

Education Committee

Oral evidence: Education Recovery, HC 452

Tuesday 29 June 2021

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Members present: Robert Halfon (Chair); Fleur Anderson; Tom Hunt; Kim Johnson; David Johnston; Ian Mearns; David Simmonds; Christian Wakeford.

Questions 1 - 66

Witnesses

I: Sir Kevan Collins, Former Government adviser on education recovery, plus international comparisons; Natalie Perera, Chief Executive, Education Policy Institute; Dr Lucie Cerna, Project Leader in the Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD; and Dr Rodrigo Queiroz e Melo, Vice-President, European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE).

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Add names of witnesses and hyperlink to submissions]



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sir Kevan Collins, Natalie Perera, Dr Lucie Cerna and Dr Rodrigo Queiroz e Melo.

Q1 **Chair:** Good morning, everybody. Thank you for coming today. It is quite an important session on the Government's catch-up programme and international comparisons with other countries. I welcome the witnesses. Will you briefly introduce yourselves and your titles, please?

Dr Queiroz e Melo: Good morning. Thank you very much for having us. I am Rodrigo Melo, Vice-President of the European Federation of Education Employers. I am pleased to be here.

Dr Cerna: Good morning. I am Lucie Cerna, Project Leader at the OECD in Paris in the Directorate for Education and Skills, and I work on a project called Strength Through Diversity.

Natalie Perera: Good morning. I am Natalie Perera, Chief Executive of the Education Policy Institute.

Sir Kevan Collins: Good morning. I am Kevan Collins and I am the former education recovery commissioner.

Q2 **Chair:** You will have seen the front page of the *Telegraph* today, and also other newspapers, and read about the 250,000 children who have been sent home over the past few months. On top of that we have the Centre for Social Justice report of 100,000 children lost in the system—ghosted. Sir Kevan, how would you deal with this problem of bubbles being sent home and children being self-isolated?

Sir Kevan Collins: I should have said at the beginning, thank you very much for inviting me to this session. In all of my work, the key thing for me is to follow the evidence, of course. What I would really like to do with the bubbles—I think it is what the DfE is doing—is taking new advice and asking the scientists and the experts what we should do next. Ideally, we all want to get every child back in school every day, because that is the very best way we will recover from the pandemic.

Chair: Thank you. Natalie?

Natalie Perera: I completely agree with Sir Kevan. Clearly pupils losing time in school is not ideal, but we have said from the beginning that it is important that the DfE and schools follow the health and medical advice to keep people safe. Where pupils do need to isolate at home, it is really important now that the technology allows them to continue to access education from home. There has been a lot of time and money invested in digital learning; there is still more to do to properly embed it into the education system, but we need to use that to make sure now that where there are cases of children needing to isolate, they can still access the teaching and learning from home.



Q3 Chair: Thank you. My next questions are primarily directed to Sir Kevan and my colleagues will come in later and ask other witnesses questions.

I mentioned the 100,000 pupils who are, in essence, ghosts to the education system. We know that in autumn 2020 around 33,000 additional pupils were severely absent—missing 50% or more of their possible sessions—compared with the same point last year. The exact figure now is around 93,500 pupils, which is a rise of nearly 55% year on year. In primary schools, the spike has been even more acute; the rate of severe absence instances has more than doubled. When I asked the Education Secretary about this in the House of Commons, he primarily spoke about the children’s REACT teams, the co-operation between schools and local government. In Committee, in response to the same question from me, he also mentioned the troubled families programme.

Sir Kevan, do you think the DfE’s current approach to tackling persistent absence at the 10% or more level is adequate? Do you think the same response can realistically tackle severe absence—the 50% or more problem that I just mentioned—or does it need a more bespoke response? What would you do to re-engage and support these pupils? Is there a sufficient emphasis in our recovery programme on children who have strongly disengaged from education over the past year? That is quite a few questions all in one.

Sir Kevan Collins: Yes, thank you very much. One of the benefits or good things that have happened—there have been a few in this terrible crisis—that we should try to capture and look at is the relationships that some of the regional commissioners in the REACT teams have forged with local authorities. Some of the structures between multi-academy trusts, local authorities and DfE officials who form the REACT teams have started to remind us that how you solve this problem is in local places. I think that you need to be quite intimate to solve these persistent absent children. It can’t be done from the distance of Whitehall; you have to have it on the ground in local communities. That is a good move and I would like to strengthen it. We have learnt that the local place matters. We should use the resource of integration of services, whether it is with health, social care, education and local authorities, and leverage what we have in the system.

We could do more; it is not as strong as it can be, and I am hoping that the social care review will help us look again at the issues of some of our most vulnerable children. But beyond the children who are ghosted—that is a worry; we need to get on top of it and I don’t think we are as quickly as we should be—the whole issue of our more vulnerable children, whether that is through special educational needs or whatever, in the pandemic is a story we have not really told. Those children have had a really difficult time and we need to be ready to give them every support we can as soon as we can when they get back, because many of them have suffered more than most.

Q4 Chair: How would you target the pupils who are disengaged from the



system, the ghosted children?

Sir Kevan Collins: As everything in my work, I would try to work from the bottom up as well as the top down. The key thing is to connect with the families and the children. From my life previously as a director of children's services, I know you need to go and knock on the doors and engage with these families through different structures, whether that is the local authority, the faith groups, the community groups, and re-engage people and motivate them to be involved. That is why for me it is important that education is a broad and rich experience. I am not trying to excuse anybody but we need to find ways to motivate those young people to get back involved and stay involved in school.

That is why I think the whole education experience in the day really matters. We know through the evidence that opportunities like, for example, free breakfast clubs are great motivators; they get more and more children involved and they achieve more. There is something about working from the bottom up with the schools and supporting the schools to reach out to these children, but also going beyond the schools with the other services, whether it is health, social care, the police. There is a whole range of services locally that need to be organised and building the lines to work—

Q5 **Chair:** What you are talking about is like a localised taskforce to find these children and get them back into the education system. Is that correct?

Sir Kevan Collins: In my experience, that is the way that it can work, and it has worked.

Q6 **Chair:** Thank you. There has been a lot of press reports about your £15 billion recovery package. Can you confirm, yes or no, that that is the correct figure and that you asked for £15 billion?

Sir Kevan Collins: There were a number of proposals. I was asked, as you know, by the Prime Minister to—

Q7 **Chair:** Just give us an answer because we have lots to get through. I mean it very politely: did you ask for £15 billion? Was it a £15 billion recovery package, or had you offered a range of different options?

Sir Kevan Collins: I had a range of options of things we could do but all built on the evidence in the proposal to get the recovery happening for every child as quickly as possible.

Q8 **Chair:** Did you ask for a £15 billion recovery package?

Sir Kevan Collins: There was a range of proposals, which did include a number in that kind of field.

Q9 **Chair:** Right, it was £15 billion. What was the other figure?



Sir Kevan Collins: To be honest with you, Chair, I was not working like that. I was offering advice on a range of options, which were then to be costed by the Department in different ways.

Q10 **Chair:** Okay, but your proposal would have cost roughly about £15 billion?

Sir Kevan Collins: There were proposals that got to £15 billion.

Q11 **Chair:** Right, £15 billion, thank you. Where ultimately did the barriers lie when it came to your suggested package? Did you get the sense that the Treasury might be receptive to some of the concepts that did not make the cut in its £1.4 billion package that it announced recently? What do you think might still be open for the debate? Is there scope to reignite some of your ideas? Do you think there is a chance that pilots could be introduced to demonstrate proof of concept to the Treasury? What sort of follow-up can we expect in the way of spending pledges if the Treasury has baulked at your £15 billion? What is another figure that perhaps it might be more amenable to spend?

Sir Kevan Collins: There is a lot in that and I hope I can get to it all. I was very disappointed, obviously, that I had to resign. The proposal that came forward, as I said in my article and my letter to the Prime Minister, just was not enough to deliver the kind of recovery we need. I was given a very ambitious but very exciting exam question by the Prime Minister, which was to recover every child in this Parliament. I set about examining the evidence and the approaches that would allow us to deliver that ambition. I wanted to make sure the work was grounded in the evidence, rapidly scalable because I think time really matters—we will probably come to that later—and we were able to leverage our existing assets.

I built it around three notions. Principally, the most important was the quality of teaching. I think it is Geoff Barton at ASCL who said that we have to teach like we have never taught before for these children, after they have suffered such a shock to their education experience. So it is investing in our teaching, and I am pleased to see there are elements in there but I don't think it is enough. The second is the way of teaching, with tutoring for some of our children. That is a big thrust. The evidence is very strong and I am pleased to see there is tutoring in the programme, but again I think not quite enough in the way that it should be done.

Finally, the big bit that did not land and the bit that disappointed me most was the element of time. I think there is an argument for increasing the amount of time children spend in school to do three things. One is to enable lots of other things to happen—to create the space for children to be involved in a broader range of experiences, the things they have missed such as competitive sport, drama and art, just for a limited amount of time. For three or four years, I wanted to increase the time to get those experiences.



- Q12 **Chair:** Can I come in on that? In your own report, as I understand it, you recommended a longer school day, with about 100 hours per child a year, which works at around just half an hour a day extra. What was the rationale behind this figure? Do you think it was long enough? I am absolutely with you on this but I would prefer a longer time.

The other part that is interesting given that Covid had an enormous effect on children's mental health and wellbeing and children have been stuck at home not doing sports, it seems that a lot of your plan was more about academic catch-up and less about enrichment activities. I may be wrong about that, but how much of an extended day should include extra sporting activities and mental health support as well as academic? If you could answer the first part of my question first—I appreciate that I am asking you a lot all at once. I am trying to get through some questions so my colleagues can come in.

Sir Kevan Collins: I appreciate it. The amount of time is all about capacity in the system. What I hoped we would do is trial a set of approaches in the next academic year to work out what works best in our system. At the same time, as you probably know, we have no legislation about the length of the school day in England. It varies and schools are able to determine that locally. The other thing I was keen to do is say, "What is the current average?" We think the average is about six and a half hours, so if we raised everybody to the average immediately, that would have been 10,000 schools having to increase their school day immediately to get to the average, but then we would have a significant number of schools trialling a longer school day, the extra half an hour.

I was never pushing it just academically, by the way, Chair. My view is that this should be school determined and school led. We know quite a bit of data, and Natalie knows it better than anybody, but we need to understand the actual Covid story for individual children at the school level and build it up from their own experience, and then work out what we need to do for individual children. I want it to be a rich and broad experience. I did want to include some academic because I think it is when the tutoring should happen. I don't want tutoring to happen when children are pulled out of lessons or their curriculum is narrowed to tutor. For me, it was when a lot of things could happen by increasing the school day by that half an hour in a way that schools determined.

- Q13 **Chair:** Can I ask again, not just about the roughly 100,000 children who are ghosted in the education system, but about the catch-up programme as is? We know that only 44% of the pupils who have a chance to have the extra tuition are eligible for the pupil premium. We know that there are significant regional variations: the north-east has a take-up of only 58% and in the south-west it is close to 100%. All the talk from the Government at the start of the National Tutoring Programme was that it was going to be a fund for disadvantaged pupils. While I understand that every pupil needs to be helped because many well-off pupils have also suffered from mental health challenges and others, do you agree that some of the NTP funding may not be reaching the pupils who need it



most? What would you do to remedy this?

Sir Kevan Collins: I am very clear that the biggest impact of Covid will definitely be on our most disadvantaged children, and growing education inequality could be the legacy of Covid if we are not very careful. We have to intentionally and directly intervene and support the children with the greatest need. We have obligations to every child after Covid and that is why I think the longer time would have supported every child, particularly with the non-academic outcomes, the wellbeing and social stuff, but when it comes to the academic loss it is clear that we are going to see greater loss for our children who have greatest need and we need to be very clear about that. That is why when I first arrived and we allocated the £700 million in February, I was very pleased to see that redirected through the pupil premium mechanism, whereas the previous £1 billion had gone out flat for every child. I think we have to be very clear that—

Q14 **Chair:** Do you think that all this should be consolidated into one fund, into the pupil premium, and it should be much more ring-fenced and targeted?

Sir Kevan Collins: I do. I think the pupil premium is a great mechanism. I think we should have more accountability around it and tighter allocation and obligations—

Q15 **Chair:** Rather than have all these separate funds, you put it all in the pupil premium?

Sir Kevan Collins: Absolutely.

Q16 **Chair:** In July 2019, a report of a previous Education Committee, the predecessor Committee that I was Chair of, produced a 10-year plan for school and college funding. How do we embed the innovations that we are seeing now, not just so that disadvantaged children recover but so we close the attainment gap that we know is widening? Surely if the evidence on the impacts of this extra catch-up is so strong, we should use this as a tool for further progress. Going back to my pupil premium question, is there scope for better use of the pupil premium in places so that it is used more on evidence-based interventions? What would a proper 10-year education settlement look like to you?

Sir Kevan Collins: I think the point about 10 years and longer term is really well made. We need to give schools an opportunity to plan over the long term for a child's education experience. I think the recovery definitely will take a number of years. I don't think this is a quick fix catch-up. The better use of the premium to apply the evidence of course was my work for eight years at the Education Endowment Foundation. I believe that education is much more susceptible to evidence than people believe. We know that some things have a bigger effect than others and we should encourage people to use them and perhaps put more parameters around the premium. But essentially, in the end the premium



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is a school resource; schools should be held to account for its use but in the ways that they determine for their own children.

A 10-year plan would be about guaranteeing that funding over the long period, holding schools to account for it and really expecting some significant change in that work with disadvantaged children, starting with them very young and giving you the runway to work from the early years all the way through a child's education life, rather than in episodes that don't seem to be connected. We don't seem to have a long-term total education plan for a child rather than a system. I hope we will come to it later, but when you get to 16 to 19 for disadvantaged children—something I know you have worked on and spoken on so well—it really is not very good for the most disadvantaged children at that point if you are not on the A-level route. I was keen for a recovery that worked on the early years, the school, the secondary school and post-16. All these bits need to work as a total education agenda.

Q17 Chair: Even with you gone, given everything that has gone on, do you think the Department for Education will be able to convince the Treasury that there needs to be a proper Covid education recovery plan which is properly financed by the time of the comprehensive spending review?

Sir Kevan Collins: I hope so because it is not just about for me—

Q18 Chair: But hoping is different; do you think they will be able to? Do you think the Prime Minister will do it? You obviously had meetings with the Prime Minister as well as the Treasury. Do you think that the Prime Minister and the Treasury will be convinced so that by the time of the comprehensive spending review there will be a proper post-Covid education recovery plan?

Sir Kevan Collins: I think the economic and education arguments are so strong that of course the Treasury will respond to that. We must.

Q19 David Johnston: Kevan, my first question is about parents. Most of what we have focused on in this pandemic is schools—what are schools doing, how are we going to get schools to help children recover and so on—but millions of parents have had to home educate their children, and even your most sharp-elbowed middle class parents found that difficult, understandably. What do you think the pandemic has said about the way we engage parents in their children's education? We don't want to be in this situation again, so what do we need to do better so that parents are playing the role that they could be and that they want to?

Sir Kevan Collins: Thanks very much. I think there is so much to learn through the pandemic, good and bad. Some of the best we saw was the way that so many parents, in an inspirational way really, supported and leant into the education experience. Some schools absolutely rose to that and supported parents with using online learning, engaged deeply with them with loads of good feedback. Unfortunately we have, as ever in England, too much variation, so I hope we capture the best of it. There are trivial examples, or maybe not trivial, but we will never not do online



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parents evenings again, as I think some schools will see that is a great thing to do.

I hope we will see parents more deeply involved in children's learning over the long term. I think we also need, particularly with some of our parents who found it more difficult, to ask the question: is there more that we can do for home learning? Particularly in the early years, can we support our parents more to engage and work with their children? I think we know, the evidence is strong again, that parental involvement in children's learning is one of the most effective things that you can get happening in a child's life, so how can we support more parents to do it? But there is a catch-up, we need to do a lot of learning about what happened there and how we can make the best of it without putting too much burden on our parents, of course.

Q20 David Johnston: My second question is about Ofsted and it is a question I have put to both Amanda Spielman and Gavin Williamson in recent weeks. I totally understand why we have not had Ofsted in schools during this period but it seems to me there is a whole range of reasons we might want them in sooner than we have perhaps suggested. I have schools in my constituency living on old judgments where they know they have improved and it would help their admissions. Amanda was concerned about outstanding schools that she says have not been inspected for 14 years. I am concerned about "requires improvement" and "inadequate" schools that went into the pandemic like that and I suspect did not fare very well. What is your view? Have we got the balance right on Ofsted judgments? Should we be getting them in there more quickly than we are proposing?

Sir Kevan Collins: I think there is a strong argument to have a more regular and fair distribution of the Ofsted inspections. It is a useful part of our system, although I think that we over-rely on Ofsted as our way of knowing what is going on in the system. We need more than that single tool. I was keen for us to get sharper at, for example, scraping and sampling data from schools and not relying on these annual bits of data or the Ofsted inspection every six years on average. I was keen to get much more feedback regularly by sampling lots of schools' data so we could respond more quickly.

