



HOUSE OF COMMONS

## Education Committee

Oral evidence: [The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services, HC 254](#)

Tuesday 2 March 2021

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Members present: Robert Halfon (Chair); Fleur Anderson; Apsana Begum; Jonathan Gullis; Tom Hunt; Dr Caroline Johnson; Kim Johnson; David Johnston; Ian Mearns; David Simmonds.

Questions 1208-1255

### Witnesses

**I:** Sir Kevan Collins, Education Recovery Commissioner, Department for Education; Professor Becky Francis, Chief Executive, Education Endowment Foundation; Geoff Barton, General Secretary, Association of School and College Leaders.

Written evidence from witnesses:

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sir Kevan Collins, Professor Becky Francis and Geoff Barton.

Q1208 **Chair:** Good morning, everybody. Welcome to our Committee session on the catch-up programme. Can I ask you to introduce yourselves and your positions to the public—those watching on the internet—and for the benefit of the tape? Can we start with you, Sir Kevan?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** Good morning. My name is Sir Kevan Collins. I am the recently appointed Education Recovery Commissioner.

**Chair:** Geoff?

**Geoff Barton:** Hello there, everybody. I am Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders. I represent around 21,000 trust leaders, headteachers, deputies, business leaders—the people looking after schools and colleges across the UK.

**Chair:** Thank you. Becky?

**Professor Francis:** I am Professor Becky Francis, chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation.

Q1209 **Chair:** Thank you. Sir Kevan, as part of your new role as Education Recovery Commissioner, you are to oversee a comprehensive programme of catch-up. How comprehensive will the catch-up programme be? Will you be looking solely at clawing back the learning lost because of the pandemic, or will you be more ambitious and seek to address the 18.4-month attainment gap at GCSE level that existed prior to covid-19? How fundamental is your recovery plan, and when are you planning to report to the Prime Minister?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** Thank you for inviting me to join today's session. I think we have to be bold and ambitious. My view is that the recovery needs to be long-term, sustained and far reaching. "Catch-up" is not really the language that I am using; I think it is much more about recovery over time. Catch-up is part of that, but it will not be enough—we need to do something over a long period.

Your point is so well made because the data is very clear that this disruption to children's learning—it has been a huge shock to their learning and education—has hit children who face disadvantage more than others. We have to be mindful of that, which is why I was so pleased that last week, for example, the covid premium resource to schools was allocated on the basis of the pupil premium, so it is weighted to where there is the greatest need. I do not think you can do anything in education in this country without being mindful of the disadvantage gap. That is something that we will have to attend to as we think about the programme of work that I am recommending.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

In terms of timescales, we are not heading for a kind of big moment with a “big bang” report. I am continually giving advice to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister—it’s an ongoing conversation—and supported last week’s work. And then, as we go through the next term, we will also keep wanting to report and give information. So the advice and the announcements will be constantly supported by my advice.

**Chair:** So it’s going to be a fundamental recovery, but ongoing.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** Absolutely.

Q1210 **Chair:** We know that children will have spent long periods in toxic home environments. We know that their mental health is worse. We know that 37% of teachers in our most deprived schools have reported an increase in truancing—this is unrelated to covid—during the first term, back in the autumn.

The Government have pledged, as you have just highlighted, more than £1.7 billion for initiatives targeted at catch-up. The first thing we should do must surely be to ensure that children are ready to learn, engaged and showing up in the classes when schools return.

Will the non-academic catch-up form part of your recovery programme? I see it as a virtuous circle, because if you have a non-academic plan to catch up, in terms of sporting activities and mental health and wellbeing, then you actually increase educational attainment. I just want to understand what your recovery plan is to address the non-academic challenges faced by young people. By the way, if all of you can be as concise as possible, we will be able to go through it—

**Sir Kevan Collins:** Sorry, Chair. I completely agree with you: this has to be broad and long-term. Doing the non-academic as well as the academic isn’t about doing what’s nice; it’s about doing what the evidence tells you has to be done. Children need to be ready to learn. We have to address their full education so, for me, it includes the academic, yes, but also what you might call the non-academic learning.

The recovery has to attend to the broad array of children, at all ages. We know that early years children, for example, have missed playing with each other, so we have to think about that and make sure it is covered and attended to in the early years. We know that, as children get older, the whole issue of competitive sports and engaging in group activities needs to be thought about, and also in colleges, with activities and outreach. So yes, I’m with you: it has to be broad and inclusive.

Q1211 **Chair:** Can I ask you about the summer holidays issue and extending the school day? Obviously, the Government have announced funding for both a summer activities programme and summer schools, which I am sure everybody would welcome.

We know that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted disadvantaged pupils. Your own institute, Sir Kevan and Becky, estimated that the gap had widened by 36%, but when the DfE delivered a programme of summer schools for disadvantaged students in 2013, they



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

identified that only 50% of disadvantaged pupils invited actually attended. You also said, the EEF, that the programme was relatively expensive at £1,370 per pupil, that it was challenging to get pupils in areas outside London and even that the intervention appeared to have a negative impact on pupils eligible for free school meals in maths, with an estimated loss of two months' progress.

So can I ask this of all of you? What specific measures should be taken to ensure that the most disadvantaged benefit from summer schools? It's a question that I raised with the Secretary of State in Parliament yesterday. And do you think that a better option is to extend the school day, because you will have a better chance of engaging in extra learning the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, who will already be in school?

Before Geoff Barton thinks that I am saying that teachers should have this extra burden, let me say that I have constantly advocated that this should be done by civil society—sporting groups and community groups coming into the school to provide predominantly sporting and mental health and wellbeing activity, as well as a little bit of academic catch-up.

Can I start with you, Becky, and then go to Geoff and then Kevan?

**Professor Francis:** Thanks, Robert. You raise the issue of summer schools and extending the school day. In both those cases, we know, from the international meta-analyses, that there can be marginal gains from those approaches. But of course the devil is in the detail, and you have captured the evidence very well already, Robert, on summer schools.

The key issues are these. There are benefits, of course, from just summer activity for wellbeing, as we have been hearing. But if you want to see academic progress made, that needs to be very targeted, led by well-qualified teachers and so forth. It is very expensive, and of course we are balancing the issues around teacher burnout and expectations for both pupils and teachers over the summer. Additionally, you have the issue that has been consistently found, both in our own RCT research and in the international evidence: that it is particularly difficult to encourage disadvantaged young people to attend those summer activities. All that needs to be weighed in the round.

In relation to extending the school day, there is evidence of marginal benefit, but again, the devil is in the detail. It has been shown that there is a tapering of benefit the longer the school day progresses, and it is no coincidence that we have come to a place with the average school day. There are issues about pupil attention and what can be required of pupils. Again, you may want to target disadvantaged pupils, but what does that mean with regards to the demands for them, potential stigmatisation and so forth? These different issues have to be balanced—again, alongside value for money and the issue for teacher resource as well.

**Q1212 Chair:** Your own studies showed that attainment increased by two months if you had sporting and mental health activities, but the opposite was the case for summer schools. I am not against summer schools, but that is



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

interesting.

**Professor Francis:** Absolutely, Robert. We actually think that there may be more benefit to be looking at attendance and making sure that disadvantaged kids are attending school and that the value for money there, and the impact on results, may be better than simply extending school, whether for disadvantaged students or all. I also want to draw attention, if I may, Robert—

**Chair:** Very briefly.

**Professor Francis:** Very briefly, to our tiered approach. We recommend a focus on teacher quality as the key driver here and the most important thing that is going to make a difference to learning gain overall, but particularly for disadvantaged students, and then complemented by targeted approaches, which we can talk about in a second, and also by whole-school approaches, including behaviour, attendance and so on.

**Chair:** Thank you. Geoff?

**Geoff Barton:** I will make three points, essentially: one around curriculum, one around teaching and one around disadvantage. I want to start by picking up on something that Kevan said, and I want to reject the language of catch-up—I am not sure “recovery” is fantastic. I also want to reject the idea that there are some things that we might call academic, and some things we might not.

Playing in an orchestra after school, whether you want to call it academic or not, is precisely the kind of thing that young people need to get back into and will be craving. That is my first point: what the evidence from EEF tells us, and what those of us who have been teachers know, is that ultimately the most important thing for young people is a broad and balanced curriculum where we do not use the language of catch-up and think, “Right, I’ll take them out of their PE lessons and give them extra maths.” It should be about quality, not quantity, which is why a lot of us have problems with the summer school idea, which we think is a bit of a marginal issue, but we will come back to that.

Young people will crave getting back into those rhythms of a curriculum, which is helping them. Having a person who can teach them that stuff will be the core business. Looking at what EEF says, the most important things that will happen for those young people are early years—getting them into the habits of learning, reading comprehension, which is so important, feedback from the teacher, which is helping young people to navigate their way to the next bits of learning, and homework in secondary. That is why if I was a head still, I would be doing after-school prep time, homework clubs and that kind of thing, using resources to be able to make sure that those children who cannot work at home have a safe environment in school to do it. The curriculum is No. 1.

No. 2: we need to remind ourselves that it will be teachers, more than people from civil society, who will make the real impacts on young people. That is not to say we do not want the other stuff going, but the core



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

business should be teachers freed up and uncluttered to relentlessly assess where young people are, and then to be able to teach them. Those young people will need extra teaching, whether it is at lunch time or after school, but let's plan that. The people who I represent—leaders—would want to have the autonomy to be able to use resources and to target that appropriately.

My third point is really picking up on what Becky said about attendance, because that is the critical one. We tend to see that when you run summer schools—we used to run a summer school at the school where I was head—it was pretty much the same young people who attended it. It was the ones whose parents could drop them off and so forth. Now if we're really going to try and get to disadvantaged children, what we don't want is the stigmatising that Becky has talked about.

I do think, therefore, that now particularly we need to remind them that coming to school next week is going to be a safe thing to do. They might have to wear face masks and have tests and so on, but let's absolutely focus on the normality for them and the rest of the young people in getting back into school. Then it is for us to target additional resources around them, which will include extracurricular activities as well. That would be my immediate response; it is not rejecting the summer schools idea, but it is just saying that if we want to make the most important bit of impact, I think we start with what happens in the school, during and after the school day.

**Q1213 Chair:** Thank you. Kevan, can I just go back to the point about the disadvantaged children not turning up to summer schools? Since the children are already in school, could you extend the school day by paying the teachers more, redoing contracts or bringing in civil society—or doing a mixture, depending on schools? Would that be a better option?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I tend to think that right now is not the time for either/or; it is a time for all things to be considered and be available. What is very important about the summer school approach this time around, compared to the study that you mentioned, is that it is for schools to determine and target which children, if any, they want to bring to the summer schools.

The most important thing that will happen when children go back—and the sooner they can go back, the better, in my view—is that schools will assess, meet and know their children and try to work out what different children need so that the right children can be targeted for the summer schools. I think schools are right to call that and that will, I think, help with the attendance.

I can't overstate the point made about quality. We also said to schools with the covid premium that, actually, that is where you invest in making sure that teachers have the support they need to do the assessment, make the curriculum adjustments and be supported to develop some of the skills they might need to meet a broader range of children.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

I don't think it is either/or at the moment. For some children, summer schools can be extremely supportive, especially if you're in year 7 and going to your secondary school and you want a couple of weeks before you get there. I can see the value of that. But I think the key thing is that schools target and know which children would benefit and for which children summer school is perhaps not the right thing. It is not to be called centrally.

**Q1214 Chair:** A final question for the time being before I pass to my colleagues. The Education Policy Institute has shown that around 40% of the attainment gap at GCSE level—and we have discussed already that disadvantaged pupils are 18.4 months behind their better-off peers—has emerged by the age of five. Ofsted's survey of early years providers last November said that 53% of providers reported that their children's personal and social development had fallen behind after the first lockdown. We know how damaging it has been to younger children particularly.

Of the £1.7 billion announced for catch-up, £10 million is to be allocated to the pre-reception early language programme and £8 million for the Nuffield Foundation, for the Nuffield early language intervention programme. This is all good, but is that £18 million sufficient? What will your priorities be for early years, Kevan?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** No, it is not sufficient; I think the whole package isn't sufficient. It is a good start, but this is not the recovery plan. My own background is in early years and, as Geoff has said, early years has to be absolutely central to the plan.

The issue around early years, of course, is quality and making sure the capacity is there to adopt the programmes. The work on the NELI programme on early language into literacy is so well made. But the crucial thing for me about early years is not necessarily overloading more programmes, but creating the time and space for children to be with highly-trained, skilled adults. There is a fundamental piece about early years and the quality we need to invest in.

I think it is fair to say that over time we have under-invested in early years as a nation. We need to understand the massive contribution that great early years practice and experience makes. I see it as core to my work to think about how we can better support early years as the foundation for learning and broad learning in terms of social skills and—I know Geoff doesn't like this phrase—non-academic development.

**Chair:** Thanks. Fleur has a question on early years specifically, then I will bring in Tom and Ian.

**Q1215 Fleur Anderson:** Thank you, Chair. Good morning everyone. I have a question about state-maintained nurseries, which don't have access to the catch-up funding. Can that be changed? They are seeing the same issues when it comes to the time before the start of school, when they would need as much as any state nursery in a primary school, which does have access to the funding. State-maintained nursery schools don't.



Q1216 **Chair:** Who would like to answer that? Kevan?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** All I can do is say that I would like to take that away and understand the detail of that and come back to you. The issue is that the money must be with the children. Wherever those children are, they need the support.

**Professor Francis:** Fleur has made a really important point. We have been very proud to support Nuffield early language intervention in the last year. It was, of course, one of the projects that had come through and had been tested through EEF trials and then we have supported the scale-up this year. It has reached 40% of reception classes and two thirds of those have been with majority disadvantaged children, so it is a terrific success and opportunity. I absolutely agree with Fleur that it is really important that we extend that further.

**Geoff Barton:** Can I just make a general point based on what Fleur said? Of the £700 million that was being announced last week, £18 million, if I remember correctly, is going into early years and yet, as Kevan said and I think as we all know, that is where the foundations for your future are formed. If you are a child in a house like this with books and where adults are having conversations with you, irrespective of all the stuff about laptops, that is the kind of thing that will have been supporting you all the way through. I hope that part of the legacy of covid is us understanding what we need to do more of and less of, and what we need to put more money into. If I was a head in a primary school or working with a nursery, to be able to have additional support for those young people's language development is precisely the kind of way that I could deploy some of that funding to build those foundations for later for those young people.

Q1217 **Tom Hunt:** I am just thinking about summer schools. We have known for a while that there is going to be this £220 million funding for the holiday activities and food programme over the summer months. How would any planned summer schools relate to that HAF programme? How would they complement each other? Would they interrelate? I can see how they could. My understanding about the HAF programme—we had it in Ipswich last summer, in the pilot—is that it tends to be focused on physical activity and so on. Presumably, then, if there are summer schools, they will be much more focused on academic catch-up. I appreciate Geoff doesn't like that term, but there is a valid distinction there. I am not downplaying the importance of anything we may deem to be non-academic.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I think that is right. The notion of a school-led or locally led recovery is very important to me in the work that I am doing. How you align what you are doing in your school or your local community with your HAF programme seems to be that we need to trust people on the ground to put these things together, rather than decide that from the top. A phrase that I will return to is that it needs to be a school-led, setting-led, college-led recovery—the centre supporting with the right resources, but the people pulling this together with local communities and local places. I very much hope that the schools link up to the HAF



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

programme. I think that is a fantastic opportunity to enrich not only the academic learning—let's not leave that behind; it is crucial. You can't walk into secondary schools behind in literacy and thrive. We need to support young people who might have missed out on some of that reading that Geoff talked about, but also broaden it into a broader range of experiences. That seems to me to be part of what we can do with this kind of opportunity for schools to build this themselves, rather than to be told exactly what the components must be from the centre.

**Q1218 Ian Mearns:** Kevan, the role and description for the Education Recovery Commissioner states that the ambition is that students will catch up with lost learning over the course of this Parliament. The course of this Parliament could well be until 2024. How will you deliver on that ambition? Do you see your role as turning that ambition into an actual strategy to make sure that the right youngsters are benefiting in the right ways, in the right places, with the right priority?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** Absolutely. Although my appointment is for nine months, I think the recovery programme or approach is a long-term, sustained piece of work. It certainly won't be over quickly. For me, the legacy and the work we need to do on recovery will go through this Parliament—to the Chair's point, beyond recovery into the reform, if you like. Recovery is revealing to us some of the underlying scars and issues in our system. We have seen what has happened in terms of the disadvantaged children's learning loss—although that phrase is fraught—so we need to view this not just as tackling the recovery, but as a longer-term piece of reform. I know from my conversations with the Secretary of State and with the Prime Minister when taking on this post that that is their ambition. That is why I am excited to be part of it, laying that ground and, by the way, reminding everyone that recovery is going to be everybody's business. This is what school's need to be thinking about now, deeply, for a good period of time. To answer your point, yes.

**Q1219 Ian Mearns:** But, Kevan, part of the problem that I can see in trying to recover a youngster's lost learning over the course of a Parliament is that many young people, in the course of that period, will move between settings and take that loss with them. What preparatory work do you think needs to be done to prepare the new settings to absorb youngsters who have that dimension of lost learning?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I will try to go very quickly. In a sense, I have three cohorts in my head at the moment. There is a group of young people who you might describe as having less time to learn. They are in FE; they are in year 11; they are not necessarily in the A-level group—they are the other group going into vocational learning. We need to do something quite urgently to support those young people, because we need to make sure that they get the time they have lost in, say, practical work in vocational courses, or that year 11s get access to choose the right vocational course. We need to do some urgent work with that group.

On the very youngest children who we are talking about, we must always remember that young people are very resilient. We have a long time to



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

adjust and support those young people, and we need to make sure that teachers are able to adjust their curriculum and provision to meet the needs of children who might come with a broader range of issues than they are used to in year groups. We need to support teachers with those.

At the transition points, particularly for those young people moving this year from primary to secondary, it is important that we support those children in that step. That is a huge moment in life, and that is why I am keen to see in the summer schools work that we have talked about that some year 7s are well supported as they make the journey into secondary school, so they bounce in and we support them as best we can as they make that transition.

There are different approaches for different groups of children, and the best people to do this are those in the local settings. We need to spend a bit of time now reflecting, learning and assessing before we dive in with lots of additional programmes.

**Q1220 Ian Mearns:** A question that immediately comes to mind, Kevan, is that I am picking up all over the place youngsters who have left school but are being dropped out of apprenticeships. Are any lessons being learned with the work that you are doing that can be passed on to training providers, FE colleges and all the rest?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I have been meeting a lot and talking to colleagues in the FE sector and training providers. As we know, and we can look back to the '80s for this kind of shock to young people, the prospects in the labour market are not particularly attractive for young people. We need to think hard about that group, who are always, I think, the group that is too easily forgotten, who are not going on to university, are not going into A-levels, and are the young people who we, as a system, do not serve as well as we should in making sure that their needs are met. We need urgent conversations with colleagues in the FE sector about that group.

**Q1221 Ian Mearns:** Kevan, in terms of your developing the ambition into the strategy, you said that you will give honest and fearless advice to the Government about catch-up. Do you anticipate any scenarios where the Department may disagree with your advice, and if so, how will you persuade the Department to take on an evidence-based approach and keep it going once your contract has finished?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** One of the benefits of doing this at this time in my life, Ian, is that I feel pretty unencumbered. I have nothing really to lose other than to give people the best advice I can. Of course, I am not going to walk away from a challenge or a fight in that, but ultimately, we have to do the right thing. I have almost come out of semi-retirement to do this, because this is a moment of genuine national responsibility for all of us who care about young people. I will give it straight to people on what we need to do.

I have only been in it three weeks, so I am being a bit tentative about laying down the law, if you like, or laying down what needs to be done. The key thing for me now is to talk as many as people as possible, to draw



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

on the evidence that I am lucky to have knowledge of and background in, and which Becky now provides so well, and to give straight and clear advice. I think it is very important now that we are not tentative, and we need to be fearless in the way that we respond to this.

**Q1222 Ian Mearns:** Can I ask whether Geoff or Becky have any observations on what has been said in answer to those two questions? How will we take this forward initially?

**Professor Francis:** Yes, I think that the overarching point is that schools will be best placed to be able to diagnose the needs of pupils and respond to them—I think this point has been well made across the board. That will need to be done urgently, given the raft of evidence now coming through about the covid gap, which is very clear. That includes—making Geoff's point again—what we call academic outcomes, but also social and emotional outcomes, language skills and wellbeing. I want to reiterate the point that, in a way, the temptation is to be looking for catchy new initiatives and so forth, but actually it is about the tried and tested. The evidence is very clear that high-quality teaching will make the biggest difference, and we know that is particularly important for kids from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Thinking about new initiatives and new approaches, we need to balance that very carefully with the potential for teacher workload and burnout. This needs to be supportive across the board. Actually, some of the Government programmes that are being developed around the early careers framework, NPQs and so forth, and that are supporting the teachers' life course and encouraging retention, teacher development and so forth, are going to be absolutely critical at this time. They may be less attention-grabbing, but it is really important that we hold on to these in relation to this overall recovery programme. Additionally, Robert—I know you always want us to keep it short—we have very good evidence on some of the things that are productive, and I know that you will have questions on the issue of tuition, for example, in this session.

**Geoff Barton:** Just two brief points in response to what Ian is saying. There is an immediate issue, and the problem for our leaders at the moment is their heads are spinning in all directions and are consumed with logistical stuff. They are essentially setting up field hospitals in their schools. Therefore, one of the proud traditions of the EEF is to lay out a national smörgåsbord of: here are the things that we know happen and make an impact. Most of them will be in the classroom, and some of them around the classroom. We can say, "Yes, we are going to trust you to do the right thing in your context, but let's have a look at what we can learn from experience, including, if you are going to do summer schools for year 6s into year 7s, and year 11s into wherever they are going in year 12, what is the evidence base for that?" Just breaking through some of the clutter of what people are thinking about would be helpful.

My second point is the longer-term one, and it is picking up what Kevan said. Even in normal times, you will remember that after 12 years of your early years, primary and secondary teachers, a third of young people were



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

leaving without the dignity of a qualification that they could hold up and say, "Look what I have done." They were the forgotten third. If covid has done anything, it has held a mirror up to our education system. We have seen the best bits and the worst bits. I hope that what we can do in the longer term is to have a look at our qualifications, have a look at the accountability and have a look at how we incentivise the best people to want to work in the most challenging places and to stay there. Otherwise, we will have squandered an opportunity.

**Q1223 Chair:** Thank you. Kevan, part of Ian's question was that you have been very charming in all your interviews to anyone and everybody, including this Committee. The old saying is, "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs." Are you prepared to break some eggs and challenge the system, or will you just be walking the corridors of power and working all the stakeholders in the way that professional people are sometimes wont to do?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I like to think you can actually get quite a lot done with a bit of charm, but people who know me and my background in education will know—for example, I led the education system in east London, in Tower Hamlets, for a long time. To deliver the outcomes that we got there with England's most disadvantaged community, you also have to be ready to be tenacious and, when needed, show a bit of steel. There is no doubt in my mind that this will require both support and challenge. The flip side to the school-led recovery and to my fight right now for the resources for that recovery to be long-term, sustained and broad, will be the accountability and the challenge. It has to be there, otherwise, to the point we made earlier, we will get the same outcomes we've got now. It is just not good enough for our most disadvantaged children. We have a good education system, but it is not good enough for all our children, and for some of our children it is actually pretty poor.

**Q1224 Kim Johnson:** Kevan, prior to the pandemic, schools suffered over 10 years of austerity and hollowing out of funding, but there are now numerous funding pots, including funding for the National Tutoring Programme, summer schools funding and the holiday activities and food programme. In your view, is there enough of a national strategy to link all these programmes together? What do you think needs to be done to address the regional variations, particularly for the disadvantaged kids you have already alluded to?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** No, I don't think there is enough of an integrated strategy. I think I have said clearly that the summer package, which was announced last week, is a good start, but it is not a recovery plan. We need to go much further with some more fundamental, long-term pieces of work.

Your point about regional variation is so important, because the story of covid on children's lives hasn't yet been told. This is why it is so important that we wait for the children to get back to school, and let schools meet, see and know their children, and assess them again. It is going to be



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

almost at the child level that you need to work out what we need to do and what adjustments we need to make.

What stands out, as ever, are some areas of this country. I was at one point supporting heavily through the research the opportunity areas. We know that there are some pockets where all the work we are doing and all the reform that has been done has not yet penetrated. We have to be very mindful of how a recovery plan is going to get into those corners.

We banged on for far too long with an idea of replicating the London challenge, or, as I call it, the London effect. We need to put that away now and think much harder about what we are going to do in some of those communities, where the progress to reduce the gap and to improve outcomes has stalled. I think a stand-out issue in the recovery plan is to think about those areas in a differential way, for sure.

**Q1225 Kim Johnson:** Thank you, Kevan. You just mentioned that you felt that “learning loss” was a fraught term. Could you say a little bit more about that, please?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** My worry is that “loss” and “crisis” have a deficit feel about them. How are young people supposed to accommodate that kind of language? I am full of optimism and confidence in our young people, so I would rather see us move into a more positive language about reconnecting, rebuilding and recovery, rather than endlessly saying to young people, “Somehow you are not as good as you might have been.” I know we’re not saying that, but how do young people internalise that?

We need to remember that we have seen two very important changes in education through the pandemic, which can be lost in all the talk about the risk. We have seen parents lean in, in many ways, in children’s learning, in an unprecedented, inspirational way. We need to capture that. That is very important, as we know, from the evidence that parents reveal. How can we capture that?

The other big change has been technology. We have taken a huge leap forward in technology in education. Again, we need to capture that. So, move away from the deficit language a bit, without losing sight that we need to do something, by the way, but I want young people to be confident and optimistic about their future.

**Q1226 Kim Johnson:** That is a very valid point. Thanks, Kevan. My second question is that since March 2020, when schools closed at the start of the lockdown, more families have fallen into poverty; you have mentioned that. Given the devastating impact of the pandemic on our education, particularly on disadvantaged kids, do you think that the Government’s catch-up proposals are ambitious enough to tackle this differential learning loss? What more do you think could be done? If you had a wish list, what three things would be on it?

**Chair:** Shall we start with Geoff? Are you happy with that, Kim?

**Kim Johnson:** Yes.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

**Geoff Barton:** I think there is an acknowledgment that what has happened so far isn't the recovery plan; that is essentially what Kevan has been appointed for. It is some immediate responses. We would simply say the frustration around it is that if it is £700 million, some of that has been salami sliced into particular programmes, such as the National Tutoring Programme.

With communities that are often fragile, if we have got a central sense of what it is that could make the impact, then we should trust those schools and colleges to decide what is the right provision for them. Ultimately, when we have teachers back in schools, we will see the scale of this, because there are a lot of unknowns. If my thesis that it is about the quality of teaching rather than the quantity is right, my guess is that the routines for a lot of young people will suddenly kick back in and they will look back like the evacuees at the end of the second world war, thinking, "That was an extraordinary experience. I am glad to have lived through it," as it were.

I think the more we can trust in our local communities and the people who are leading education in those communities to determine what we need to do next, and perhaps go back to that sense of building, as the extended schools programme did, a range of different support mechanisms that are in a place and are trusted by the community, like the school, whether that is counselling services or part of social care—we used to have police based in school, too—that sense of rebuilding communities through education would, to me, be an important part of a kind of legacy here.

Q1227 **Kim Johnson:** You talked about the quality of teaching. Who is responsible for making those significant changes in the schools where that needs to happen?

**Geoff Barton:** The changes in terms of teaching?

**Kim Johnson:** You talked about the quality of teaching, which is important.

**Geoff Barton:** That is the most important thing, isn't it? What we are talking about now is a national mission whereby teachers go in and teach like they have never taught before. That is why they need as few distractions as possible, and that is why we have welcomed the fact that performance tables aren't going to happen this year. Ofsted need to keep on the margins and let teachers do that job.

For the people I represent—school and college leaders—it is all about the quality of teaching. That is why I would make reference again to remembering all the things within and around the classroom that particularly appear to work, and allowing them to choose those, as appropriate, for the cohorts they have. That is something they will be used to and is something that they will turbo-charge as young people start to come back into our schools and our colleges.

Q1228 **Kim Johnson:** Would anyone else like to come in on that question?



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

**Professor Francis:** I would. We all agree that the programme needs to be evidence-informed, which is obviously correct. Apart from the key point that we are all reiterating about high-quality teaching, there are relatively few well-evidenced approaches that are easy to access nationally that can support and provide extra capacity in the system at short notice. One of those is tuition, which is very well evidenced internationally and nationally.

When we talk about availability and what can go directly into schools, one of the things I want to emphasise is that our current experience with the National Tutoring Programme has shown that, in relation to that support of schools' capacity, there hasn't previously been the access to high-quality tuition right across the country. Many schools value the opportunity to be able to have the recommended high-quality tuition support that the National Tutoring Programme can offer.

We should not underplay the issue about national reach and coverage with well-evidenced programmes that will harness potential for catch-up in the present situation. They are complementary and they are only one among a raft of different approaches, but when we talk about the potential for targeted approaches, tuition is obviously a well-evidenced approach.

**Kim Johnson:** Thanks for that, Becky, but I know that some of my colleagues today have some reservations about the tutoring programme. I think it is going to be picked up by one of my colleagues shortly.

**Chair:** Before we go to Jonathan and Apsana, can I bring Tom Hunt in quickly?

Q1229 **Tom Hunt:** My question is mainly for Kevan. It is to do with national schools funding—this is perhaps straying a little bit beyond your brief.

Last week, we had a session with DfE officials talking about the funding formula. One thing that came to our attention was the disparities in funding in different areas of the country, which David Simmonds touched on. For example, I think a pupil premium kid in Shropshire gets less money per head than a non-pupil premium kid in Birmingham. I know Suffolk is one of the areas affected; I don't think disadvantaged kids in Ipswich get fair funding. It is good that the covid recovery is going to pupil premium kids, but, if we are going to recover, to what extent do we need to look at that national funding formula? It seems totally wrong to me that a disadvantaged kid in Ipswich gets less money than a disadvantaged kid anywhere else.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** It is out of my remit, I'm afraid, but I am very clear that in a fair recovery we have to think about the needs of the children who have suffered most. You are right: it does sound quite odd that a disadvantaged child in one part of the country gets less money than a disadvantaged child in another part of the country, but I am not going to wade into the national funding formula. That piece of work is ongoing and is out of my remit, but in the work that I am doing, I will direct the resources in a way that makes the recovery fair and allocates them to where the greatest need is. That is a principle that is important to me.



**Chair:** I will bring in Apsana and then Jonathan, please.

Q1230 **Apsana Begum:** My questions are really for Becky. First, how did the Education Endowment Foundation ensure that the best tutoring services were chosen for the National Tutoring Programme?

**Professor Francis:** I have the selection criteria for tutors in front of me. First of all, we looked at user qualifications in our recruitment processes. We looked for their experience of working with schools, and with disadvantaged pupils specifically. We looked at the training that they offer for tutors, the duration of that and the content as well; systems and processes of communication and close working with schools, because that liaison with the classroom teacher is all important; quality assurance processes; existing evidence of impact; reach into geographic coldspots, which we have already discussed; and, crucially, value for money. Additionally, there were due diligence checks around safeguarding practices, financial management and data protection practices. I hope that gives you a sense of the criteria that we applied, some reassurance and a reflection of the value that is being added by the National Tutoring Programme.

Q1231 **Apsana Begum:** Do you have any responses to what the Education Policy Institute have highlighted about the NTP being intended to focus on disadvantaged pupils, as you have said, and particularly those eligible for the pupil premium? They have said that “no firm rules exist for which pupils are eligible for subsidised tuition. Caps will, however, be introduced”. Do you have any comments on that at all?

**Professor Francis:** Those are really important points, and we are learning all the time. I think I have already said that we delivered this. It was created over the summer last year, and delivery began in November, so it has been very rapid development and delivery. I am sure that we have points to learn, and we are evaluating all the time so that we can do that.

With regards to what has been achieved though, that reaching across geographical regions has been really important, as I have said. There is also this issue about flexibility for schools. Very much designed in at the outset and specified by the DfE was the expectation that, although there would be a focus on disadvantaged kids, it would be at schools’ discretion to decide the emphasis: whether it is just pupil premium kids, or whether it is other kids who have either become vulnerable during the pandemic, as very many have, as you know, or have particularly fallen behind during the pandemic. We are seeing in the results that we are basically at around 46% pupil premium uptake, which of course is very high, but we are continuing to monitor and press both our tuition partners and schools to make sure that they are directing it in the best way. But that flexibility balance has been very important.

Q1232 **Apsana Begum:** You talked about safeguarding, quality checks and the criteria that providers had to fulfil, and there is now an approved list of 32 tutoring providers, but not all of those offer qualified teachers. If some



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

of those providers do not qualified teachers, could the quality of tuition vary?

**Professor Francis:** That is of course possible. Again, the research looks at different arrangements for tuition: small group, one to one, tuition provided by graduates, undergraduates, qualified teachers and so forth. The evidence is clear that the smaller the group and the more highly qualified the teacher, the better the quality. Of course, there is a trade-off with resource and value for money. The overall evidence is that small group tuition—one to two or one to three—gives very good value for money. We have also set the bar at undergraduates in relation to that subject specialism. Basically, what we have tried to do is to ensure, again, choice for schools. Some schools definitely prefer to choose qualified teachers and they can do that as most of the tutors employed are qualified teachers, but some like to use that flexibility of using undergraduates and so on. So that element of choice is played into the system.

**Apsana Begum:** I am going to hand over to Jonathan for the next two questions, which I believe are for you as well.

**Chair:** Thanks, Apsana. Jonathan, and then I will bring in Fleur, Ian and David Johnston.

Q1233 **Jonathan Gullis:** I have so many questions. Kevan, I hope I can come back in later to raise a number of ideas that I have mentioned in previous Committees. If I go back to you, Becky, with the National Tutoring Programme, Apsana has asked some great questions there. My real concern is that we have had only 125,000 kids reached so far, and we know that there are 1.5 million to reach. By the way, I think the Education Endowment Foundation is a very good organisation, so this is in no way a slight on you; I just think it is a massive thing to try and do and I always have major worries when we try and run things from the centre, from Westminster, rather than putting it in the hands of local authorities in some cases, or local multi-academy trusts, or whatever it may be. How are you going to rapidly upscale from 125,000 to 1.5 million children in, let's be honest, as short a space of time as possible?

**Professor Francis:** That is for the providers next year, because we know that the Government have announced their tender process for year two of the National Tutoring Programme and we see that intention to scale. As I said, the National Tutoring Programme was only ever intended to be one element in a much wider package of recovery approaches across the system. It is really important to say that it can only ever be one approach; it is not a panacea. That plays into everything we have said about the importance of what goes on day to day in the classroom and quality teaching, but with the National Tutoring Programme being an important additional element of capacity in the system.

As you have seen, we have tried to emphasise quality based on what the evidence tells us and that is how we designed in the programme. To that extent, we have been able to supply sufficient tutors so far. We are still working on encouraging schools with take-up and ensuring demand. I



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

think that that will be the challenge for the National Tutoring Programme going into future years and I really welcome the encouragement of everybody here for the system to embrace this opportunity for disadvantaged kids. Middle-class kids often take tuition opportunities for granted and that is subsidising their educational experience all the time. This is an opportunity for disadvantaged kids to be able to access that bespoke additional support.

**Q1234 Jonathan Gullis:** I suppose my concern is that I know this is one part of the package, but we are spending £650 million, if not more, on this part of the package, so it is a significant part for a package that the Government separately put into a different pot that schools would not have the control over the funding for. The Government have also hung their hat on this idea that one-to-one tuition is going to be the big way of going forward. An awful lot of political capital, as well as taxpayers' money, has gone into this scheme and my big worry is that, ultimately, it will not reach children in places such as Stoke-on-Trent, where one third are disadvantaged, in that they qualify for free school meals and pupil premium. It is going to be a huge challenge to engage those communities at the best of times, as they are normally quite sceptical of organisations that come from outside their area and get involved. How are you going to overcome that barrier?

Also, was consideration ever given to encourage retired teachers or former teachers, like myself—sorry to the Committee for once again plugging the former teacher angle—to come out, sign up and offer some hours for free? I would have happily done that and given hours of my Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays to kids in Stoke-on-Trent.

**Chair:** Jonathan's point, and the point that other Committee members and I have made, is why wasn't there a national education volunteer army, alongside the national health service volunteer army, that could have worked with schools? Is that correct, Jonathan?

**Jonathan Gullis:** Yes, Chair.

**Q1235 Chair:** Becky, can you answer briefly? Then I will bring in Geoff and the others.

**Professor Francis:** There are a lot of points buried in there. First, it is important to clarify that we have only received under £80 million for the first year of the NTP. There is opportunity for tuition, both in the recovery programme—for example, post-16 has got extra money for tuition and we have talked about the early years already—and in that schools can choose to use their recovery premium money for tuition of any sort that they want. That opportunity is there and that will be true going forward.

As I said, we have tried to emphasise quality, because quality for disadvantaged young people is all important. They need to be getting the best, most well-qualified tutors. I want to reiterate that.

Before I move on, Jonathan, the west midlands coverage seems to show that there is more to do, but you will be encouraged to hear that 63% of the targeted schools have been onboarded. The west midlands is looking



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

promising. I hope you are heartened to hear that.

**Chair:** Thank you. Geoff?

**Geoff Barton:** We think that the jury is out, frankly, in terms of the National Tutoring Programme. This won't come as a surprise to Becky, because we have talked throughout in terms of our support for principles. It is hard to argue that the kind of entitlement that parents were giving to their child in Buckinghamshire, because they were doing the 11+ or in supporting their GCSEs, shouldn't be given to young people whose parents couldn't afford that.

In doing that, you are shifting responsibility for a decision from the parent to the school. Some of the logistical issues, at a time when our leaders are dealing with so many other things, have been problematic. They have said to me that they know their communities and that having somebody known by the child, whether they are a graduate, a former student or a high-level teaching assistant, who can do the tutoring after school, would make them feel more in control of it, in the way they are doing in Wales.

We support the principles and we continue to have discussions around how it is rolling out. It seems to me that it allows the Government to say, "Look, we are putting another £200 million into education." That, as you say Jonathan, is not going into schools. Schools can buy into this if they want to. It is part of a salami slicing of money, which is ultimately proving a bit unhelpful.

**Chair:** Kevan?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I think we are building something new and we should give it a bit of time. Geoff, for me the money is going into children. I think it is great to build a new supply side of this. There have been areas of the country where for too long children have not had access to one-to-one tutoring. The evidence is strong. It is not instead of but as well as. If we get this right, over time we are going to have something very exciting—a new bit of furniture, if you like—in education, which will be dramatic in the way that it can transform opportunities for our most disadvantaged children and support teachers.

We know the evidence is strong, but if there is the link back to the teacher and to the school, that enhances it. The training really matters. Low-level tutoring is not what we are talking about. It is about having high-quality, well trained, well supported people. We need to invest for a while and build something. It is at the very early stages.

**Chair:** Thank you. I want to bring in Fleur now, please.

Q1236 **Fleur Anderson:** I have a question that incorporates both value for money in the National Tutoring Programme and access to it by community organisations. On value for money, there were reports over the weekend about the funding being awarded by the Government to contractors, and the amount of money that tutors get paid. For Tute, tutors get paid £20 to £30 but the Government is providing £80. For



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Fresh Start, tutors get £16.81 but the Government provides £72. For White Rose Maths, tutors get £21 and the Government have been awarding White Rose Maths £84 per hour for these contracts. The amount of money that is going to frontline tutoring as opposed to the costs for IT, quality assurance and so on seems out of kilter. What are your views on that? Kevan, is it within your remit to get a grip on it?

The other part is about access. Before becoming an MP, I used to run a catch-up programme—we didn't call it that then—for families with a refugee background. It was a mixture of homework clubs, mentoring and tutoring that got us amazing results in terms of changing their lives.

Is there the ability for schools to be able to bring locally based, well-trusted, well-qualified community organisations into this furniture, as you call it, Kevan? It has been proven that they can do it, but there needs to be flexibility at a very local level. Geoff, you have been saying it should be school-led. Can community organisations be part of that? In some places, they really can provide what is needed.

**Chair:** Can I ask all three of you to answer, but in a nutshell, if you can? Kevan.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** On the detail, it might be better if Becky goes first.

**Chair:** I want to bring Becky in on the issue of the tutoring organisations and so on. I think the other points that Fleur raised are your area.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** Of course. I think the points are really well made. Your point, Fleur, is the right one. I personally would like to see a wide range of providers. I would like to see local authorities, local community groups—a broader range of people coming together to be the providers. It is about supporting schools with this additional resource and this additional service for children, rather than it all just being through the school.

I won't take too much time, but I think the first wave of teaching is the most important thing, as Geoff said. We are losing sight of that. High-quality, first-wave teaching is the best recovery we can give any child. But, in the great systems in the world, they know that there is a second wave of support for their children—many people in the country who can afford it already do this. I think if we get the tutoring right and we get the broad range of providers, let's make that available to every child. Why should it just be an opportunity for those who already have, as it has been for too long? If we don't create this opportunity for children, it is a gap-widener. I want a broader group of people offering that supply and I think community groups are really well placed to come and be part of the providers, absolutely.

**Geoff Barton:** I agree with the terms of your question, Fleur. It seems to me that we need to be careful in terms of national programmes for anything now. That is not to say that there isn't national insight and national understanding, but the local delivery seems absolutely critical to me, not just in what it can do for young people, but in the sense of

building community cohesion as well. I think the more we can do that and have a really clear plan for it, the more quickly we will start to get a sense of regeneration across those communities.

**Chair:** Thank you. That was very succinct, Geoff.

**Geoff Barton:** You can thank the English teacher.

**Professor Francis:** Coming to your point about value for money, the article at the weekend included of course some of the provision that is very specialised—for example, to support SEN students and so forth. I will give you a few quick bullet points.

The average total price of the subsidised tutoring across all our tuition partners is under £20—it is £19.18. That is per hour, per pupil. That more expensive tutoring, commissioned at a lower proportion, is to be used for those pupils who have more complex needs.

As I have said already, value-for-money assessments formed a really key part of the original criteria. The cost of tutoring also includes preparation and liaison with school, the preparation for the hour's tuition itself, the training of tutors that is provided in an ongoing way, and of course the cost of equipment, secure online tutoring and so on. I just want to reassure you that, in all cases, the cost to schools is less than the equivalent private tuition provided by our tuition partners. We have tried to look at value for money as a really key piece in this.

**Chair:** Thank you. I want to bring in Tom and then Kim, and then David Johnston.

Q1237 **Tom Hunt:** I have one question for Becky and another for Kevan. It is do with special educational needs. The Minister for Children paid a visit, virtually, to the Committee about a month ago. She said that there had been a lot of SEN specialists feeding into the National Tutoring Programme to make sure that those needs were covered. More generally, is there enough of an appreciation of the specific ways that school closures and not doing exams have had an impact on young people with special educational needs? I am not referring just to those with EHCP plans who may be in special schools, but also to, say, dyspraxic and dyslexic pupils. I am dyslexic and dyspraxic, and I would not want to have been in school at the moment. I think I would have been disproportionately impacted by school closures. I would not have liked not being able to do exams—I liked doing exams.

**Chair:** Can I add to that for the answer that you give Tom? How will the £700 million that has been announced be split to provide support for alternative provisions and PRUs? Geoff, do you want to go first?

**Geoff Barton:** In terms of the exams, it would perhaps be useful just to reflect on the cancellation of exams later on, because there are all kinds of things that, publicly, people will need to be aware of. It seems to me that, at its best, that decision clears the way for teachers who have not finished teaching the course to their year 11 and year 13 to claw back time to



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

focus on the most important thing, which is just that, rather than the end of the cycle of revision that they would have been in if those exams had proceeded.

We will probably look back and think that, with the decision over exams, we have done the very best we can on three fronts. First, to try to ensure that the child gets a grade they can hold up and say, "I earned this grade; it's a fair grade." Secondly, to protect teachers in all this from accusations of being overly subjective. It is not individual teachers doing the grading, but teams of teachers in their schools, and what failed last year was the regulation—the regulation or quality assurance will be better this year. The third thing we are trying to do is of course rebuild public trust after the fiasco last year, and I hope that we can start to do that as well.

**Chair:** Thank you. Becky?

**Professor Francis:** In terms of the NTP, 15% of pupils who have been signed up for tuition are SEN pupils—that has been really encouraging. We have been working really closely with the SEN sector from a slow start. That has been very heartening.

I agree, Tom. I think that sometimes SEN kids have been a bit of an add-on in thinking, and that really needs to change. Again, I guess it will be down to that diagnostic assessment in the classroom to look at the bespoke, different needs. It will be very patchy, both in terms of where kids were even before the pandemic, and then of course in terms of the different ways that each individual child has been impacted by the pandemic. That will be particularly important to bear in mind in the case of SEN.

**Chair:** Thank you. Kevan, briefly, please?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** To answer the direct question on the allocation of funding, the £302 million that was allocated in the last wave is the covid premium. In that fund, there was £145 for every child who was eligible for free school meals, and £290 for all the children in each school who were special, AP or hospital children. The big shift that I was pleased about personally was moving towards a funding mechanism that allocates more to those children who are "harder to teach", as you might call it, which is a principle of mine, and that is an example of it. Do we understand exactly what has happened and what the needs of those children are? No, we do not. Who is best placed to understand the needs and work that out? I think that is for the next term, when children get back and schools meet and spend time with them. Across the board, I am very reluctant to start describing the needs. Schools have to work this from the bottom up, in my view.

Q1238 **Tom Hunt:** I have a quick question, for clarification. Was that 15% or 50%, Becky?

**Professor Francis:** Fifteen.

**Tom Hunt:** I make a plea to the Education Recovery Commissioner on



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

SEN. I really think that those with SEN process information differently—they are a bit different—and having that at the heart of everything would be good.

**Chair:** I am going to bring in David Johnston, who has not asked any questions yet, then Caroline Johnson.

Q1239 **David Johnston:** I have one question for each panellist. The first, sticking to tutoring, is probably for Becky, and I hesitate to ask it because I am not sure I really want the answer. Let's suppose we deliver the tutoring programme as advertised and as planned. What will the gap be between the amount of tutoring that is being given to children through that and the amount of tutoring that we know the most affluent are giving their children outside school anyway?

**Professor Francis:** That is a really good question. We know about the education arms race. I am sure that there will still be a gap. I don't have evidence beyond what the Sutton Trust has collected previously, of course, about tuition practice within the pandemic. That is a really good research project, actually; I'm making a note to self.

We know that previously about 40% of more advantaged students have been able to access private tuition, and I can only imagine that that will likely have gone up during the pandemic. Given that there would be no parameter on that, there is a question on the resources for disadvantaged pupils. I am really proud and encouraged that we are offering them some high-quality tuition here, focused on the academic subject identified by the teacher that will benefit them, at least.

Q1240 **David Johnston:** Thank you. My second question is to Sir Kevan, which goes back to the discussion we were having about ensuring the most disadvantaged take part in summer schools. But I have a broader concern that our focus at the moment is all children; generally, when the focus is all children, the disadvantaged don't do as well. They often don't do well in places like leafy-suburb schools where they are forgotten, or the average looks good, so they are not looked at enough.

I accept what you say about it being up to schools and local areas to make that assessment. I think that is absolutely right, but there must be some element of really wanting these children involved, either because of background or pupil premium, or because if you are this much behind where your school thinks you should be, you've really got to be taking part in all the activities—summer schools and others—that are coming to local areas.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I completely agree with that. There are many examples that I would highlight, but let me pick out one at a time. If you are arriving in year 7 in secondary school and you are not reading at the right level that allows you to flourish, we know from cohort study after cohort study that you are very unlikely to succeed at secondary school. I do not think you need to be a recovery commissioner to understand that what secondary schools and primary schools need to do now is target and



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

highlight those children who are on the cusp of literacy and do whatever they can to get them thriving into year 7, into secondary schools.

Sometimes it is not identifying a child by their characteristics; it is identifying them by their needs. What is interesting about working with disadvantaged children, of course, is that when you raise the quality of teaching—going back to this point—for a disadvantaged child or for a child who finds learning more difficult, you actually raise the quality of teaching for everybody.

One of the best things that has been happening over the last few years in the DfE is that when the guidance goes out around the premium, or allocating additional funding in the way that I have been describing, it says that the first thing you do—it actually has a sort of little dial—is that half of that money should go on raising the quality of teaching for everybody. Then 25% should go on additional interventions, and a final 25% on what you might call widening participation in more enriched activities.

To your point, perhaps sometimes we need to stop talking about groups of children and talk about the priorities in learning. For me, literacy entering secondary school is a No. 1 priority to thrive, and that must be something that every school—I am sure; I know—will be looking at and doing something about as they construct their year 7, their key stage 3 offer, because it looks like we are going to have another additional chunk of children who are, perhaps, arriving at year 7 with literacy needs. Year 7 teachers and key stage 3 teachers need support in meeting those children's needs. Otherwise, we know we have a long-term problem.

**Q1241 David Johnston:** Thank you. Geoff, this might feel a bit niche, but last week I had a meeting with some of my head teachers, and they said to me, "What's going on with regional schools commissioners? We only ever hear from them if they want to say something negative; otherwise, they are not really touching our lives as heads."

You might have views on that, but I wondered what you thought their role might be in the coming years, given what we have been through in schools.

**Geoff Barton:** I don't think that is niche at all, actually. It is something that people were getting in touch with me about. I talked to Dominic Herrington at the Department, because there was a bit of a feeling. Take a school in Oxfordshire, where in one week back in October, 50 members of staff were having to be off and self-isolating. The head said to me, "There is no way I can keep all these young people in here." The response of the regional schools commissioner was a letter saying, "Why have you had to close for certain years?", to which the answer was, "Because there is a global pandemic and I haven't got all my teachers here." It felt a little bit as if the role was one of snarkiness. After the discussion with Dominic, we have seen a change of tone—I don't want to overstate it. When we return to some kind of normality, I think we will see a Government that sees that schools working in whatever we call them—trusts or families—is the future. That seems to be the direction of travel, and the regional schools



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

commissioners will continue to play a really important part in helping that to happen. At the moment, it is not business as usual, but I suspect that will be the direction of travel once we surface from this.

**Chair:** Thank you. David, have you finished?

**David Johnston:** Yes, that's it.

**Chair:** Thank you. Kim, briefly.

Q1242 **Kim Johnson:** Last year, Black Lives Matter raised the profile of race and racism in schools. Becky, 15,000 tutors will provide support for the National Tutoring Programme. What I would like to know is whether the recruitment of those tutors includes a proportionate number of black teachers and tutors. If not, what needs to happen?

**Professor Francis:** That is an excellent question, Kim. I cannot answer it, because I don't have that in my notes, but I will find out for you and answer your question. It is a really important point, and you know that my prior research has looked at issues around representation, in terms of both gender and ethnicity, in relation to the teacher workforce. I recognise the importance here.

**Kim Johnson:** Thanks, Becky.

**Chair:** Thank you. I am going to bring in Caroline, who has not spoken at all yet.

Q1243 **Dr Johnson:** Thank you, Chair. I have a couple of questions. The first one, for Kevan, is in response to what he said to David Johnston about literacy being very important. Obviously, it is very difficult to teach people additional subjects if they are struggling to read the books. We have cancelled year 6 SATs. In the light of what you have said, do you think that not having a national assessment of maths and English as people left primary school was a mistake? If so, how do you think we can best identify those children now, rather than waiting till they start year 7 in September? Do you think testing in other years, to identify those children who are the furthest behind or who may be doing less well than expected because of the pandemic, would be beneficial?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I think it made sense in the current year not to try to do a national test in the way that we had done previously. For what it's worth, I am encouraging from my position that schools think about using the covid premium to support diagnostic assessment. I know it is not particularly sexy, but it is something that we really need to work hard on now—great diagnostic assessments in all year groups, so that you can inform the adjustments you need to make to the curriculum in September. By the way, though, the reading test at key stage 2 is a very decent test as a test. I am not talking about accountability; I am just saying it is a good way of learning something about children. Diagnostic assessment now is very important, and I would encourage schools to think about using some of that money to do that, so that you can really understand what the



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

needs are, where the gaps are and what is most important for you to cover in the time that is available.

**Dr Johnson:** I agree with that, and it is particularly important for constituencies like mine, where there are very rural areas. That means the most disadvantaged children are often much more difficult to pick out and target for improvements than they are in some of the more urban areas.

My other question is about tutoring and how long it is needed for. Becky, you talked about the arms race of education, but surely it is a natural response for every single parent to do all that they can to improve the life chances and education of their children. You are right in one respect: whatever the state provides, those with means will seek to achieve further resource for their own children. In the light of that, we have the covid pandemic National Tutoring Programme. As I understand it, that is designed to help children catch up with the lost learning over this 12-month period. Do you think it should be permanent? If not, for how long will it be needed to achieve catch-up?

**Chair:** If you could all give brief answers that are as succinct as possible it would be helpful, because that is an important question.

**Professor Francis:** We are really encouraged that the Government are looking at the NTP for the long term, and that it is indicated in the tender process. We do think that it is a legacy project for disadvantaged kids to address the challenge already mentioned by you. It also, of course, supports the long-term recovery programme: we have all agreed that this is not just about catch-up, this is going to need a sustained approach.

**Geoff Barton:** I think it is very difficult to know in terms of timelines. Kevan's point that what teachers do, essentially, is to use testing and assessment all the time because that is what teachers do, not because they are required to because of accountability. We are just at the beginning of having a look at this question: whether a child is from an advantaged or disadvantaged background, what can we see that they are going to need next? If we can then simplify the logistics as much as possible so that one part of the armoury—for some of those young people—is for them to be able to have one-to-one or small-class coaching after school or at some other point, then that will start to deploy the process locally, as I have been arguing for.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** For me, a key disruption is technology. Assessment is going to be radically changed by better use of technology for rapid and constant assessment, so that more precision can be fed into the teaching. Going back to my furniture analogy, I also think that tutoring should become a fixture and fitting. The blurring of lines between in-school, out-of-school and beyond-school learning is changing dramatically, again through technology. Covid has helped us make that leap forward. I see it as a long-term fixture and fitting in the educational experience, and in opportunities for children. I want to make sure that it is available for every child. Currently it is there, but it is there for a small number of children.



**Q1244 Dr Johnson:** My final question in that respect is this: the Government policy for tackling things like universal credit has been to try and prevent a cliff edge occurring where opportunity and resource is not lost because of additional work and income. Tutoring is expensive and difficult for parents to afford for their children. How do we avoid a situation arising whereby parents do not wish to go and work and earn more money because to do so would lose, as you say, an incredibly valuable resource for their children?

**Professor Francis:** Did you mean this in relation to the pupil premium status?

**Dr Johnson:** If we are targeting tutoring towards the most disadvantaged children—which, of course, we want to do—it means that there will inevitably be a cliff edge where some people are entitled to tutoring and some people are not. If that cliff edge is defined in some way—presumably it would need to be—does that leave some parents in the unenviable situation of being unable to improve the financial standing of their family and both work and earn extra money, because to do so would lose them that tutoring that the extra money would be far from able to provide, and on which their children are so dependent?

**Professor Francis:** That is not actually the case with the National Tutoring Programme at present. The Government have avoided stipulating that pupils eligible for the tuition have to be pupil premium students. That is what we were discussing earlier. We then have a question about the proportionality of uptake that is directed at pupil premium students. It is about that balance and flexibility, to which I was referring earlier. We all agree that many families have fallen into challenge through the pandemic. As you say, many families are sitting on either side of that cliff edge as well. A benefit of the flexible approach has been the facilitation of those families. The potential disadvantage is the really direct targeting at the families that are most in need. We are watching and monitoring that balance.

**Chair:** Thank you very much. I will bring in David Simmonds next, as he has not had any questions.

**Q1245 David Simmonds:** Much appreciated, Chair. Like you, I have a Foreign Office question due in a moment. I will link my two questions. I will go back to what Kevan said at the beginning about the need to have a real strategic think about the issue. Do we need to be much more radical than the programmes announced so far envisage in the way that we approach catch-up? In particular, Kevan, from your experience at Tower Hamlets when you were director of children's services in a place of great deprivation, where you did a remarkably good job, is there any learning from the role of local authorities or other issues that you would bring to it?

Secondly, we have heard a lot about the need to learn from what goes on in other countries. Mainly that has referred so far in the public debate to Wales and Scotland. I am interested in the views of the panel on how we might bring to bear the expertise and the learning from the way that



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

other countries across the world approach this in order to boost our position in the UK.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I think the big battle is for capacity. How do we build capacity? Somebody touched on it earlier with the role of the RSCs. We seem to have used heavily the levers of accountability. You need intelligent accountability. We are talking about resources now, but we also need to build capacity in local systems. I am not wedded necessarily to local authorities, but local systems supporting schools to build capacity is one of my lessons from Tower Hamlets. You need to share the local assets, the local knowledge and capacity building so that all schools can thrive and grow. That is something we need to be more radical about. I don't think our infrastructure to build the capacity is very good, so there is something about how we deliver and implement rather than how we have ideas. The implementation is often where it falls down.

In terms of the international learning, the work we are doing, particularly on teaching, is definitely gleaned from the international evidence. We must continue to invest in our most important resource and build that, and that is the quality of teaching—not teachers, but teaching—as people arrive in the profession, and, critically, we must invest in the life cycle of teaching. We seem to put a lot in at the beginning. This is across early years and FE as well, not schools only. Then we stop investing in people's learning and growth. It is a bit of a lottery depending on which school you happen to be at or which MAT you are in. So we need to have a much more systematic and national approach to building the capacity and support for our teaching to grow. Again, I think local levels will have roles there.

**Chair:** Thank you. Becky, do you want to respond briefly?

**Professor Francis:** We talked earlier about the gap on arrival at school, and I think the pandemic has shown in sharp relief that the issues around poverty really need to be addressed to give better support and equalisation for life chances at the start of schooling. I have already argued that we should not be looking at radical in terms of catchy programmes. The focus should be on high-quality provision and teaching, but we ought to look at the cohorts who have left with the learning loss and their learning disrupted. Issues around contextual admissions will need to be radical in higher education this year and possibly next as well. We should think about a revolution in adult learning as well, because some of those gaps in learning will become evident in future life. We must make sure that kids do not have their future opportunities capped because of learning loss during the pandemic.

Q1246 **David Simmonds:** I want to ask the panel one further question on the capacity point that Kevan raised. I asked about local authorities because they already have a statutory duty in respect of young people's education and, by and large, are consistent in providing a degree of infrastructure across the country that is ready-made. Having had the experience of having to build an alternative local infrastructure to do what local authorities could have done, I simply ask the question: are we at risk of



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

not getting the maximum bang for our buck if we choose to try and create something from scratch that will be different everywhere, rather than implementing something based upon existing structures that we know, broadly speaking, work quite well?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I agree. I need to go a bit further with this. In terms of early learning and early years, this is still very much led, supported and co-ordinated by local authorities. In terms of things like public health and early education, go to the other end—apprenticeships, training, planning development, and section 106 agreements. All of this is in the control or authority of local government. I do think we need to bring local government, local resources and local communities back into this effort, and not just have it behind the four walls of schools, so I do think there is a resource and a capacity that we need to harness and revisit because I think we have almost drifted too far away from that resource in some regards. It is there and it has the authority and opportunity to do more.

Q1247 **Chair:** Just before I pass to Ian to chair the closing part—the last 10 to 15 minutes or so, because I also have a question in Parliament—was I right in thinking, Kevan, that you were sort of saying that the opportunity areas have outcomes that are less clear, and that perhaps money should be better spent on other things?

Given that Becky and Geoff have stressed “teaching, teaching, teaching”, would it not be better, rather than spending £100 million on opportunity areas, to spend that money on recruiting leaders and teachers in those disadvantaged areas, who will then transform the schools and the prospects of the children in those schools?

**Geoff Barton:** It is a point well made. I think we will have to change aspects of our accountability system so that it feels in your interest, as somebody going to take on a challenging school, that you are going to stay there and you will be able to attract teachers. When I talk about accountability, I mean let us have a slightly longer-term view of what it is possible to do, and let us let the system help to build some of that support. The trust system, at its best, is showing how you can mentor and support other people, in an extraordinary fashion; it is still early days for that, but that would be one of the things.

I also think that accountability needs to start looking a bit more grown up, and it needs to be rooted in the idea that, whether it is my school or your school, it is in our joint interest to keep those children and not exclude them from my school to your school, and for us to be judged for what we are doing for a community of young people, rather than incentivising people—

**Chair:** Thank you. Kevan?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** In terms of the policy of opportunity areas, I think what we have learned is how extraordinarily difficult it is to mobilise the assets in those places. They are varied—some are huge and coterminous, like Bradford; some are tiny, like bits of Scarborough and Whitby—but I think we need to stick with it.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

We need to be serious and put some serious resources and effort into those areas if we are going to shift them—Blackpool, Stoke, Derby; these are places that we all know well. Opportunity areas is a programme that I personally think we should drive harder on, because that is where the real need is. What we have learned is just how hard it is—

**Chair:** Thank you. Becky, briefly?

**Professor Francis:** I do not think that I have anything to add to that.

**Chair:** Geoff, this is a very different area, but I raised it in the House of Commons yesterday. One of my head teachers, Vic Goddard, who you know, has had significant pressure because some parents are saying that their children should not have to wear masks because the guidance is only guidance—it is not a regulation. Can I ask your view—masks in classrooms in secondary schools: right or wrong? And what should the Government do? Should there be tougher regulations for it or against it? What, in your view, should happen?

**Geoff Barton:** It would be so much easier if it was black and white. This time last year, we were being told that masks, on young people, were actually an impediment because they fiddle with them, they drop them and they put them in their pockets, so they were not a good idea.

Now, the nature of the virus has changed, and people would say to me, “Well, you look overseas and young people there are happily wearing masks for five hours a day in their lessons”. The difficulty is that there isn’t a clear boundary on this. What my members are saying is, “Look, can either we make the decision, because we have lots of ventilation in the school we happen to have, or can the Government just be much clearer around it?”

Q1248 **Chair:** What should happen? Should they be wearing masks in secondary school classrooms or not?

**Geoff Barton:** In the set of risks that there are—and therefore the different measures—if it is so significant that masks should be worn, can we have that said really clearly? It makes it much easier to say to a parent, “I’m sorry; that is part of the expectation, just like wearing a school uniform, doing their homework and all the other stuff. This is more important than that, and therefore they need to be wearing it”. I do think we need a clearer steer on that.

**Chair:** I am going to pass over to Ian Mearns now. Thank you; all of you are much appreciated, and no doubt we will have you back soon. You have given invaluable evidence; thank you.

*[Ian Mearns took the Chair]*

**Chair:** Apsana, you have some questions that you’d like to ask?

Q1249 **Apsana Begum:** I have a question that follows on from what was just being discussed. There are a number of concerns that have been raised



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

by coalitions of education practitioners about the impact of measures and covid safety in schools, such as the wearing of masks or not, where students should sit and the maximum number in a given room. All of this against the backdrop of the grief, trauma and loss that many students have experienced throughout this period. In view of that, do you think it is enough to rely on schools to do the right thing by complying with the last-resort principle in relation to exclusion decisions? Many in education know that is not the reality, particularly for schools with zero tolerance behaviour policies. I just wanted to get a bit of understanding and thoughts from the panel on that.

**Geoff Barton:** Everyone is angry about everything all the time and everyone is anxious about everything. I think what I am hearing from members, who frankly could really do without setting up these testing centres and without getting into disputes about face masks, is to just remind ourselves that these are unprecedented and extraordinary ranges of different measures. None of which in itself is the answer to all of this, but all of which put together mean that you can come back into your school feeling more secure, whether it is about face covering, ventilation, having done a lateral flow test and learning how to be able to do it back home.

I am hoping that people will not get into disputes that lead to young people having to be excluded from school because they are not prepared to wear a face mask. I really hope we do not have to do that and instead we have a sense that "When I wear a face mask, I am not doing it for my self-interest. I am doing it as an act of altruism. I am demonstrating as part of a community that we are looking after each other." What I am picking up from members is that for all the frustration they are having with a small group of parents, generally people are proceeding with that spirit of social generosity.

**Chair:** Kevan?

**Sir Kevan Collins:** I do not have anything to add to what Geoff said.

**Professor Francis:** It is just to reiterate the point that Geoff already made about the clarity that school leaders need to be protected as far as possible from being made responsible for making difficult decisions on the ground, and then being the recipients of parental campaigns and so forth. So that clarity is really important. I think also close monitoring of how things are going so that there is that learning and that playing in an open dialogue within the sector.

Q1250 **Jonathan Gullis:** This is more for Kevan, really. I wrote a paper last year in November about the idea of shortening the school break in the summer from six weeks to four weeks, and I think that should become a long-term thing. I am also a huge advocate of an extended school day.

I also believe that there should be a national standardised test. What I mean by that is that every child from reception up until the age of sixteen, has, at the primary level, a literacy and numeracy test and then at secondary, in English, maths and science.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

If we do that in the summer term of this year and somehow the exam boards can pool together their resources and expertise to help create these papers, that will give us a true indication of what has happened to education in terms of whether or not children have gone backwards, and to what extent they have, and therefore enable us to do that.

The marking could be done by examiners who, as we know, some of whom would have made money in the summer but are not necessarily going to be doing that in their normal way anymore. That for me would be a really positive way to have statistical data to look at and see what is happening with education, and therefore allow teachers to go into the start of autumn with a very clear idea of where every child in their school is at. What do you think?

**Chair:** Kevan, before you come in, I would just point out to Jonathan, as a warning from history as it were, that when I was on the Local Government Association education executive, I chaired a sub-committee which took evidence and produced a report on a five-term year, and I still bear the scars.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** It is funny how things turn back around in the education world. I read your report, Jonathan, and I agree with so much of it. I think the idea of the summer activities and particularly about your point that this is not necessarily about requiring teachers to work longer, it is about opening up these fantastic facilities.

As Apsana will know, in places like Tower Hamlets, the best resources and assets we have for children are some of the wonderful schools we have built—BSF and other sorts of programmes. To me, it is almost a crime that they are shut for so much of the time. How do we make these facilities be open? How do we encourage the community and others to make use of them and hand the keys over to somebody else? I am all with that and I was always a fan of the extended schools programme. I see ways of thinking about time in that regard, and I think these wider experiences that we talked about earlier are so vital for young people, beyond just more lessons.

The big question about assessment is: “How will you use it and what will it be for?” If assessment is in order to inform teacher decisions and planning within the school and it is trusted and good assessment, we have found in the past that once you create national tests—the optional tests that we used to have for every year group; you may remember them, Ian—people pulled them down, or 80-odd per cent of schools did, and used them. The minute you link the test to the accountability framework at the school level is when the rubber hits the road. In many countries, you have national assessments and you draw a random sample of children. That gives you the picture of what is going on in your own system. The old APU data we had in England kind of worked.

I am all for good diagnostic assessment and I think that to assess is right at the heart of great teaching. Technology could make it more streamlined and less burdensome than it is. I do not think that, at the moment, the



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

trust is there that would allow you to lay on another test that people would say: "This is not going to come back and bite me." We need to rebuild confidence in assessment for children and for learning, rather than the assessment that sometimes has been crudely used for accountability.

**Geoff Barton:** I will take two points in response, Jonathan. First, the point about rethinking the shape of the school year and the extended day. This is the time to be thinking around that. We have had a mirror held up to it and, actually, it would be possible, notwithstanding the scars on your back, Ian, to look again at the five-term year, which has much merit. My second point though, Jonathan, is that I think you might find that Ofqual is talking about running its national reference test, which it runs every year. That has always had a specific function, which is to be like a dipstick of where year 11 is this year and then using it to see whether comparable outcomes shift up or down. Instinctively, we think, since you are not using comparable outcomes this year, it would seem odd to use the national reference test, but it is, as Kevan says, a sampling exercise that might actually prove helpful just in shining a light into where young people are this year, compared with the data they have in previous years.

**Chair:** Becky, anything, please?

**Professor Francis:** I think the remarks on assessments are very well made. On the extended school day, we know that systems that use longer days do not necessarily have higher learning outcomes. I would want to reiterate the point about quality rather than quantity there.

**Chair:** Yes, I think the days when the vast majority of youngsters were used for autumn arable cropping and so on are long gone. There is some justification in looking at what Jonathan has had to say. Jonathan, you have a comeback, quickly.

**Jonathan Gullis:** I could not agree with you more, Geoff, that this is now the time to start having those frank and honest conversations about how we make what would be some major reforms to the system, but ones that ultimately are needed for the benefit of children. Thank you, Kevan, for saying that you are interested and that you have read my report. I did not expect you to have done so, and it is very kind that you have. I agree with you that school buildings sit in these communities, not being used as they should be. Ian and I have discussed this before as well. When we talk about the extended school day, we are not saying: "Teach till 5pm." We are saying: "What outside youth agencies, youth groups and outreach work can be done in a school building, with all the safeguarding that is already in there and all the facilities already provided?" That means that, instead of spending on youth centres—nice and shiny as they can be—which have lots of ongoing overhead costs, we can actually then invest in people, which is what, ultimately, we want to do. Thank you, Ian, for allowing me that comeback.

Q1251 **Chair:** Before I come on to my last question, Becky, I am really still not sure yet about the National Tutoring Programme and how we are going to build the capacity to provide good-quality tuition to scale to meet, head-



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

on, the breadth and depth of the problem we face. Is there anything you can do to reassure the Committee?

**Professor Francis:** It is a real challenge, Ian. I just used the phrase “quality not quantity”, but I fully recognise that given the conditions of the pandemic, the demand for quantity and that rapid scale is also significant. I have already said, though, that we are managing to provide the number of tutors. That is actually turning out to be less demanding than engaging schools with take-up. It will be a gradual and developing approach. As I have said, that also does tally with the long-term, sustained, catch-up recovery approach, as well.

There is nothing else to do but focus on quality. We cannot dilute quality for disadvantaged pupils; those who need it most. Finding that balance and evaluating systematically the different programmes—both the National Tutoring Programme and the other tutoring offers out there at present via the Government funding—would be really important, to learn rapidly about quality at scale.

**Chair:** Geoff, did you want to add something? You look like a coiled spring.

**Geoff Barton:** No, I am sure I have said quite enough for everyone.

Q1252 **Chair:** Could each of you give three proposals you would include in a five-year plan to tackle lost learning and help improve educational outcomes for all children but, in particular, those with the greatest levels of lost learning? Three things. Becky, do you want to go first?

**Professor Francis:** You put me on the spot straightaway. I think I have covered them really. Point one is quality teaching. I have mentioned the existing Government programmes, early career framework and NPQs, but there is more that we can do to support professionalism, CPD and so forth, and respond to some of the demands from the pandemic. There are the things that have been mentioned such as diagnostic assessment and so forth.

Point two refers to our specific programmes, following on from that tiered approach. We are looking at high-quality tuition, literacy and numeracy programmes and so forth.

The third is both the whole-school approaches and the system-level approaches that facilitate those. That may be whole-school approaches around behaviour, attendance and so on, but also, as we have said, the system-level things, such as contextual admissions and support for young people going into the world of higher education and work. It will be really important to support them and ensure that they are not limited by the pandemic.

**Geoff Barton:** First, let us be careful about the language that we use about those young people who need to be motivated where they are back in school, and will be demotivated if they think, “That’s it. We’ve been lost.” It is really important that we recognise how much they have been



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

through and how well they have done, and how the resilience that Kevan talks about is for many—not all—of them going to be exactly what they need.

My second point would be, let's trust in our local leaders and their teachers, knowing what works in the classroom and what works around the classroom. The more we can declutter that and have as few distractions as possible, the better. I think parents would particularly welcome us doing that.

Thirdly, let's not squander the opportunity for the kind of reform agenda that has been mentioned already, including questioning whether a GCSE designed in a different era, where the average child sits 27, 28 or 29 papers—not hours—is really the best we can do. And whether some of the points that Kevan has made about technology could start to move us into a world where technology does some of the heavy lifting, freeing teachers up to do the thing they do best, frankly, which is teaching.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** Yes, build on some of those things, in the context of a broad and long-term school-led recovery, which directs resources to the areas of greatest need, but in which everybody obviously is resourced.

My three things are these. Extend the learning experience of children. Think about the use of the resources we have to extend the learning and broad school experience that children have. To invest in quality teaching all of the time, to think about how we better invest in our teachers, and to ensure that the targeted support for children, when they need it, is available and is of high quality, and is there as part of the ongoing provision.

Q1253 **Chair:** Any quick thoughts about this improvement that we need, or the focus on quality in teaching? As you said, that is not in teachers but in teaching, in terms of recruitment, retention and continuing professional development. Any particular thoughts? Anything we could concentrate on there to make things better?

**Geoff Barton:** One point I would make in response to that, Ian, is that there is an opportunity, and I think it has gone under the radar too much. It involves the early career framework, which I think dates back to Justine Greening's talk about how, if you were a solicitor, your first year would be different from your fifth year would be different from your 10th year. There was a sense of, "How does your career develop?" That early career framework, which essentially was in the news yesterday, gives us a real opportunity, I think. We have concerns about money that we thought was coming into mentoring now not coming in, so there are details that are not right. But that is saying, I think, that the mixture of an early career framework and national professional qualifications is the way in which, wherever teachers are—in Scunthorpe, Cornwall or wherever—there are certain things great teachers do at different stages of their career. Let's invest in that, because the big issue for us is how we keep people beyond the fifth year, which we have not cracked yet. I do think that there is



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

some good news in that early career framework and seeing it rolled out further.

**Chair:** Kevan and Becky? I know Caroline wants to come in. Kevan, please.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** One of the most exciting things in the last 15 or 20 years in education has been the way the insights we have as to what works have become much more accessible. That is not just about the EEF; it's an international, global kind of summary, bringing the evidence together. So what I like most about the early career framework is that it does bring to the table not an ideology necessarily, but clarity about the things you need to know and be able to do to be an effective teacher, from the evidence. The other bit that's so lovely about it is that it links the newly qualified or the early career teacher with a mentor who is a more experienced teacher, and that is where the relationship really helps you thrive and grow. So I think that bringing the evidence to the table and being clear about what it is that helps teachers thrive in the classroom but also using the assets we have in our profession to help us learn is where we should go on the professional development side.

**Chair:** Thanks, Kevan. Now Becky, please.

**Professor Francis:** I would only build on those remarks that have already been made, really. I would love to see this—I think this work is already positioned within the overall recovery programme. It is really important that that is strongly articulated and, as has already been remarked, well resourced as well. This needs to be an open and a full resource for all schools.

Then, of course, there is the continuing, ongoing challenge and dilemma about how we incentivise teachers to work and remain in the most disadvantaged schools. I think that some of Geoff's earlier remarks about accountability and being able to encourage great leadership and great teaching in our most challenged schools are very important to hold on to.

**Chair:** Caroline, you have a quick question.

Q1254 **Dr Johnson:** Yes, it's a quick question following on from something Becky has said repeatedly throughout the session about the quality of the teaching rather than, necessarily, who is doing the tutoring in and of itself. I just wonder: there is obviously only a finite number of teachers. They have been working exceptionally hard this year, and there are only so many things that you can ask one group of individuals to do. In medicine—my background is as a doctor—we have increasingly diversified the workforce who provide medical treatment in all its forms. Could there be a diversification of the teaching workforce? Can we draw on some of the skills and experience of perhaps middle-aged people who have had a career in something else, like technology and engineering or computing, and get them to come into the classroom to provide not just that teaching but real-world experience? That would be added on to the provision, so that we had quite a wide breadth of different experiences



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

coming into the classroom, and different teaching experiences, because everybody teaches in different ways, as you will be aware.

**Chair:** This reminds me of a debate we had about 15 years ago about educational psychologists and developing the role of “para-psychologists” to help out on meeting the demand. Becky, do you have any thoughts, please?

**Professor Francis:** I think those remarks are well made. Of course, we have the teaching assistant workforce. I mentioned earlier the Nuffield early language intervention, which we have been supporting nationally this year. That is based on training with teaching assistants. I think that supporting quality in the teaching assistant workforce and that support for the classroom teacher is really important and a real opportunity. There are also other programmes about encouraging teachers back into the workforce and so forth, as I am sure you are aware, Caroline.

Focusing just on teachers themselves at the moment, we also have an opportunity because the uptake of initial teacher training is really high at the moment, in contrast to recent years. So we have a real opportunity to enhance those teachers, support them and retain them, but that will be a double challenge, because of the challenges in the classroom at the moment—so one to really keep an eye on, and enhance that workforce.

**Chair:** I will caveat that answer though, Becky, because there are some significant shortfalls in subject specialisms.

**Professor Francis:** Ongoing. How true.

**Sir Kevan Collins:** As part of the programme alongside the tutors, Caroline, Teach First is supporting the academic mentors in schools, which is another model, where a graduate is working alongside, in the school, and that is pretty well evidenced; but then we have got TAs themselves. We know when they are well deployed. You can have huge impact if they are well deployed. The evidence is clear. HLTAs, instructors—this broadening of the day, for me, is about bringing to bear the value of artists in residence, musicians in residence, your point about technology. There is a whole array of people available. One of the new professions, I think, in education, that is emerging—or new niches—is the technology teacher who actually wants to do online learning. One of the things that is happening this summer that we have not mentioned is the Oak Learning lessons for all year groups. They will be available across the summer for all children, and there will be some children who use that; so there is another kind of teacher now who just wants to support remote learning, I am seeing, around the world. So I think you are right. There is a diversification of the workforce to provide a much more diverse access to education. It is not just you going into your classroom with your teacher any more. It is a much more broad group of people who should be involved.

Q1255 **Dr Johnson:** I think one of the things I was referring to, really, is, for example, in my constituency, there are quite a lot of retired military



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

personnel with great skills in maths, science and engineering. I remember my own father, when he retired from his job at ICI, wanted to do some teaching in maths, which he was very good at; but it required him at that point to do an entire teaching degree. So he went and taught statistics at Durham University instead. I think we are missing out on a lot of people, who are retiring from our military services at a relatively young age, or retiring or changing jobs because the pandemic has shifted our economy, in middle age, who could be tracked in a fast way into teaching, so that we do not lose those valuable skills and opportunities for children.

**Chair:** Yes, and if the motto of the Royal Engineers is to be believed, they get everywhere: “Ubique”. But there we go. Geoff, did you want to come in with anything?

**Geoff Barton:** I would just say two things. First of all, I know, as a veteran English teacher for all those years, that there were some young people for whom my ability to explain something did not work, and the teaching assistant could sit down beside them and explain it far better than I could. I regret that we have lost a lot of those good people from the system. It illustrates your point. Michael Barber in his book “The Learning Game” called them paraprofessionals, originally: that idea that having a broader workforce, whether it is within the school day or beyond the school day—has to be in the interests of young people.

My second point, Caroline, is about the broader community. There will be a craving, after this, won’t there, for schools to be places which are not hermetically sealed from the world outside? Actually, in the way that we saw with the older generation—something we noticed in older generations with this pandemic and praised that older generation; the Sir Toms, etc.—I think that schools will want, when it is safe to do so, to bring other people from the community into those schools. I think there will be a new interest in listening to people’s stories from maybe years ago. I think it will be a sign of schools getting back to the kind of things that schools have always done so well.

**Chair:** Thank you, Geoff. I am going to wrap things up now, so can I thank our three witnesses this morning, Kevan, Geoff and Becky? It was a pleasure to see you all again. Thank you very much for coming along and having the stamina to stick with us, and thanks to the Committee members and staff. They are much appreciated. Take care, everybody.