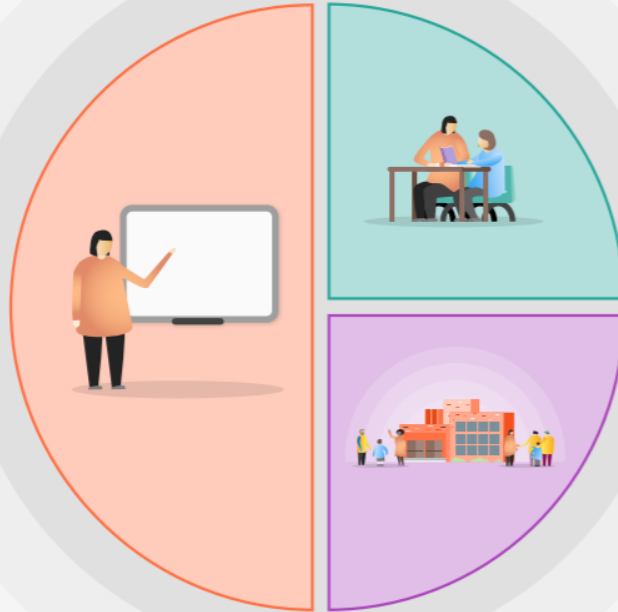
2 Targeted academic support

To enable improved access to the curriculum:

- Launch the Kingsbridge Reading Canon to improve the metacognitive aspects of reading.

- Provide Research School led literacy CPD to ensure high-quality teaching.

- Use reading guides for pre-teaching with targeted support groups.

- Communicate reading guides with parents.

- Provide parents with additional support materials.

3 Wider strategies

To enable access to a blended learning model:

- Provide ongoing technical support.

- Ensure our most vulnerable pupils have priority access to classroom teaching and online materials.

- Ensure pastoral contact home for disadvantaged students also identifies barriers to engagement due to technology or a lack of other forms of support.

- Use incremental coaching to ensure teachers are focused on closing gaps for disadvantaged students that would potentially be greater in a blended learning environment.

National Tutoring Programme

Nuffield Early Language Intervention

1 Teaching

- Regular staff CPD on mental health, wellbeing and SEL.

- Regular CPD opportunities are provided to all staff to sustain and enhance SEL work, including opportunities for understanding key outcomes of SEL and strategies to support self-awareness and self-regulation.

- SEL is embedded within school routines including regular emotions check-ins and time for calming activities.

- SEL core competencies are regularly and explicitly taught by all teachers throughout the curriculum.

- Teachers model use of key strategies for identifying emotions and employing self-regulation strategies.

2 Targeted academic support

- Safe Spaces available to targeted children throughout the day.

- Pastoral staff provide small group and 1:1 support to assist children in transition into school.

- Mentoring sessions for specific children focused on self-awareness, self-management, problem solving and social skills.

- Weekly access to therapy dog for targeted children.

- Lego therapy.

3 Wider strategies

- Lessons on identifying emotions and self-regulation strategies.

- Whole school physical environment has been planned with Safe Spaces.

- Safe Space access scheduled for all.

- SEL Skills Progression Framework outlines learning from EYFS to Year 6.

- SEL strategies for self-awareness, self-regulation, problem solving, social awareness and relationship skills shared.

- Staff Wellbeing Committee.

- Student Wellness and Awareness Group (SWAG) provides pupil voice.

- Shared language across the school.

A checklist for implementing targeted academic support in 2020-21:

☐ Are we using relevant and rigorous data to ensure targeted interventions are appropriate?

☐ Are our school staff sufficiently skilled in delivering targeted academic interventions? If not, what additional support is required?

☐ Will changes to rooming or facilities, as a result of social distancing measures, have a direct or indirect impact on targeted academic interventions (e.g. are there sufficient spaces in school for small scale interventions)?

☐ Are any interventions being stopped to ensure both staff and pupils have the capacity to undertake new interventions as part of their daily work?

Questions to consider when planning to support pupils with SEND:

- How do staff know their pupils, including those pupils with SEND? How is this communicated widely?

- How will your school plan for effective teaching assistant deployment to offer both targeted interventions and supplementary classroom provision?

- How are supportive relationships with an adult in school developed for pupils with SEND?

St Mark's C of E Primary School: Supporting parents, supporting learning

Partial school closures have presented a positive opportunity to work closely with families in our school community. It has been a leadership priority for us over the past months and will continue to be so in the academic year ahead.

We ensure we invest in strong relationships with parents. This includes employing a Community and Wellbeing Leader and an Attendance Officer who maintain strong links between school and home. During partial school closures we have undertaken a differentiated approach to supporting pupils (including phone calls and home visits fortnightly, weekly and every three working days).