I think with thematic inspections by Ofsted that are not about the school but about the features of the system, for example tutoring, you could quickly do a thematic review of tutoring across a few hundred schools and learn quite a lot about it within the autumn term and feed that back to the system. Rather than always been so high stakes for the school, it is learning about the things that we want to do as a system. What happens too often when you do the high-stakes school's Ofsted inspection, you get to see the Ofsted school rather than the lived education experience that the children are having. When it is about a theme, schools are much more relaxed about showing you the real world.



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I would like to see Ofsted used more flexibly, more nimbly, but I would also like to use a more regular dataset to give us information so we can improve.

Q21 David Johnston: On that data point, do you think that is the role of Ofsted, or do you think the Department for Education should be doing that better? There is an argument that it is not really using data as well as it should be, or collecting it and sharing it enough. Whose role do you see that as?

Sir Kevan Collins: I worked with some great people at the DfE in that job, as I have in the past, but I don't think it is something we do brilliantly. It has been interesting that through the Renaissance Learning reading data, for the first time we have started doing something regularly and we have realised that you can get a sense of what is going on in the system. I was shocked when I asked a question about time: what is the length of a day in the average school? We don't collect that data and we don't know. We had to start looking at websites and asking people, ringing them up. There is lots of information about the system—we have to keep reminding ourselves that it is only 3,500 secondary schools; it is not that big—that we don't have at hand. We should be collecting it and using analytics to drive our decision-making.

Q22 David Johnston: It would be helpful if Kevan could write to the Committee with the data that he thinks DfE is not good enough at collecting and we could put that to the Department.

Chair: Thank you. Is that okay, Sir Kevan?

Sir Kevan Collins: Sure.

Q23 David Simmonds: For the record, I need to mention that Dr Melo is from the European Federation of Education Employers, and I was one of the founding directors of that organisation. Although post-Brexit the UK is no longer directly involved, I do have some history with the organisation and its work.

The question I want to ask is about the strength of the Department's case for the recovery package. Given that we have heard quite a lot about that already in your questions, Chair, may I ask Sir Kevan and other witnesses what is the evidence base around the recovery package in the UK? How does it compare with what we may have seen being implemented in other countries?

I have particular question for Sir Kevan about the impact of self-isolation requirements on education. What is your view on the impact and what decisions should the Government be making about that to enable recovery?

Dr Melo, what is your perspective on how that is impacting on education in other countries? Are any of them implementing a different approach that is having a positive or more negative impact on the ability of children to catch up?



Sir Kevan Collins: The huge challenge here is that we keep working with headline average numbers. We have a very good, large dataset on reading and mathematics, which Renaissance have collected for us, and there are other sets, which tell us that children are three months behind in their reading and three months behind in their maths. You can add a bit more for disadvantaged children, but they are average numbers. We know that underneath that there is going to be a huge range and they are only about reading and maths. We don't know very much about the other subjects. Although we have lots of reports about issues of stress and mental health, we really don't know the detail of that—the non-academic outcomes you might call them.

We have to rely not only on those headline data; we have to work with schools and help schools to understand what the needs of their children are as they present and as they know their children. I was encouraging schools with the resources they had through the second wave of money in February to do a lot of diagnostic assessment. We have to build this up from the bottom, but we do know that the impact of Covid has been significant on children's learning, and that is ongoing and is sitting there and, and they are not recovering. It will go with them. We have international examples over time where if you don't recover, it can impact not only your academic attainment but your lifelong earnings. There is a long-term loss, not only to the individual but to the economy.

I was fortunate to speak to many parents, head teachers, teachers and medical colleagues on this, and I believe there is definitely something happening to the mental health and the wellbeing of our children. There is not enough competitive sport, not enough activity, not enough socialisation and music and drama and art—that has a bearing—and not enough play in the early years. We know that our country has responded in a way that compared with some others is, quite frankly, a bit feeble. The amount of money we are responding with at the moment is significant sums, but this scale of shock, losing on average 115 days of face-to-face learning, requires a massive national effort to recover. I worry that it is not a bit of tutoring in the corner but a fundamental approach that the school needs to take.

Recovery now becomes the work. It is not an activity; it is an outcome of everything we do. That is why I was keen to see a whole school effort around time, teaching, tutoring, and not a narrow kind of auxiliary attention to one particular activity that if we are not careful gets put out to a teaching assistant at the back of the room.

Q24 **David Simmonds:** Thank you. Sir Kevan and Rodrigo, have there been international efforts that you are aware of and can share with us to share expertise and experience across countries to support the recovery effort by learning from each other?

Dr Queiroz e Melo: Thank you very much. Of course catch-up policies are based on the situation in each country and also on the structure of the different school systems. Nevertheless, and maybe not surprisingly,



what we have seen with our members is that there is a very strong focus on the social and emotional aspects, we think mostly because this is the most democratic loss in the systems. Reality is very different from school to school and from student to student. When we look at upper secondary school, our members have reported that in fact people are catching up, schools are working with their students, so they are more worried about social and emotional losses than with straight cognitive replying to the test losses.

There is a sense that over time these more cognitive aspects will eventually be developed and a lot of our members are reporting a strong focus on the emotional part. Even our member from Poland stressed very much that the only thing they have to share is that they are focusing it all on getting students emotionally on board and motivating them to start the next school year catching up. Most of the measures have been additional funding.

What worries us as education employers—well, not worries us but what we are trying to always bring to the light—is that learning losses and inequality have been there for ever. They are unfortunately more or less structural in all our school systems, so we really don't see that there can be one-off solutions to address these losses. If something is put into place and is working, how can we take it away? We are a little bit worried that we have good ideas, we look at the evidence, we put things into places, and then when the money is over in one or two years things will go back, and that is just not a possibility. Even with all this investment in ICT—and it is going on in all the countries—in five years you will have to invest again because all the components will be outdated by then.

Chair: Can I ask you to sum up the answer, because we have a lot to get through? I mean that very politely but we have to get through a lot.

Dr Queiroz e Melo: I was ending.

Chair: Thank you. David Simmonds, do you want to come back at all?

Q25 **David Simmonds:** I have a question for Sir Kevan in light of the evidence that we have heard from Rodrigo. It certainly chimes with what I have heard from a lot of schools, that the big deficit is in the school readiness, the emotional, social situation of children, and in fact the learning loss has been relatively modest. Sir Kevan, do you feel that there is sufficient focus in the structure of the support for schools on catch-up of children's emotional and social skills as opposed to offers around tutoring for a learning loss that may not be the biggest problem that we face?

Sir Kevan Collins: I am always keen to never allow these two things to become in opposition to each other. I think they sit in a virtuous relationship, the academic and the non-academic, and you need both. Of course the reason I wanted time and I want the non-academic activities is because children have to be ready to learn. We know that it is critical they are ready to learn and their dispositions to learning are correct if



they are going to thrive. But equally, I am very worried about the young people going into year 7 who are not reading at the right level. We know that if you fail to read that has a deep impact on your efficacy and self-belief and confidence.

These things live in a virtuous relationship and I think our schools have the wit and understanding that you work on them together by knowing the child and you have the right balance. But the time is essential if you are going to create the space for the non-academic stuff to thrive and grow. We just need more of it.

Q26 Chair: I want to ask about the figures that were widely reported in the media and elsewhere, for example one saying that the average pupil has missed 115 school days to Covid, one model predicting that the long-term economic cost of lost learning in England due to Covid will be £100 billion. That was in *The Times* on 2 June. Other models have put entirely different figures on the likely damage and the IFS said, "Evidence on the returns to schooling would imply a total loss of £350 billion or £90 billion under incredibly optimistic assumptions". That was on 1 February. How are these figures reached? The projections vary quite wildly. We are obviously confident that the damage will be bad but it would be useful to get a better steer on the facts to inform public debate. What is the most reliable estimate you have seen so far and what is it based on? Natalie, if you go first and maybe Sir Kevan Collins will want to respond briefly as well.

Natalie Perera: I can't speak to the rigour or robustness of other organisations' estimates. EPI has published its own estimates of the wider economic cost and that is based on our analysis of the increase in earnings based on each additional year in school. We found or we estimate that there could be between £60 billion and £420 billion of overall impact to the economy, based on the current cohort of children and the amount of learning they have lost. Clearly that is a wide estimate because these things are difficult to nail down, but when we think about the order of magnitude of the longer-term impact to the economy—by the way, that does not take into account any wider impacts including things like civic participation, impact on adult mental health and wellbeing—even that £60 billion to £420 billion impact, when we then go back and think about what EPI and Sir Kevan has been asking for on education recovery in the order of £15 billion, is a relatively low amount when we consider the bigger economic impact.

Q27 Chair: Thank you. Sir Kevan, do you want to very briefly comment on my question or what Natalie has said?

Sir Kevan Collins: I agree completely with Natalie. There are, as ever with economists, a range of estimates and the one from the OECD and Eric Hanushek went up beyond a trillion. I think the key thing is—

Q28 Chair: I think you quoted the £100 billion yourself.

Sir Kevan Collins: I did. I was going conservative.



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Chair: Where did you get that from?

Sir Kevan Collins: That came out of the work we were doing with the DfE and you get to a conservative figure.

Q29 **Chair:** Is that a robust figure that would stand up to Treasury officials and so on?

Sir Kevan Collins: I certainly think the £100 billion and the work that the Education Policy Institute that Natalie leads has done are very robust figures.

Q30 **Chair:** To be clear, the £100 billion is from the DfE?

Sir Kevan Collins: That is the figure we were using with the DfE, yes.

Q31 **Chair:** That was worked out by DfE statisticians?

Sir Kevan Collins: Worked out within the DfE, yes, by their own staff.

Q32 **Chair:** Was that figure presented to the Treasury?

Sir Kevan Collins: All these figures were presented to the Treasury.

Q33 **Chair:** What did the Treasury respond to the £100 billion figure? How did it respond to it?

Sir Kevan Collins: I don't think there was a direct response to that figure. I think everybody accepts that there is a link between the economic wellbeing of the nation and the productivity in education terms, the human capital kind of investment. I think a key question might be, and my job is not to ask questions: what is the Treasury's own model of the economic loss?

Chair: That is an important question.

Q34 **Ian Mearns:** Sir Kevan, your resignation did seem to be on a matter of principle and I think I detect some disappointment in the Government's response to your recommendations, but you said that you hoped the Treasury will bring forward further finances to support the implementation of your recommendations. Is it your view that there will be further rounds of catch-up funding? If there is to be more, will it be enough and will it be timely enough to make a real difference to the lost learning that we have talked about? David Simmonds said that lost learning was modest for some pupils, but I think it has been rather significant for the most disadvantaged pupils. That is certainly my experience here in the north-east of England.

Sir Kevan Collins: On the timing first, if you don't mind, Ian, we can't wait. I know there are these processes known as the spending reviews that fit within a Government cycle but I am obsessed with the education cycle. We need to start from September. I wanted to hit the ground running this September because children can't afford another year, because of the phenomenon of compounded deficits. I will take the year 7 reading example. If children are struggling with their reading in year 7,



the textbooks get harder, you get more subjects and you don't catch up. In fact, you build a compensatory behaviour to your reading and it can get worse. The children can't wait, so I wanted to break out of the spending review cycle and do what we need to do in education in education's time rather than in someone else's time. That is why we are disappointed about the timing.

Since I have resigned it has been reassuring to hear the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and the Chancellor talk about there being more money coming. I hear that sort of stuff in completely good faith. I am a total optimist in this. We have to do it because the arguments, both economic and educationally, are overwhelming, so of course we will have to do more. We cannot blight a generation of children by not investing in their education. I was ready to be known by the end as the education recovery commissioner who might have suggested we spend too much on England's children. I would rather be that side of this wrong than the side that we have underestimated and underinvested in the lives of our children.

Q35 Ian Mearns: When you presented your recommendations, was that directly to the Department or to the Prime Minister? What was the response? The numbers are important but the sort of things that you talked about in your recommendations had implicit costs within them.

Sir Kevan Collins: Yes, of course, and this was an ongoing conversation over a number of months. As Natalie said, there were reports coming out; we had the data from other countries that responded—the United States, the Netherlands with its £2,000 a child. We were building the case; this was not a one-off conversation. I was working closely with colleagues in the Treasury and in the DfE. I presented to a range of people. Of course I presented to the Prime Minister, the Secretary and the Chancellor. I am always clear, and this is completely correct, that my job was to advise. Other people have many other priorities they are competing with and issues I don't understand and know about that they are making decisions against and that is their job, but my job was to advise.

Q36 Ian Mearns: Are you absolutely convinced that the evidence upon which you based your recommendations to Government was totally robust?

Sir Kevan Collins: I am convinced they are robust as they can be, Ian. Evidence is always about the best we know, and this is what the evidence indicates. There is no beautiful randomised control trial on what you do at the end of a pandemic that gives you your best outcome. We were trying to build from an unknown situation what is the best of what we were looking at. We looked at international examples where there had been disruption in education previously and we knew that with those examples—the Belgian example is a very good one—there was a long-term loss to children's learning. We then saw examples where if there is a loss to your learning there is a long-term loss to your lifetime earnings.



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We also know from evidence that children don't necessarily recover naturally unless you intentionally do something about it.

It was all built on assembling the best of the evidence that we could pull together across not just my work, of course, but a whole range of partners and colleagues. I was really pleased to speak to literally thousands of head teachers and others.

Q37 Ian Mearns: Are you clear, Sir Kevan, that rather than levelling up, if we don't get this right there will be a widening gap in education particularly for the poorest youngsters?

Chair: In a nutshell, Sir Kevan, please.

Sir Kevan Collins: I am completely convinced of that.

Q38 Chair: Did you present your case directly to the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary or was it just the DfE and the Prime Minister?

Sir Kevan Collins: There was a whole range, including the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary.

Q39 Chair: Did you meet directly with the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary to present your case?

Sir Kevan Collins: Including the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at the NERT meeting. There is a well established structure.

Q40 Chair: You were able to make your case directly to the Chancellor is what I am trying to understand?

Sir Kevan Collins: Yes, of course.

Q41 Tom Hunt: Thank you for your time, Sir Kevan. This is to do with the £15 billion and I think you touched upon it earlier. I am trying to get a sense of what you might have deemed as being acceptable. For example, if the Government had come back to you and said, "We have looked at it, we are going to give you £7 billion or £8 billion," would that have been enough?

Secondly, I know that you are understandably monitoring things of interest and have perhaps seen some hopeful signs in movement from the Government since your resignation. Potentially, the fact that you have resigned has had a positive impact and moved things in the right direction. I take the points you have raised about the timeline for spending and how it shouldn't be tied to spending reviews and it should be education, education, and I sympathise with the point you are making there, but did you consider staying on? Perhaps if you had stayed on you would have had more influence and more ability to get maybe not entirely where you wanted to be but at least closer to where you wanted to be than where we are now?

Sir Kevan Collins: Personally, it was a very difficult decision. It was not what I wanted to do. I saw the opportunity to be involved in the recovery



as the challenge of my professional life, and I see it as the biggest challenge for our generation of educators. I am very worried about a complacency that this will happen naturally and we don't have to intentionally and nationally lean into this. We have to mobilise. I was deeply disappointed. I did consider all the options, as you have said, but the quantum was so different from the amount that I thought we needed to deliver the exam question I was asked, it was impossible for me not to step back at that point. I think we need a significant greater investment than the Government have agreed to provide so far. But in the end it really is not about me, is it? It is about what we are doing as a system to face this problem.

Q42 Tom Hunt: On a slightly different point, you have mentioned special educational needs. Some young people will have the EHC plans and some will not have those plans but they might be dyslexic or dyspraxic or something else, and the impact on them of online learning will be significant. From your investigations, in what ways do you think that they have been negatively impacted and how is that specific to their disabilities? Do you think you can help us understand that to a greater extent?

Sir Kevan Collins: If you take our most vulnerable children, and perhaps you want to include some of our youngest children as well, the online learning technology capacity we have just doesn't cut it in the way that it can for, say, an A-level student doing history. You need the expertise and the human relationships more closely with you. Some of those children have, for example, been shielding. They have been out of their schools. They have had quite an impoverished experience apart from what their families have amazingly done for them. I think we have a huge issue with some vulnerable children who have missed a lot of the experience of education.

That is why for me it is critical that we create the opportunity for schools to decide what is best to do for the children. We must not drive this from the top down, but for those children particularly I worry that they have been isolated, alone and have not had the access to our highly trained expert people who work in special education, as an example.

Q43 Kim Johnson: Good morning, panel. My first question is to Sir Kevan. The National Tutoring Programme was one of the interventions that you mentioned to support education catch-up. How effective do you think the rollout will be with Randstad as the provider, with no previous experience? Disadvantaged kids have been disproportionately affected during the pandemic, as we have just mentioned, and the Government talks about levelling up, but schools are losing out due to the funding change to pupil premium. What will be the impact of that going forward?

Sir Kevan Collins: To be clear before I start, Randstad was one of the providers in the NTP, so there is some experience there. I think the NTP was a good idea and had been set up very well. We have nearly 250,000 children now in tutoring, which is a huge move from a standing start. To



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hit the target that the Government have set for tutoring we need to get to 600,000 children a term, so you need to expand that dramatically. In my view, you need to go beyond the NTP, which is where schools pull down tutors from organisations that are available, to give some of the money directly to schools so they can access and develop their own tutors who are well trained and qualified. We know in the new model that both options are available to schools and I think that is the right step forward.

The challenge is going to be to get the right level of understanding. This is a huge step forward. This is way beyond the scale of anything we have ever done before. It is a big change for the system. If we get it right, the evidence on tutoring is quite significant that we will see an improvement and it will be something that could close the gap and help to close the gap, but we have not really mobilised in this way before and I am not sure we are that prepared for it. I am certainly very worried that tutoring done inside the school day could pull children out of lessons and tutor them before they are taught, which doesn't make sense. Also some of the best tutors we have around may well be teachers who want to do some tutoring after school for, say, your A-level physics group, so we need time for them to do it. I think it has huge promise and we are doing a lot more work on preparing for it.

I don't want to comment on Randstad. I don't know about Randstad.

Chair: Okay, we have got it.

Q44 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you, Sir Kevan. You mentioned that we need to reach 600,000. Will those 600,000 be the most disadvantaged? You have mentioned that at the moment the tutoring programme is not really meeting those pupils who need to be supported going forward. How much funding is required to meet that need?

Sir Kevan Collins: I think it is slightly confused at the moment about whether it is tutoring for every child or for the children that need it. In my view, you may well have tutoring not for all children and some children may need two or three blocks of tutoring. Each tutoring block is 15 sessions and I don't think that should be for every child necessarily because some children are already tutored, and some children don't need it. Other children will need it in two or three subjects and may need it for different periods of time over the Parliament. I think that needs to be clarified.

The 600,000, by the way, is we need to do that each term to hit this target. Currently the model is that 50% of the money on average comes from the Government fund and the rest comes from within the schools' existing budgets.

Q45 **Kim Johnson:** My other question is about the change to funding pupil premium, Sir Kevan, and the impact that that is going to have. We know that that is a lot of funding to a lot of schools for the children that need



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the funding most. Do you have an opinion on levelling up on the one hand and then taking away funding on the other?

Sir Kevan Collins: I think the pupil premium has become a very important resource to get money to the areas where it is most needed. I am not sure it is always spent as well as it could be. I would like to see more support and challenge on the way that money is actually spent. As the Chair said earlier, I would like to wrap a whole load of funding pots and channel them through a single kind of pupil premium mechanism. As long as you have the right floors for all schools to get an adequate amount, it allows you to get more money to where it is needed.

I think that the changes in the premium allocation were unhelpful at this time. It is not when you want to see budgets suddenly change, but I think overall the premium has been a fund that has been incredibly useful to schools and I really hope that it continues to be there, as I think it will be, for the foreseeable future.

Q46 **Kim Johnson:** Do you think the DfE has a coherent approach to tackling this whole issue of catch-up? If not, what should it be doing?

Sir Kevan Collins: There was a plan that I thought was pretty good that might have helped. Investing in teaching and tutoring are good components but it needs to be a bigger co-ordinated effort, a substantial resource that gives everyone the appreciation that this is everybody's business for the next three or four years. It needs to be a bigger whole education effort. Early years is underfunded in the current package. I think that post-16 needs more attention, but the major point for me is that we send a signal that this is a national endeavour. I am worried that it is being reduced to an activity and it is not going to be an activity for recovery. It is going to be an outcome of everything that we do.

Q47 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you, Sir Kevan. Those are all my questions to you. My next question is to all panellists. What should the UK be doing in funding wider wellbeing support and mental health support? Are there lessons that can be learnt from other countries? Can we start with Natalie first, please?

Natalie Perera: To reiterate what Sir Kevan just said, there are elements of the DfE package that are rooted in evidence. There is a commitment there to improving the quality of teachers in schools and in early years settings and we know that there is a strong evidence base for tutoring. The problem is that the DfE package does not go far enough with the elements it covers and there are lots of elements that it does not cover. As well as a focus on the early years and more support, particularly more funding, for post-16 provision that Sir Kevan has already mentioned, another key omission from the DfE package is anything to support young people's mental health and wellbeing. There is a bit of money there for summer schools but that is quite acutely targeted at incoming year 7 pupils over this summer. That is a key factor that is missing from the DfE package.



From the analysis that we have done about how well it compares to other countries, the answer is actually quite poorly. We estimate that the total amount of catch-up funding the DfE has announced equates to about £310 per pupil in England. That compares to about £1,800 per pupil in the United States and about £2,100 per pupil in the Netherlands. Again, it is not only the scale of funding but also the fact that we are seeing in the US and the Netherlands a much more comprehensive package of education recovery support focusing on pupil wellbeing. A large number of states in the US are saying that they are planning to spend their recovery money to prioritise young people's social and emotional wellbeing.

Another area that the US is focusing on where there is not as much focus in what the Department has announced is vulnerable groups. That is not just those eligible for the pupil premium but those, for example, from migrant families, different ethnic backgrounds, different levels of special educational needs. We compare internationally quite poorly in our spending and our coverage of support at the moment.

Q48 Kim Johnson: Thank you, Natalie. Dr Rodrigo, do you want to add anything on the question about funding for wellbeing and mental health support?

Dr Queiroz e Melo: What we are seeing now is that most countries are still at the planning board so it is difficult to say what is working and what things will roll out. Nevertheless, we have some examples that this focus is really being given to the schools to decide. In the example that Natalie gave about the Netherlands, there is an extensive menu of instruments that schools can choose from according to their specific situations: more counsellors or more time at school, a lot of summer camps and summer activities to try to put students together. What we are not seeing internationally very much is something that was referred to a moment ago, which is better articulation between health services and schools and education. We still see health on the one side, education on the other, when we speak about mental wellbeing and so on. Probably there is something to do here.

Chair: Can I bring in Lucie, please, because we haven't brought you in yet? I apologise. Lucie.

Dr Cerna: Thank you very much. To add to what the witnesses have already said, there are a number of countries that are focusing a little more on a comprehensive package of recovery funding that not only focuses on academic losses, which of course are important in all countries to varying extents, but also many countries are very keen on focusing on mental health and wellbeing.

For example, New Zealand is dedicating quite a lot of funding to the wellbeing of students, but also the wellbeing of the teachers. There are recovery funds for that. Portugal is also investing quite a lot in this regard, and in Canada a number of the provinces are making particular



funding available as part of a whole comprehensive package for wellbeing and mental health. This often includes a variety of measures. It depends a lot on the needs of the regions or of the schools and can again range from additional teachers or teaching assistants or counsellors to more time for after-school activities. It is not only academic ones, it is ones related to play, sports or drama, more for socialisation, or it is also more time or more opportunities for summer schools.

Again, it is a package about catching up on the academic losses or gaps, but also providing opportunities for socialisation and positive mental health. Those are the areas that we don't have as many studies on what the impacts have been on wellbeing and mental health, but the studies that exist show that there will be long-term consequences. They need to be taken into consideration and to take comprehensive measures in this regard.

Kim Johnson: Thank you, panel, for your contributions.

Q49 **Fleur Anderson:** As a parent, this is an extremely concerning conversation. I see the effects of this, but I also see the amazing teachers in my constituency and across the country, working so hard to overcome this.

Sir Kevan, when you came to speak to us before, we just really appreciated your experience, dedication and enthusiasm for taking on this project. A quick question from me to start with: was there a final straw? Was there one thing that broke the camel's back and you decided, "I now can't stay," or was it an accumulation of all the things that you have been talking about and are in your resignation letter?

Sir Kevan Collins: It is the latter, but to be honest with you, it was the amount; it is the quantum. I think the quantum really matters. It is everything everyone has said. The non-academic outcomes, the social and emotional learning for our children—in the current package there literally isn't anything for that. That matters not only for the children but it matters because for me it sent the signal that this was about the child, it was a recovery for childhood and not just some narrow stuff we were working on. It was the quantum, to be honest with you.

Q50 **Fleur Anderson:** Thank you. Also you raised data, and we have just been talking about wellbeing and learning from other countries as well. Do you think we have the data in our schools to learn about the non-academic impact of lost learning and of Covid? Will we know in a year's time what that effect is, if it is beyond those things that are measured by Ofsted?

Sir Kevan Collins: I don't think we will. When I started the work, I looked at three measures. I was thinking about attainment being returned to its correct levels. I think that is essential; I don't take a step back from that. Narrowing the gap was one of the outcomes I wanted from the plan. The third was a shift in the non-academic outcomes for our children, but when we ask that question, of course we do not have a



measure for that. We did start exploring, but I got very nervous about a new national measure. I could see how that might go all wrong.

There are tools and instruments and my view was that schools should develop instruments and tools for that. I wanted every school to have a recovery plan, for example, and be required to report on those questions. In the Ofsted framework there is a section on pupil wellbeing and behaviour and I thought that could be used as a very good way of encouraging schools to reflect. We should use that more, we should build Ofsted to be more interested and concerned about that domain of children's lives, because I think the evidence has changed over the last 15 or 20 years. The reciprocal relationship between attainment and social and emotional skills is very strong. We do not have them, but we need to let schools build them and I think build them into our accountability framework.

Q51 Fleur Anderson: Thank you very much. My next question is for Lucie and Rodrigo about learning from other countries. We have been talking about a specific focus on certain groups, early years, for example, or children with special educational needs or those in exam years or those going between primary and secondary school. What have you seen and what decisions are other countries making? You mentioned the plans, Rodrigo. What plans are being made and what decisions are they making about these special groups or where to focus the funding? Rodrigo and then Lucie.

Chair: Shall we do Lucie first, because I think she was about to say something?

Dr Cerna: A number of countries have been looking in particular at these vulnerable groups. That can involve students with special educational needs, immigrant students, students from ethnic minorities and many countries that also focus on LGBTQI+ students as a particular group, and then of course there are the socioeconomically disadvantaged and regionally concentrated students, and then the transition years and finishing exam years.

Countries have made different decisions about what to focus on because in a way all the students need particular help. Some countries have tried to provide support to all of the students who need it, but also to a varying degree. There has been a lot of effort on students with special educational needs, because they are often the ones where online education has been very difficult for them and parents often could not help without specialised support.

There has also been a focus on especially the students who are finishing their secondary schooling and are then going on to higher education or the labour market, providing particular support to them to be able to finish and have good results at the end, because they have often lost quite a lot. Then the early years, many countries have focused to keep those early years students in schools as much as possible. In some



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countries there has been a lot of focus on not closing schools for them because the online education is perhaps not as easy and suitable for them—it might be easier for some older students—and they need especially the socialisation aspect and being together with other children and learning from them is very important. In some countries Governments have made a priority of keeping their upper secondary students in school as much as possible in order to prepare them for the examinations.

There has been a lot of collaboration with particular organisations on the ground, so it could be associations and NGOs, working with specific groups. It could be also sometimes some trade unions in some countries, it could be with community organisations providing support from different levels and engaging the parents and families. It was not necessarily always education ministries who were responsible, but it is very much the organisations on the ground often know best what these students and their families need. Otherwise there has been a lot of effort to also engage directly with the families and with the parents.

Dr Queiroz e Melo: In a nutshell—

Chair: My favourite phrase, as the Committee members will know.

Fleur Anderson: In a nutshell, which groups, yes.

Chair: My favourite phrase, yes. Go ahead.

Dr Queiroz e Melo: There is more funding for special needs students and a longer school year for migrants and other minority students, so a longer school year and a little bit more money for special needs. That is what we have seen.

Q52 **Chair:** Thank you. Very quickly, Sir Kevan, going back to Tom’s question and perhaps Fleur’s, when you stepped down was it because you felt that you had lost the whole argument or is it that you just lost the battle? Because if you had stayed, perhaps you could have continued to make the case to the Treasury and be there convincing the Treasury in time for the comprehensive spending review.

Sir Kevan Collins: It is very hard to answer that question. I was asked to give the advice, I gave it, and it wasn’t accepted and it wasn’t adopted. As you know, I was so grateful to be asked to do this task and take it on as a voluntary thing that I was doing and I gave honest advice. I think it is perfectly fine—

Q53 **Chair:** But could you have not just said, “I will give you until the comprehensive spending review and if you don’t do it, then it will not be acceptable,” and just continue to fight the battle? Because otherwise some might say you threw in the towel too early.

Sir Kevan Collins: I don’t throw in the towel. It is not the way I work. I fight as hard as I can, but in the end, when the quantum comes back as what I regard as too small, too narrow and too slow an approach, I can’t



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stand by it. I have to be very clear and honest. By the way, the problem with the spending review notion, as I said earlier—

Q54 **Chair:** But by stepping down, it implies that you think that the whole plan is lost completely, despite what the Government says, that they are looking at it for the comprehensive spending review.

Sir Kevan Collins: I remain optimistic, largely because of the work that teachers and families do, and our children of course. What is critical about the spending review is the money must get into the schools as soon as possible. If we lose an academic year, I think that is unacceptable, because we know what the issue is and we know the implications of the issue, both academically and non-academic, for our children.

I could not stand by and say, "There is some kind of process that you just have to wait for, Kevan, and hope that you get the money you want in that process." By the way, if the argument is strong enough, why wouldn't you do it now? This is an investment. This isn't about spending and controlling—

Q55 **Chair:** But by stepping down, you are suggesting that it is not going to happen.

Sir Kevan Collins: I hope it will happen. I don't know, do I? My job is to advise. I think the advice was, "We need to do it and we need to do it now". That was the advice.

Chair: Fleur, you said you wanted to come back, is that right?

Fleur Anderson: No, it is fine.

Chair: Tom, we will bring you in in a bit. I just want to bring in David Johnston, who has not properly spoken yet. David Johnston.

Q56 **David Johnston:** Thanks, Chair. Just a quick question about the evidence of extending the school day. I am a supporter of extending the school day, largely because at lots of successful schools and academies in this country, independent schools, charter schools in the US, you often see a longer school day. The Government say they are reviewing the evidence about an extended school day. Do any of you have good evidence about extending the school day being good for pupil outcomes and specifically do we know if two hours is better than three hours or one hour is better than an hour and a half? What exactly, from anyone, is the evidence on this?

Dr Cerna: A lot of the evidence that we have is from the United States, which has tried in various states to increase the length of the school day, but most of the extensions have been at least 60 minutes or 100 minutes or 120 minutes. There is evidence to show that this has been beneficial, especially for more disadvantaged students, and increases attendance and results in the core test scores and also in teacher ratings. It can be effective, but it needs to be very high quality. It depends on what you are



offering in that additional time. It needs to be quality and it needs to be very much aligned to the student needs.

Q57 David Johnston: Lucie, from that US evidence, what exactly is being done that is making it effective?

Dr Cerna: It is a whole very comprehensive plan, thinking about what you offer in this additional time, what kind of enrichment you offer. It is the combination of academic courses or additional time in the subjects—for instance, reading or maths—and what time is spent on additional activities, which are supposed to then improve the wellbeing and socialisation, or some of the non-academic outcomes. It is a very comprehensively designed programme and it is evaluated. That is the important aspect, that there is a plan to evaluate it and it is very much you bring all the stakeholder sectors together. It needs to be very clear what the objectives are and who is it supposed to reach. It needs to be evaluated to see whether this is working.

Sir Kevan Collins: Just to build on what on Lucie is saying, I agree with everything that she said. Interestingly, when you look at the synthesis of different studies from the United States and you bring them together the way that Harvard have done, you see that all of the big reform programmes that achieve improvement include time being one of the key features. If time isn't in there, those reform programmes did not lead to improvement. It is a key enabler. The critical thing is how you use it and what you do with it. As ever with evidence, it is not what you do, it is the way that you do it kind of stuff. It is an enabler that really matters.

Secondly though, time is a multiplier in the evidence. My point about tutoring, if you want to get the effect of tutoring, you need to do it as well as and not instead of, so creating the time for it creates a multiplier effect. Then the third bit for me about time, the evidence was social and emotional learning and time creates the opportunity for a broad recovery because you can do the other stuff. So you have the enabler, the multiplier and it allows you to have a broad recovery, otherwise you are going to narrow the recovery by trying to do it in the same amount of time.

Q58 Christian Wakeford: It is a question to all the panel. In the UK, it has been estimated that a decade's progress of narrowing the attainment gap has now been reversed due to Covid. What has learning loss been like in other countries and what lessons can be learned to prevent this, if we ever had a further pandemic?

Dr Cerna: Reversing the narrowing of the gap has been a concern in many countries, especially because the disadvantaged students or the more vulnerable students have been affected the most, so the gap has been increasing in many countries. There are some studies already, but there are still a lot of studies that are currently being undertaken as to what extent this has happened. It is a concern in many countries and that is why a lot of the recovery funding and the programmes have



focused on these disadvantaged vulnerable students, especially to help them be supported and to decrease the gap again. For maybe 10 years there has been some narrowing of the gap, but who knows how long this will take to come back to the same point where we were. It is quite a concern across many countries, unfortunately.

Dr Queiroz e Melo: We are all speaking as if the pandemic was over and the next school year will be a normal year and so we are doing things to catch up. We are not convinced that is the fact. We do not have great measures about the learning gap, but we have a real concern, first, that it is there, especially for disadvantaged students, and secondly that next year might make it even worse. What we have seen from the schools' perspective is the need during the summer to get our acts together in online or distance learning, because if during the next year we have school closures eventually, we will need to make it better. Unfortunately we don't have a silver bullet, but we have the fear that the learning gap will be even worse a year from now.

Chair: That is an incredibly important point, Dr Rodrigo, which we need to keep on board all the time. Natalie?

Natalie Perera: Going back to the question about the likely impact on the gap, what is very important to keep in mind—we called our report that we published last month "Education recovery and resilience" because it is very important to build resilience into the school system.

When the pandemic hit, it hit a school system that was already showing signs at least of being unstable. We were already, pre-pandemic, seeing that disadvantage gap starting to widen after a decade or so of making good progress. By the end of secondary, before the pandemic, the disadvantage gap was already just over 18 months and we saw wide variation in different parts of the country. Mr Wakefield, for example, in Bury South, the disadvantage gap was wider, at 20.4 months. What we are seeing from the data that we are analysing for the DfE is that not only are poor children falling behind, but we are seeing some of those regional gaps opening up too, particularly in the north-east, particularly in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Going back to funding and the spending review, the Government need to think about how they can genuinely level up if they don't invest properly in recovery and resilience funding for education. Otherwise their levelling-up agenda is at real risk of not being realised or not being prioritised.

Q59 **Christian Wakeford:** Thank you for the figures for my own constituency. I think it was Sir Kevan who mentioned the point on literacy. One of my big concerns is the number of people across the country who either struggle with reading or can't read and the impact that Covid has had on a generation of children and young people and the impact on their literacy. What has the impact across the country been? Is there any online learning, distance learning or anything that can be done to circumvent that and stymie the flow of literacy getting worse for our



children?

Sir Kevan Collins: What is most worrying about the evidence of a child who is behind in reading when they are five is that they are seven times more likely to be behind in maths when they are seven and 11 times more likely to be behind in maths when they are 11. It is not just reading; it is the whole curriculum that begins to unravel for children.

This goes back to my imperative about why we need to act now. I think how we respond to this will set the course for the English education system for the next 10 years. My worry is that we are going to have growing inequality and the system fracturing in ways that we have not seen before, because I think the biggest experience of Covid was the level of variation. We saw children getting fantastic support from their schools and families. To your point, in every constituency some children were getting a wonderful experience, but others were not, and the gap is opening up. I think that is going to be a feature of our system if we are not careful and we don't act very quickly. Again, it goes back to why I was so strong that we need to act now.

Christian Wakeford: Some very damning thoughts, but thank you, Chair. That is my questions done.

Q60 **David Simmonds:** Natalie, the EPI's modelling suggests that pupils who have lost out on their learning are going to face a significant lifetime financial penalty. The figures range a bit, but I guess a similar challenge is faced in other countries. Do you have a view about how that can be mitigated? Within that data, are there subsets of students where you feel there will be a much more significant adverse impact? Do you have a view about how that specifically might be mitigated?

Chair: Natalie, we will just have you answer that one, please, and then we will move on to Fleur again.

Natalie Perera: In the report that we published last month, where we did also publish those estimates of the economic impact, we focused largely on what the Government needs to do based on the best available evidence. We recommended—again, similar to Sir Kevan—a package of funding of between £10 billion to £15 billion over the next three years. That included a focus on improving quality in the early years and running some pilots so that the most disadvantaged younger children have access to high quality early years provision, which includes a lot of parental engagement, going back to what we were talking about at the start of the session. Then for primary and secondary pupils, a package of measures that included improving teacher quality, funding for pupil premium-eligible pupils, but also a wider group of pupils who are currently in the social care system and have a child protection plan.

We also recommended before and after-school clubs. You could call that a longer school day, but in line with the evidence, we recommended that there is more time at school devoted to a combination of academic and



social activities, again reflecting the evidence. We also—and very importantly, mirroring some of what has been in the media this morning—recommended that schools focus on inclusion, because we know that the most vulnerable children have had the toughest time during the pandemic. For them, they need to be back at school and learning more than anybody else. We need to make sure that schools continue to be inclusive, that they keep children in school and provide the services that they need to enable them to survive.

Finally, post-16 we recommended additional funding targeted to disadvantaged students and the ability for students, if they need to, to repeat the year before they go off to university or into the labour market or another qualification.

Chair: Sorry, Natalie, if you can sum up, please, in a nutshell.

Natalie Perera: I was just going to say that we recommended a whole raft of measures.

Chair: Okay, got it. Thank you. Can I bring in Fleur, please?

Q61 **Fleur Anderson:** Thank you, Chair. I think this is to Sir Kevan and Natalie. You have talked already, Natalie, about the wider impact and the long-term consequences of lost learning for the economy, but what other lost learning consequences are there for society for social cohesion, for example, and for skills and productivity in the long term? Sir Kevan?

Sir Kevan Collins: I think they are profound. I would like to focus on one group to answer the question. Young people at post-16 who aren't going to university—so the non-A-Level group, if you like—we currently fund for about 17 study hours a week, as you know. Our competitors fund more like 25. Those people are heading towards a very difficult labour market. Some have not had the right level of on-site or practical experience that they might have had for their course.

We present the risk of an increasing number of young people, for example, becoming NEET. We know that the consequence for that is not only a cost to us all—£69,000 is the estimate for a NEET—as well as the implications for a young person's life in terms of wellbeing and health. We know that all that connects to attainment. The recovery, as I said, will set the course for our education system, it will begin to set the course for how we respond as a society to the pandemic. If we don't get this right, there will be a generation of young people who will, I think, take the cost of it, which they shouldn't. That post-16 group, with less time to learn, are the ones that you could focus on right now.

Fleur Anderson: That is all from me. Thank you very much, Chair.

Chair: Thank you. I am going to bring Ian Mearns in now, who is going to chair the rest of the 20 minutes or so session that we have left. I apologise. I have to ask a question on behalf of a constituent in the House of Commons for Justice questions, which is about to start. Before I



pass over to Ian, can I first of all thank all the witnesses from overseas, and Natalie, who is an incredible source of information and data constantly to our Committee? We really appreciate the work that you do. Especially to Sir Kevan Collins, I think that you will see from the questions that we have asked there is a lot of support for what you are trying to do and I thank you for your service to education and trying to get a long-term educational plan. Thank you very much. Ian, I will pass over to you. Thank you.

[IAN MEARNS *took the Chair.*]

Q62 **Chair:** Thank you very much, Rob, and good luck in the Commons.

I would like to ask a question about the catch-up spending and how it compares internationally. We have heard a number of figures being bandied about. Are the figures that we have heard bandied about accurate and they comparing like with like? That is the main question I would like to ask. Lucie, I saw you nodding there. Do you have some numbers on that?

Dr Cerna: There have been some comparisons already mentioned. It is always hard to compare because there are figures and then when you divide it up and figure out how much it is per pupil and how it is spent, it varies a lot. It is true that there are some countries like the Netherlands, which seems to be spending about £2,000 per pupil, whereas some countries are spending maybe £100, but it often goes to quite varying measures and means.

Also it depends a lot on how long this funding is provided. Is it some short-term funding for one or two years? Is it more long-term funding for at least five years? Some countries don't necessarily know how much funding they are committing; often there is funding committed and then there is more funding committed a bit later on, so it is not always a comprehensive package from the start. We already mentioned that in the US they are also committing more funding and it goes to both academic and non-academic measures. Norway commits about £100 per student and the funding can be used for a number of measures, including catch-up programmes, summer schools, additional teachers and tutoring.

In some ways it is a bit hard to compare when you just look at the numbers because, just to sum it up, it depends a lot on what the funding can be used for, how long the funding is for and who are the targeted groups. Is it for all students or is it only for disadvantaged vulnerable students? There are lots of factors to consider in the comparison.

Natalie Perera: I agree with that. We have published our best estimate of international comparisons, but as Lucie says, it does depend on a number of variables, including how well the funding is targeted to different groups of pupils and over what period of time. One of the



missing pieces of information in England is the duration of time of the recovery package that the Government have announced. It is not clear whether the latest £1.4 billion is for the upcoming academic year or whether it is for two or three years beyond that, so we definitely need more clarity in England before we can continue to compare internationally too.

Sir Kevan Collins: Two things to add quickly. The amount you spend should of course have some sort of relationship to the event that you experienced. It is worth remembering that the number of days of closure in England was the highest number in Europe to date. On Dr Rodrigo's point, this isn't the end, but where we are. That needs to be kept in mind. Also the ambition of the amount we spend is to build a stronger and fairer system, not just to return to where we were. We have talked about some of those outstanding issues. It is important to remember that our Covid experience was more significant than in almost any other education system in Europe.

Dr Queiroz e Melo: I agree with everything that was said. Just sharing one international experience from my country, Portugal, there is one thing we are trying to do and it relates to the spending, because when we look at the exams we gave to students, we see that 30% of the students in fact did quite well through the pandemic and the school closures, so we are focusing on the low end, but there is a high end of students who did well in the more autonomous setting of the online teaching and learning.

What we are trying to explore in some schools is if this is so, why do we not keep these 30% of students with some form of blended learning so we free up teacher time for the more in need students? We should take the opportunity to restructure the way we are looking at schooling and what we are doing and we will free up extra teacher face-to-face time for the students who need it most. If we come into new school closures, then we could explore not a complete lockdown, but maybe more in need at-risk students coming into the school and the other 30% who are doing very well by themselves doing it better, of course, with preparing more autonomous work that could free up time for the others.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Of course we are not out of the woods yet as regards the pandemic, so a lot of the comparisons about what is being spent, we are not finished with the job yet by any stretch of the imagination.

David, did you indicate earlier that you thought your question had been answered?

Q63 **David Johnston:** I did, but I will just ask a slightly different one, thanks, Ian. Apart from the different amounts of money that are being spent by different countries, is there a fundamental difference in the approach? Leaving aside the money, which I accept different countries are spending different amounts, what is the thing—if there is one—that you think the UK has not done in its approach that you have seen other countries do?



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Kevan put his hand up first.

Chair: Kevan, the missing magic bullet, please.

Sir Kevan Collins: It is not a magic bullet but the big thing in the current package is attention to the social and emotional aspects. I don't overplay that, as you know. I think this is a combination of academic and non-academic, but in our current package there is nothing around the non-academic, whether it is sport, art, drama or whatever.

Natalie Perera: Yes, I completely agree. One other thing that we might reflect on is that, particularly in the US, there is more of a kind of bottom-up approach to how the money will be used. Each state is drawing up plans about how they will use their recovery funding and that is then being sent to the federal Government. There is much more co-creation between local education authorities and the state about how to target and prioritise funding.

The other thing that I touched on earlier is about targeting funding and support to specific groups of pupils, so narrowing down on pupils from more vulnerable backgrounds, including immigrant families, pupils with EAL and pupils in the social care system, for example.

Q64 **David Johnston:** Natalie, very quickly on that, the states are getting to design their own. There is a tension there with evidence though, isn't there? Do they have to do it within the parameters of, "These are things that work" in the way that we would say you should use things EEF recommends? Are states able to just come up with what they want?

Natalie Perera: They need to demonstrate that it is aligned with the evidence and it aligns with their local needs. I think it is a bit more flexible than just saying, "All of your things must be evidence-based".

Sir Kevan Collins: David, out of interest, the Dutch schools have been given the EEF toolkit to help guide some of their decision-making.

Q65 **Tom Hunt:** Obviously it does seem that a lot of the stats and data does show that there are particular groups of young people who may be more adversely affected with some of that socioeconomic background, certainly in regions of the country. There could be a concern here that no one child's experience has been the same, all children are different. I am slightly concerned if we are going to be focusing funding in this way that some people might be falling through the cracks.

You might have a young person where when you look at them you think, "Surely they should have done quite well compared with other kids," but for whatever reason they just haven't been able to get out of bed in the morning, for whatever reason mentally—they have just been particularly badly impacted by what has happened. Conversely, you could have someone who has just responded to it in a positive way, because each child is different. We do have to draw some patterns and see patterns, but I guess we just need to make sure that the funding and these



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decisions about how to target support are made as local level as possible. It is just whether you are confident that is the case.

Secondly, it goes back to my question earlier on about special educational needs. I am an associate governor at a special school, so I absolutely have a real concern for those who have need of that extent, but we are not just talking about those children. I know the point that some of them have had to self-isolate to a greater extent. A lot haven't. A lot do not have an EHC plan, they just have dyslexia and dyspraxia. My concern is that they are going to fall through the cracks here, because I am not hearing a lot about them. Whenever I ask questions about SEND, I get a response to do with special schools. You might have dyslexic or dyspraxic people who have struggled with online learning and might have benefited from your traditional exams. I just want to know that there is a bit of thought for them as well.

Chair: Anyone who wants to come in on that, please?

Sir Kevan Collins: This is why it is so important for me that the school-led recovery is what matters here. I wanted ideally that each school would write a plan in the sense of how they were going to recover over the next three or four years, based on their knowledge of their own children, and that schools would have the capacity and space to make those decisions. While you allocate the national funding through patterns—as Natalie said, and I agree with that—through characteristics of children, you also have to make sure the floors are in there for every school to meet the needs of children and not have some schools getting very small amounts.

The key thing is that individual schools have to create the response based on the children as they know them to cover a broad range, rather than it being top down and given of what must have happened. I think your point is very well made.

The other point I would make is in any one classroom, regardless of where you go, each child is going to have their own story of Covid and that story has not yet been written. We don't have the story of Covid written for our children. We have some big patterns and average data, but schools have to work this out, knowing their children individually. I personally would trust our schools to do that.

Natalie Perera: Going back to the wider point about children with SEND, if we look pre-pandemic and we think about how unresilient parts of the system were, for those children I think the system was the most unstable. We had back then been waiting for the Government's SEND review. We are still waiting for that. We already know that the funding system isn't fit for purpose for pupils with SEND and for special schools. The best thing we can do now is not only focus on recovery efforts for these pupils, but also look at the underlying system of funding and provision for pupils with SEND.



Dr Queiroz e Melo: The tricky thing about all this is that, as Sir Kevan already said, we have the evidence of more or less what seems to work. We do not know what worked. We didn't know before; we don't know now. With these kids in particular, we only know that it is even more difficult. Just to bring into the discussion one aspect that we did not see in the international approaches to this, we are always focusing on the children and that is good, but for these kids we probably should have more focus on the teachers, because teaching for these kids is emotionally different from teaching regular classes. Maybe we need to scaffold the teachers so then they can scaffold their students. That is something we do not see in the catch-up plans that probably deserves a better insight.

Dr Cerna: I would agree that I think a lot of recovery needs to be school-led, because it is the schools and it is the teachers who know the needs of the students in their classes. It is possible then the students with dyslexia fall through the crack because there is a lot of focus on special schools. There are some examples like Portugal, where there are very few students in special schools and more or less 98% of students are in regular mainstream classrooms. It is up to the teachers and the multidisciplinary teams, which are made up of professionals—psychologists, teachers, the school leaders—who determine what are the specific measures and the specific needs of particular students. So all of them, with whatever needs they have, it can be very varied, taking that into consideration. Working very closely in the schools with the different stakeholders, of course also with the parents, is very important to move forward.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Tom, is there anything you want to come back on?

Q66 **Tom Hunt:** It seems to me that it is very crucial and to an extent it is down to those individual schools and teachers to have those conversations with each individual pupil to understand what their experience is and to not make assumptions about it, because I do sometimes hear assumptions made and I think it is important that they are not. But that is all very helpful, thank you very much.

Sir Kevan Collins: One thing we haven't spoken much about is the investment in teaching. The range of needs that teachers are going to face is going to increase because of the growing gaps or the growing differentiation in the classroom. I think it is great that we are now investing in teaching and in the early careers framework and in a better lifecycle of teaching. The work on the ECF and the national professional qualifications will help, but I still think that is where so much of our attention should be, on how we support our teachers to be the best they can be, because this is going to challenge teaching over the next few years to meet the range of children that we have talked about and the growing range of children.

Chair: Yes, and of course that is in the aftermath of the Government



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publishing a document about the future of teacher training only a couple of weeks ago, which leaves a lot more questions than it does answers at the moment, so that is an important point. Thank you for that, Kevan.

It is important that we must not forget the wellbeing of our teaching staff. As a governor myself, a chair of governors of a primary school, I do know that the last 12 months, 15 months has taken an enormous toll on all of our teachers and I am sure that is the same wherever they are across the piece, so a big thank you to them. We do need to have much more than just a weather eye for the wellbeing of the teaching profession, but teachers as individuals as well.

It has been an amazing session. I apologise, we have obviously spent an awful lot of time talking to Sir Kevan because of the context of what has been going on recently in the UK and in England in particular, but can I thank you all? Sir Kevan, Dr Melo, Natalie and Lucie, it has been a very useful session. Thank you very much for your time, your insight and your expertise. It has been really quite rewarding, certainly from my perspective, so thank you very much indeed. Thank you to the other members of the Committee and our staff, as usual.