Our focus on creating bespoke and targeted learning packs is something we can learn from as we move into the new academic year. We will be ensuring home learning is purposeful, achievable and well monitored by staff. The suite of options for home learning can be deployed flexibly in the year ahead; especially if there are unplanned school closures or pupil absences.

A checklist for implementing support and communication with parents in 2020-21:

☐ Are there barriers for parents that need to be recognised and supported, e.g. limited time due to work commitments, or low literacy levels?

☐ Are existing approaches to supporting attendance adequate given a new context where many parents may have a heightened sensitivity to the health and wellbeing of their child?

☐ Are our school staff sufficiently skilled in engaging in sustained parental communications? If not, does our planning contain the right blend of professional development activities?

☐ Can new or existing technologies sustain a manageable and meaningful plan to communicate with and support parents?
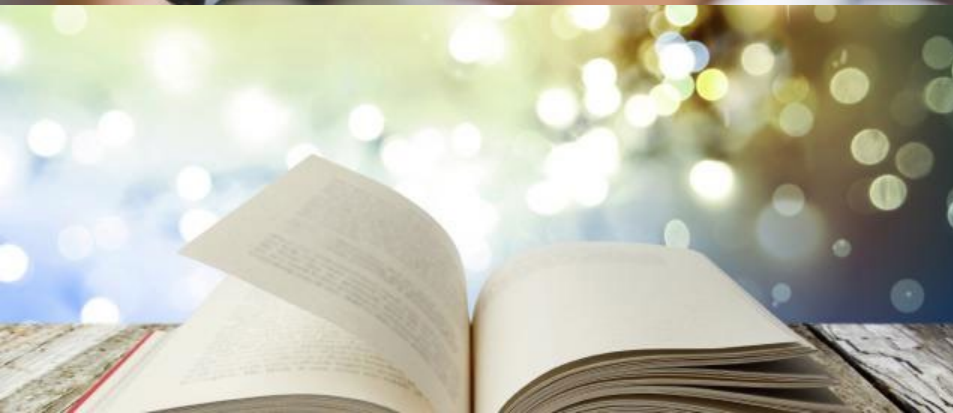
Thank you

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Education Endowment Foundation

@EducEndowFoundn

Andy Elvin
CEO
TACT

Back to school

Issues for foster families & lessons from school return in Scotland

Transition – No surprises

- Prepare children – discuss differences in drop off and pick up. Describe what the classes and break time might look like. Talk about what teachers might wear (masks) and the importance of handwashing

- Unexpected changes can be really disconcerting for children in care and acting them out in a role play can help younger children to envisage how it may go. Older young people may want to make sure that they know what happens when they arrive, ensure they are comfortable if they have to wear a mask getting a bus and know that they cannot have lunch with friends in different year or class groups

Assessment and recovery curriculum

- Support foster carers in finding out assessment results which should be available in the Autumn term PEP so that they are aware if the young person is behind and if so, what the school intend to do to help close the gap.

- Asking in PEPs how Pupil Premium Funding will be used and how the school is allocating the funding they will receive for the recovery curriculum. Advocating assertively so that our young people receive the support that they are entitled to.

Emotional support

- For those children who might struggle with the return carers need to know what support is available. Opportunity for carers to speak with the young person to find out how they are feeling and raise any concerns with the school if issues persist. There is a drive for schools to be more nurture, trauma and attachment aware.   Accessing emotional literacy programmes, circle times and school counselling services. Having a mentor or key person to go to if they are in distress. Anxiety and self-harm incidents will have rise, particularly with our teenage girls who may internalise how they are feeling.

Tracking progress and addressing issues

- Resilience and recovery are key as some will take the changes in their stride and other young people who really struggle with the 'new normal'. Restrictions are likely to vary for a while longer depending on pandemic progress so routines may be less rigid and harder to predict. This might help our young people who can be oppositional and find rules oppressive but those who thrive on routine, particularly our young people living with autism or anxiety issues find the changing rules really hard to manage. If the young person isn't settled by half-term our advice would be to take action.

Feedback from Scotland

- Schools have manged things really well with separate entrances for years groups, bubbles & one way systems. Separate entrances an issue for carers with different aged children

- Parents picking up at home time is a big issue, very little social distancing, lots of chatter and few masks

General issues & Conclusion

- TACT/RiP research & Bristol Uni research has seen anxiety reduce for some children in lock-down. This is largely down to no school. Schools need to be more trauma informed (role for schools based SW)

- Compassion fatigue – Foster carers have seen their role more than double since March. They have seen no general financial recognition of additional costs. They have also missed out on holidays (with or without children) We need to be mindful of this

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION