

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: [Impact of Coronavirus on Children's Education](#), HC 824

Wednesday 30 September 2020

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Members present: Caroline Nokes (Chair); Theo Clarke; Elliot Colburn; Angela Crawley; Alex Davies-Jones; Kim Johnson; Kate Osborne; Bell Ribeiro-Addy; Nicola Richards.

Questions 1–46

Witnesses

[I](#): Dr Halima Begum, Director, Runnymede Trust; Ruth Davies, President, National Association of Head Teachers; Dr Angela Donkin, Chief Social Scientist, National Foundation for Educational Research; and Anne Longfield OBE, Children's Commissioner, Office of the Children's Commissioner for England.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Halima Begum, Ruth Davies, Dr Angela Donkin and Anne Longfield OBE.

Chair: Good afternoon and welcome to today's session of our inquiry into covid and the impact on children's education. Today's session is specifically focused on those from different ethnic backgrounds and on gender. Other protected characteristics and issues have been explored in more detail by our fellow Committees, such as the Education Committee and the JCHR. We have already looked at the impact on children with special educational needs as part of our inquiry into coronavirus and disability; however, I will invite our witnesses to come in and offer further information if they think that we have missed anything important. I will ask Members to ask their questions in turn, starting with Kate Osborne, please.

Q1 **Kate Osborne:** Thank you, Chair. Welcome, everybody. Do you mind, first of all, if I address you by your first names? Would that be acceptable? Okay—thank you. The first set of questions is on the impact of covid-19 on the education of children from different ethnic groups. My first question is to all of you. The impact of covid-19 on children from different ethnic groups has caused great concern during the last few months. Could you tell us what evidence there is of educational disparities being exacerbated by the pandemic for children from ethnic minority groups? Would you like to come in first on that, Angela?

Dr Donkin: Good afternoon. We have conducted two surveys: one in May and one in July. In May, I do not think that we quite realised the disproportionate impact on the BAME community, but in July we did. We made sure that we did some analysis looking at some of these issues. When schools partially reopened in July, just 56% of those who are eligible to attend did so, according to our survey. But that number was lower in the BAME groups, at just 49%. When asked about the reasons given for non-attendance, the school leaders said that two thirds of the parents in schools with high proportions of BAME pupils mentioned concerns over safety. That was double the general number of concerns about safety.

We have also done some additional analysis looking at the "Understanding Society" data. That illustrates that, for the whole population, a quite surprisingly high number of children are living with people at risk or very high risk from the negative impact of covid. Again, that number is even higher in deprived households and BAME households, so it is maybe not surprising that there were higher concerns over safety.

The other piece of evidence that I have is in relation to catch-up. We tried to work out how far behind children were in their learning. On average, they were three months behind. There was no significant difference for BAME groups. However, when asked about how many needed intensive catch-up over and above the normal catch-up that anybody would require,

the general number was 44% for the population of children, but it was even higher again in BAME groups. There is some evidence that children were potentially being kept away from schools and that some of those children were going to be more in need of catch-up support.

Q2 **Kate Osborne:** Thank you. Ruth, can I bring you in next?

Ruth Davies: Thank you for bringing me in. We have highlighted and noticed an intersection of BAME pupils with disadvantage. What we have found is that the kind of risks that disadvantage raises have exacerbated those risks that were already in existence for these pupils. For instance, on average, 20% of children in England are living in low-income families. Children in Pakistani households and Bangladeshi households are, respectively, 2.8 and 2.4 times more likely to live in low-income households. We have found that the reintegration of these pupils into school marries with the plans that are needed for children experiencing disadvantage at large. You are right to raise the issue of non-attendance due to fear. We have also found that sometimes the lack of attendance by disadvantaged pupils is simply down to a reduction in the transport system or additional concerns with regards to vulnerability within the homes that they live in.

Q3 **Kate Osborne:** Thank you. Halima?

Dr Begum: My fellow expert witnesses have given a flavour of the statistics for BAME communities, so I won't repeat those statistics back. We had known before the publication of the Public Health England report that BAME communities would be disproportionately affected. That is because we know that they were already experiencing inequalities in health, housing and so on, so you would expect that impact to be significantly worse. If you look at groups that are vulnerable, often there is a secondary effect that follows from the health impact itself. We were pretty clear that BAME groups would be affected disproportionately, but we were not sure to what extent. When the Public Health England report came out, it confirmed our worst fears. We were terribly worried about what the follow-up and the action were going to be. To this day we remain concerned, despite the publication of Public Health England's report and several other reports, including our own; we actually carried out a survey between June and August to test out what those fears and concerns are. Despite all those findings, we are still really concerned that the Government has not followed up with any action.

We know that children from BAME communities are experiencing financial pressure, which pre-existed, as you were saying, Ruth. For example, Bangladeshi and Pakistani families experience child poverty above the national average, so then experiencing a member of the family being unwell with covid, a loss of income or just additional care responsibilities all has a compounding impact on the ability of families to cope, and therefore on children who are then expected to learn and to cope.

We have definitely noted that BAME children had less access and ability to address remote learning. IPPR, one of our partners, has recently done



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some research in this space and they reckon that only 2% of teachers who work in disadvantaged areas could say with any confidence that children from BAME backgrounds had equal access to online learning. If you factor in the evidence that we already know—when children fall out of education during a normal summer holiday, education inequalities widen anyway—and now think back to March, and to where we are now and what we expect the outcomes to be on learning and attainment, we remain very worried.

Q4 Kate Osborne: Thank you, Halima. Before I bring Anne in, did you want to come back in, Ruth?

Ruth Davies: Yes, it's to concur with what has just been said. During the changes to school provision in four months, schools developed a range of different approaches to support remote learning. Some schools, for instance, provided a weekly list of ideas for activities and tasks that pupils and children could work through, while others might have taken a more structured approach. Obviously, we are finding that on the return to school, children from disadvantaged backgrounds typically have had less access to that, either because of a lack of resources—with the machines themselves—a lack of access to reliable wi-fi or simply too many siblings with whom they have had to share limited resources.

Undoubtedly, we are finding that on the return to school the experience of disadvantaged children, as might have been expected, has been grossly different to that of children who had ready access to online facilities.

Q5 Kate Osborne: Thank you. Anne?

Anne Longfield: Thank you. I would support both those comments. Throughout this crisis I have been keen to look at how children with existing vulnerabilities had heightened vulnerabilities during this time. Whether that is about an educational divide or particular vulnerabilities around race or gender, they are likely to be heightened during this period, not least for those who are economically disadvantaged or in poverty, as we have heard. Housing is also a strong factor.

Just to add a couple of points about the home environment, we know that the number of children who didn't learn much is about 4 million and that there were about 1 million children who did not have access to tech or to wi-fi. Obviously, there were interventions from Government that sought to address some of those things, but looking particularly at the disparities between BAME children and others, BAME children were more likely to have parents who were key workers, and therefore more likely to be in school; it is not a huge number, but it is 5.5% rather than 3.9%. So, BAME children were more likely to be in school but less likely to have access to laptops.

Some 5% of families said they did not have access to laptops at all. BAME families were less likely to have access to open space—8% of BAME families do not have gardens, compared to 2% of non-BAME families—and less likely to have space to work. Again, 63% said they had space to work rather than 67%.



All that compounds an already difficult situation for those children who experience disadvantage and who are then trying to work in a very new way, which is largely online. The gap in experience is enormous, from more affluent households where parents will have space and may be working at home, to children going to schools where there is a strong online offer, to those that got very little.

We carried out a stress survey just of 2,000 children in June, and children from BAME backgrounds said that they were more likely to feel stress about mental and physical health; 44% of them said that, as opposed to 25% of others. We will come to girls and stress about schoolwork. But 38% of children from an Asian background said that they felt more stress about the future; they were worried about jobs and what that would mean. I think that supports much of what others have said. That wider disadvantage where black children are disproportionately represented is something that should concern us all.

Q6 Kate Osborne: Thank you. Leading on from that—I think Ruth and Halima touched on this—is there evidence of the differing impact on children between different ethnic groups? Angela, would you like to start us off again?

Dr Donkin: In our survey, we did not have sufficient numbers to look at that. You would presume, in terms of those existing inequalities whereby certain groups do less well in education, that they may be the ones who are likely to have fared worse. We cannot presume that. If you think about some of the communities where the parents actually put a great amount of value on education, you might presume, for instance, that Indian and Chinese groups may have done relatively well through remote learning, whereas other groups may not, but that is just conjecture.

Q7 Kate Osborne: Thank you. Ruth?

Ruth Davies: Similarly, I haven't got the figures for the actual differences between the groups within this, but what we are finding undoubtedly is that, again, there is a correlation with disadvantage, which, we should remember, pre-existed covid. Covid did not create disadvantage; it was already there. To repeat what has already been said, the conditions that existed during lockdown for some of the most vulnerable just exacerbated the risks that are already there for them.

In terms of catching up, I think we use the term "catch up" as if it is something that can happen overnight through a single activity. Catch-up can be achieved only when we take wholehearted control and responsibility for bridging the gap that, as I said, pre-existed the crisis and when we get to grips with exactly the issues that continue to contribute to inequality—and not just inequality but inequity of opportunity generation upon generation. Schools will need to be supported to put short-term measures in place, but in terms of what we are finding for BAME pupils in particular, the kind of features that made them vulnerable prior to covid have just been exacerbated.



We need a longer-term plan to ensure that these children have equity of opportunity, and some of that longer-term plan needs to involve process and actions to match the words. For instance, we always knew it was an ambitious proposal to put out a number of—I think the target was for 230,000—devices by the end of June. Actually, only just over 202,000 were delivered by the end of June. It was too late, and it was too little too late, for children who by that time were nearing the end of their term.

Sorry, this has been a long answer to a short question. We just need to be clear that the risks that we are talking about this afternoon require a longer-term strategy rather than mere short-term fixes.

Q8 Kate Osborne: Thank you. Halima, you mentioned the impact on Pakistani and Bangladeshi children and families. Do you want to expand on that or any other examples that you have between the ethnic groups?

Dr Begum: Yes. Our research showed very similar differences and disparities within the different minority groups as well. Some of you will know that, within the black and minority ethnic group, there are differences between those groups. Indian and Chinese families generally tend to do well on educational attainments. That relates to the socioeconomic class factor. It's very important that when we have these discussions about disparities within different ethnic groups, we actually talk about socioeconomic factors as well.

The reason Indian families and children from Indian families tended to be less vulnerable was to do with their socioeconomic status, and not because of any additional value that any middle-class family might place on education. I think it is really important to separate cultural values and emphasis on education from socioeconomics. We found that black Caribbean families, British Bangladeshi families and British Pakistani families were, on the whole, disproportionately impacted in terms of their ability to respond to, be resilient to and cope with the crisis, and in any sort of learning and education follow-up, they were disproportionately impacted as well.

That correlates with existing inequalities in education. Children from black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani families also tend to fare worse, in general, because they are socioeconomically worse off. As you know, some white working-class families are also socioeconomically worse off. Whenever you combine race and ethnicity, you will find the knock-on impact, and that is what we remain concerned about.

I am really concerned about the fact that although we have been discussing this since March, and we know the vulnerabilities, to this day, the Government have not actually done anything to address the vulnerability of BME groups in relation to covid, with the exception of announcing an equalities commission. We know that every day matters; a response in an emergency is time-critical, but all we have done is set up an equalities commission. We have not responded to the recommendations from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, in the Public Health England report or from the Department for Education, and we are losing

time. I remain very worried, as we head into the winter months, about the welfare and education opportunities for the children we are discussing.

Q9 Kate Osborne: Thank you, Halima. Anne?

Anne Longfield: I want to make the connection with children with special educational needs and disabilities, though I know that is not the focus. There will be particular issues for them around their time at school and their reintroduction to school. Children from BAME backgrounds—and boys, actually—are more likely to have SEND than other groups. For white Irish Travellers and black Caribbean boys, you are talking about significant numbers. They will have had a particularly challenging time outside school; they may not have had access to the school place in the way that other children who were eligible might have. For a lot of them, risk assessment found that the school was not a safe environment for them. A lot of the support that the family would rely on in any case was not there in the same way, so families have really struggled during this period. Reintroducing schooling will, in itself, require more support. That is just something that we need to factor in.

Q10 Kate Osborne: Thank you. I do not want to steal too much time from the other Committee members, but I know you wanted to come back in briefly, Angela.

Dr Donkin: Yes, very briefly. Although a number of comments have rightly linked socioeconomic and BAME status, I want to point out that 44% need catch-up, but 56% of BAME children need catch-up. That finding is significant, even after we control for socioeconomic status—you can control for other variables—so although it is absolutely a tragedy that so many of these groups are low-income, there is something additional happening here over and above poverty disadvantage. I want to make that point, because it would be incorrect to suggest that you can sort out all these problems just by going through a poverty and inequality strategy. There is something else here.

Q11 Kate Osborne: Thank you. Briefly, Halima?

Dr Begum: Obviously, the race, stigma and discrimination factors are on top of the socioeconomic issues; other issues are barriers to those communities—I fully agree, Angela.

I want to put out there an additional concern that we have in relation to education and learning that pertains to schools. We remain really concerned about the increasing number of school expulsions and exclusions, particularly for black boys. We are now seeing a through-line from exclusions to pupil referral units, too—another situation that relates to criminalising young black men and the increasing presence of policing in our schools. We remain really worried about this, particularly in relation to monitoring coronavirus, fines, lockdown provisions and so on.

Q12 Theo Clarke: Evidence suggests that the disparity in funding between schools means that pupils from a lower socioeconomic background did not receive educational support at home while schools were closed. How



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did that impact on children from different ethnic backgrounds?

Dr Donkin: First, we found that certain types of delivery were better for engagement with remote learning, such as using a VLE—a virtual learning environment. That might be something like Show My Homework or Google Classroom, or interactive lessons—say, a Zoom lesson, or something with some feedback. That type of delivery was less available in schools with higher numbers of disadvantaged students. That is No. 1.

No. 2, which is of huge concern and has been touched on by a couple of witnesses, is the issue of IT. In May, a quarter of students did not have decent IT, and by that, I mean good wi-fi, broadband or a laptop. Then the Government scheme came in, so in July we thought that we might see an improvement. No—still a quarter of children did not have good IT access. That is a real issue. Teachers were concerned about children from deprived backgrounds, but they felt most concern about children specifically without IT, or without the space at home to work.

As for the impact of that, what we have seen is that all children—98%—are behind, as you can imagine. On average, they are three months behind, but they are much more likely to be four months behind if they are from a deprived background. We found that, generally speaking, the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children increased this year by about half.

Ruth Davies: I have already touched on this, but it is such an important one. Sometimes, we can be under the impression that if the normal classroom learning situation is not available, we can just switch to online and things will carry on as normal. These are two very different platforms, and schools approached them in lots of different ways. As I have said, in some settings, there would have been daily timetables. There might even have been face-to-face catch-up teaching times with individual members of staff. Some schools would have been using existing online learning platforms; others started from scratch. Teachers were drawing on a range of existing online resources, as well as designing their own.

The commitment was there, and the will was there. Speaking as a teacher, online learning in that way amounts usually to little more than revision. It is not possible to teach new concepts and skills entirely in an online setting. The two formats or platforms are not interchangeable. There is nothing that comes close to face-to-face learning, and we have to be realistic, in terms of looking forward to whatever the rest of 2020 and 2021 holds for us.

There has to be, as I have just described, a commitment to ensuring that all pupils, regardless of their personal home circumstances, have equity of opportunity to access the online platform, but we have to remember as well that there is a limit to what online platforms can achieve, however skilful and creative schools are in deploying them. I am just putting that forward as a practitioner. It is important that we maintain contact with pupils, but in terms of new learning, there is a limit to what can be achieved on the online platform.



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That leads me on to the next bit: reminding ourselves that a school's core business is teaching and learning, but if the crisis has taught us anything, it is the centrality of the role of schools in society and in our communities. What is less successfully achieved through an online platform is all the pastoral care, the development of wellbeing programmes and so forth, which absolutely underpin a pupil's ability to progress and access the same opportunities as their peers.

As we think about the alternatives, should more lockdowns occur, to a class-based approach to teaching and learning in 2021, we have to be mindful that we need an alternative plan for meeting the mental health and wellbeing needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, and general pastoral care needs.

Dr Begum: I think I will answer that question with two comments. One will be around access to IT and remote learning, and how ready and prepared we were. I think we all agree that very few of us were ready; that includes teachers, not just learners. On the ability to move towards remote working, people in the work space generally are struggling with that. I think all of us are struggling with Zoom, Microsoft Teams and what have you. We must not underestimate the struggle that comes with adapting too quickly or too late.

In addition to that, looking forward, if we think about living with this situation for 18 months or so, the education system needs to consider IT agility and adaptation equitably. If we are going to recreate or reimagine an education system that is more equitable, it might actually be helpful to start designing it from that point of view of BME children who already lack access and need additional support, because if you design a system for those who are most vulnerable, it will almost certainly work for everybody else.

On that level, we need to think about the longer term, as Ruth was saying. If this isn't going to go away, we should think about how to make the technology more agile, accessible and inclusive. There is a lot of work to be done there. Many, many BAME families and their children lack access to IT, not only because schools do not make it available, but because they live in multi-generational households. On the supply side, where they receive education and learning is so cramped and limited. We have adults who are stressed at home and children who are stressed at home cohabiting in very compressed spaces.

We have not really looked at the wider environmental factors that might have alleviated that distress. For example, what about asking local authorities to look at vacant spaces? When a member of a family is shielding, where should they go and shield, if they have no access to separate facilities for shielding? You will know that in South Korea, the option of shielding was actually made mandatory by Government if you could not afford that. None of those measures has been put in place in the UK at all.



We also need to think about food poverty. A lot of BME and white working-class children are on free school meals. How equitably was that provided? From our experience, food poverty significantly increased for BME communities, particularly in the inner cities of our large cities. That has had a knock-on impact on financial stress, child poverty and adult poverty in the home. That also remains a concern for us. Although we are asking questions around education, attainment and learning outcomes, we must not forget that this is an incredibly stressful situation in which people are losing jobs, wondering whether the money will come in and whether they can put food on the table, and so on, so it is not just something that schools are responsible for. We need to start thinking about the safety net for families as we go into winter lockdown, and what that safety net is supposed to be.

- Q13 **Theo Clarke:** Finally, Anne, what discussions, if any, have you had with schools that are struggling to support children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds during the closure of schools?

Anne Longfield: We had lots of discussions with schools over that time. It sounds pretty obvious, but this is why I felt it was important that children should be back in school as soon as possible: because that is the place where we can provide the most equitable learning offer and get that structure into children's lives.

I have no doubt that schools did their best, but some just couldn't compete with what the more affluent, often private-sector, schools were able to provide almost seamlessly—a full-day, full-week offer of Zoom lessons. I am not trying to ape that as the ambition that we should all be aiming for, but it is starkly different from what other children received. Even those children who were able to have some communication online, I am told, did a lot of that work on their phones and sent it on their phones.

We should not have any kind of rosy idea that working at home—for those who were—was quiet study. For a lot of those children, it was doing Q&As on phones and sending them straight in. I think that the response from schools, especially those that really geared up to be able to support their communities beforehand, has been excellent.

The point about the whole aspect of pastoral care, which Halima talks about, is really well made. Schools—especially in the most disadvantaged communities—really stepped up to the plate on that. However, it also exposed where the gaps were. I spoke to a group of headteachers in Bolton last week, as well as the local authority, and their main worry was, yes, keeping their schools open, because they are in a very high infection area, but also what happens in that gap between where schools stop being able to offer that support—even more so now that children are back at school—and where the local authority is able to start offering that support. For them, there was a very large gap there, and children who would fall through the net. Yes, we do need to be very aware of that and look at things from the viewpoint—again, as Halima says—of vulnerable kids. If you do that, you start in a different place.



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Building back, I think there is a need for a comprehensive recovery programme for kids. Of course, the £1 billion catch-up is a good start, but it needs to be the start, and needs to go alongside that early intervention and mental health support, because so many children need their confidence built back to be able to start learning in the way that we want them to.

- Q14 **Chair:** I think Angela referenced accessibility of broadband. Did any of our witnesses do any research on how accessible broadband was for different ethnic groups, and was there any consideration of rurality?

Anne Longfield: I said that around 1 million children were thought not to be able to get online. Some 60,000 children did not have access to the internet. I have not got that broken down into ethnicity or rurality.

- Q15 **Elliot Colburn:** Moving on to the increased risk factor that there might be, research from the National Foundation for Educational Research suggests that BAME children are much more likely to be living with a parent who could be at serious risk of covid-related illness. Do you have any evidence about the impact that might have on pupils returning to school?

Dr Donkin: The research that you mentioned is our research. What I was talking about earlier was the issue of safety. When school leaders were asked the main reasons given for not returning to school, two thirds of school leaders in areas with a percentage of BAME pupils said that safety was a concern, compared with just a third of school leaders in non-high-BAME areas—they had double the concern about safety. That was, potentially, one of the reasons why they were not going into school. Ensuring that schools are safe, and that that is communicated widely in different formats to different groups of people, is imperative to make sure that children go back to school.

Ruth Davies: I am glad you have brought me in on this one, because it is absolutely critical, isn't it? As I think I have already alluded to, our families have had grossly varied experiences of lockdown and of the last six months. What will encourage those families back to school and those learners back into the classrooms is not punitive fines for non-attendance, but the building of successful, positive and trusting relationships. For the schools I am working with, part of their return-to-school plan is an acknowledgement that there will be fear featuring as one of the reasons for non-return. Schools need to be supported in these instances to help to build the trust of parents and families, by being given the space to create the safe environment and safe learning settings they know best suits their cohort and their communities. I am not of the mind that fines help with that process at all. A time of crisis calls for the construction of positive and constructive relationships, not punitive measures. I feel that our pupils and their families need to be supported to make that leap back into a new setting. For that to happen, they need to be reassured that, while schools will never be risk-exempt completely, those risks are being managed and are being managed in an open and transparent way.

Q16 Elliot Colburn: Thank you, Ruth. Halima, can I bring you in?

Dr Begum: I concur with Ruth that if you are positively encouraging families to take the risk to send their children into school, when they have not only a parent, but maybe also a grandparent, who might have been affected with covid, and they are still coming back home to that vulnerability, the very idea that you add a fine and a punitive measure on that family creates so much stress. I do not think any of us would want to take that approach. Not only does it create so much stress on the individual families, but it also creates distrust between the school and the community.

If you take the example of policing and pupil expulsions that I talked about, the more children come into contact with police in a punitive sense, the less confident they will be that the police have their best interests at heart. Therefore, if we want to build a positive relationship with the school to mitigate against those risks, the fines are not helping. The school should be a safe haven; it should not be the place that forces and compels you to come back. I concur with Ruth that we need to think about more positive ways to start the journey back to school, but also really listen to parents' concerns. These are families who have multiple vulnerabilities at home. They may have one or two members who have been affected by covid, so it is not easy. We have to learn to listen, and we have to understand that certain families are carrying more pressures and more risk than others, and who they are.

I suppose it goes back to the question around the equality impact assessment as well; if we are going to institute a policy of return to schools, have we conducted an equality impact assessment to see what the impact of that decision is on the particular BME community and its household characteristics, for example? To my knowledge, not all schools have undertaken an equality impact assessment, so I would say that there needs to be a more holistic response, not just an emphasis on schools to do the right thing.

Q17 Elliot Colburn: Thank you, Halima. Finally, Anne, can I bring you in?

Anne Longfield: I want to share some figures from the 17 September published data on school attendance, which up until today were the latest ones. They give a snapshot into which schools are closing, and there is something here that needs to be looked at closely: as of 17 September, the schools with a higher rate of non-white children were not as likely to be fully open as those with lower rates. That means 10% of schools with less than 70% white British children were closed, compared to 4% of schools with more than 70% white British children. When you look at it in terms of schools with 15% or more of their population accounted for by Asian students, they are nearly two and a half times more likely to be closed than those with under 15%.

That gives us an indication of maybe where there is a nervousness, where there is not school attendance or where there are outbreaks that are leading to concern. Overall, the numbers of children in school are decent



in the broad population in the first month back—almost 90%—but keeping them there will be another issue, and we need to look at that 10% and what that means. Clearly, there is something going on here about schools and school closures, which presumably is because of potential outbreaks or nervousness within the population.

- Q18 **Elliot Colburn:** Thank you, Angela, I just want to clarify one point. The word “concern” was used. Just to clarify, are we saying that this is more of a perception of risk or that there is evidence that schools are unsafe, and that is known by families? Or is it a combination of both?

Dr Donkin: The questions were asked of teachers and school leaders, not parents. We were asking about attendance by different groups and the reasons given for non-attendance. Two thirds of school leaders said that the main reason given in schools with high BAME populations was a concern over safety. That was the most common reason given by parents. Of course, that is their perceived concern, but there is something there about communication and reassurance. Also, we are now further on. Anne is absolutely right, and those figures are further up now, but I have a concern about what happens if those figures continue rising and people get worried about taking an infection home.

I also want to point out one thing that we have not talked about, which is slightly related. It is about teachers. If you imagine that teachers may well reflect to some extent the population of children in their area, the reason schools closed originally—if you remember, Boris was trying to keep them open in March—was because of a lack of teachers. When they did close, they were at about 75% capacity in terms of their full-time equivalent staff, so if we want to keep schools open, we also need to think about teachers. Thankfully, now, I think they are on the priority list for tests. With the NHS, a whole raft of volunteers was brought in. If we are serious about keeping schools open, they are asking for more resources to cover the costs of teaching in this new environment, including more staff. We need to think about covering staff and having a kind of quorate number to keep a school going.

- Q19 **Elliot Colburn:** Thank you, Angela. Ruth and Halima, you both touched on the issue of fines. I think it is fair to say that you do not think that they would be effective or useful, especially at this time. I would be interested if you could expand on that. What kind of impact do you see fines having had on BME families, and do you think that there is a more effective way? Tied into that, what would be your view on the compulsory need to return children to school, given the concerns that we heard in previous answers?

Ruth Davies: I come back to the points that I have made previously about the varying experiences that the lockdown has presented for our families. The introduction of fines would undoubtedly compound those difficulties and extend them further. We are looking to reintegrate pupils back into a setting that is oh so familiar, yet oh so unfamiliar at the same time. As a school leader myself, I can fully understand, appreciate and sympathise with the concerns of parents. It has been an unmanageable



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time. We are surrounded by unknowns, and we have surrendered control, whether through lockdown or simply not being able to go about our usual day-to-day lives.

Within all that uncertainty, we have to present schools as a fixed base—places that are open to discussion, that are inviting and that families want to turn up to and want to come into. We can do that only by building relationships and constructive discussions. Building constructive relationships and productive discussions is not a soft measure; it is going to be the key driver for whatever schools look like going into 2021. I do not really see what place fines by themselves have in that sort of setting. I would stop short of saying that fines are never the answer, because, obviously, we are there ultimately to protect the children.

With pupils coming into schools, it is a safeguarding issue for schools in terms of their commitment to ensuring that attendance is reached as much as possible. Pupils need to be there, and we need them to be there, and fines can have a short-term impact. If pupils are not there, quite often it is the result of a breakdown of trust of some sort or other. A fine is going to be a short-term measure, and we can bring these children back in the short term, but if we have not properly addressed the real reason why they did not come in the first place, obviously that real reason will re-emerge and will need dealing with. It is much better to get to the crux of the matter and get into the core of what the difficulty is with regards to attendance and then to proactively look at measures that will give us a longer-term opportunity to sustain an improved level of attendance.

Fines are short-term reactive measures. I would stop short of saying that they are never useful, but I would say that of far more use for the pupil would be a commitment to engaging families in the kind of relationships that will eventually breed longer-term trust.

Q20 Elliot Colburn: Thank you, Ruth. Anne, I saw your hand up there. In bringing you in, could I tag on another question specifically for you? It would be interesting to know what discussions you have had with schools about ensuring that there was relevant support for children from different minority backgrounds once it was announced that schools would reopen. If I can bring you in on the last question and tag that on the end, that would be really helpful.

Anne Longfield: My starting point is that, from talking to schools, and indeed parents, I found that there is enormous good will at the moment. Everyone wants the kids to be in school. There is a will to make that happen, and a will to make it happen once they are. That is something that was not there in the summer, but is there now. Parents very much want their children to be in school.

The other part of it is that, over the summer, or rather over the closure period, some of the most disadvantaged communities often relied heavily on their schools. Those schools were the ones bringing the food boxes. They were the ones knocking on the door and checking things were okay and giving people a call. It has changed people's perception of what school



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is for. That relationship with children's services in councils has also, overall, improved, so that they can now see that there is a commonality of what they are trying to achieve. That is the gateway to getting children whose families have more anxiety about school into school.

I agree about fines. At the moment, it is about building that trust. If kids are not in school, there is usually a reason the professionals, between them can work on to prevent that.

In terms of schools and making their assessments, again, schools worked heroically over that late August period to make it all safe. I believe that they have made good judgments on which children they need to reach out to. But it has all been very fast, and there has been a huge amount to do with the practicalities of getting an 80-class school up and running. The headteachers have been moving the furniture around just to get the thing open.

So although the will has been there, there has not been the in-depth time yet to really analyse which children are there and to put in place that strong strategic plan to get them back in. I am sure that that is the operational mode, but having that broader plan needs in-depth collaboration with the local authority to look at the kind of support the family needs, especially, again, when we are talking about children with special educational needs.

Then there are the practicalities of teacher availability and of assessment plans for support being revitalised, and what that means in terms of communication across the school. I do not think there is any will not do that, but there have been huge amounts that people have had to do. They have done it well, but it is something that remains very much a priority now.

The other thing about exclusions is that we know that black Caribbean boys in particular are twice as likely to be excluded as their peers. Going back into school, it will not be easy for every child to just slip back into a classroom. Again, schools are doing great things to be able to provide a broader curriculum around emotional support, but it still will need endless dialogue with families to be able to get through some of the bumps that undoubtedly will be there over the coming weeks.

Q21 Elliot Colburn: Thank you, Anne. Ruth and Halima, I can see you both have your hands up. I will bring you in very quickly as I am conscious of time. Halima first.

Dr Begum: About fines, you have heard that I don't approve of them. If you look at fines, they do not induce behaviour change. They are there to stop us from being harmed. If the idea is for us to encourage families to send their children to school positively, the fine probably is not the right approach, and I suggest that that is the wrong instrument for the outcome that we want to see.

On the fine approach in general, we need to look at who it impacts most. If we are saying that children from BME families are disproportionately



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impacted by covid, it is most likely that those fines would have a disproportionate impact on those children. I would then ask the question: is there a discriminatory effect on some children more than others? I think we need to be really careful about a standardised approach that then has a disproportionate and discriminatory impact on BME children.

Ruth Davies: I forgot to say that we should remind ourselves that the reason why some of our children are unnecessarily at home is that they simply cannot get a test, and we must remember that. The Government were very clear about the availability of an appropriate track, test and trace facility as one of the key markers in terms of schools returning. They promised us that the schools' return would be matched by a process that was safe and responsive to need. Clearly, that has not been the case, so let us not forget the fact that an awful lot of school absence at the moment is down to pupils simply waiting around either for a test or for test results.

Elliot Colburn: Thank you all for your answers.

Q22 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** This question is to the whole panel. As we know, this year's exam results were cancelled due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, and teachers were asked to submit centre-assessed grades based on how each pupil was predicted to perform if they were to sit an exam. But the Government decided to introduce the Ofqual algorithm, which was the subject of a lot of controversy around A-level results, with almost 40% of results being downgraded for seemingly no reason at all. In your opinion, what impact did the Government's initial algorithm-based approach have on pupils from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds? Halima first.

Dr Begum: Thank you, Bell. We were really concerned about this back in April, so we had a meeting with the Department for Education, with Gavin Williamson and others, to say, "Look, if you move towards this standardised approach of centre-based assessment, it will have a discriminatory effect on children from black and Asian minority communities," and they dismissed us. We now know that that is exactly what happened, so we urge the Government to listen carefully. We are not there to be alarmist because we just happen to be alarmist; it is because we have seen this happen before. So, yes, it has had a discriminatory effect on black and Asian minority children. We said it would, and it has. We are really keen, going forward, that if the pandemic persists, we think really hard about a fair system of assessment that can work for us in the future, not just for BAME children but for all children.

We have various ideas and suggestions for how you could improve this, Bell. A lot of the discussion is focused on looking at value-add assessments on predicted grades and so on, but I think that, fundamentally, what this demonstrated was whether a summative-based assessment actually works. Some of us who have worked in education for donkeys' years know that there is a real debate around how you mark children's learning and assessment. If you look at tests and exams and take the measure based on the end-of-year learning, you are essentially



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measuring the health of the system, but not the actual pupil's learning progress. That was what the algorithm brought up, I think.

That was what the algorithm brought up, I think. When it came into play, it basically looked at the health of the system and overall average grades within a school system, rather than what an individual pupil was learning. This had had a disproportionate impact on BME children, because they tended to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The algorithm helped schools that were already affluent, happened to be in the right postcode, and also had students who were generally well off. If we were to focus on pupil learner progress and various forms of assessment that help children throughout the course of the year, we might find that BME children were showing really good results consistently, and were not being penalised at the end because of the assessment system.

I think that fundamentally, that raises a question about how we assess overall, not just because of the pandemic, and not just because BME children are discriminated against in their results and will have lost amazing university offers. Bell, you and I know that for a BME child from a lower socioeconomic background to do well and get good predicted grades, and then have that knocked off at the last opportunity, is something that I cannot even articulate here. The effect on that young student's life chances and what happens to that child are things that I would want us all to avoid, so whatever we do, we need to move away from that standardised approach to marking and assessment. Even teacher-predicted grades are probably not as sound as we would want them to be.

- Q23 Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Thank you very much, Halima. Sorry, I realise I am having issues with time, so I will move on to my next question, which I want to ask of Ruth. One of the main reasons for the outrage towards the algorithm was the impact on students' university placements, which Halima just touched on. I received several emails and phone calls from students, teachers and parents concerned that the algorithm had marked their grades down and cost them a university place, and I know I was not the only Member. In your opinion, did the U-turn and the decision to use centre-assessed grades improve the outcome for pupils from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, particularly those for whom English is an additional language?

Ruth Davies: We have learned that clearly, algorithms and blanket policies are not the way to go. A one-size-fits-all approach has been seen to fail, and BAME pupils must be protected from the application of unconscious bias. Ofqual's own analysis of the impact of the proposal for centre-assessed grades on groups of pupils was protracted. The protected characteristics it looked at included ethnicity, as we know, and we concur with them that simply not enough was done to ensure that this did not occur. The equality impact assessment showed that the processes just were not robust enough, nor directly applicable to the exceptional circumstances that existed in the summer, to justify the adjustments and the proposed awarding. I think NAHT highlighted to Ofqual the need for clear guidance for teachers on avoiding unconscious bias, and we have yet to receive this.



We believe it is crucial for both Ofqual and DfE to monitor the impact of these arrangements on pupils from BAME communities, and to publish their findings as well. In particular, they must compare this year's results with previous years' to consider whether pupils from BAME communities have been disadvantaged under this year's exceptional arrangements, and once an understanding of the effect of this year's arrangements is established, they must act to address those findings to ensure these pupils are not disadvantaged in the same way should it need to happen again. Ofqual must ensure full transparency through the process. Again, we have requested improved and clear guidance to teachers on how to avoid unconscious bias. BAME pupils really must be protected.

- Q24 Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Thank you very much, Ruth. My next two questions are for Anne. When it was announced that A-level and GCSE exams would be cancelled this year, there was much concern about the outcomes for black students in particular, because—as we know—they are routinely marked down by teachers, and also routinely outperform their predicted grades. What discussions, if any, did you have with Ofqual and the Department for Education regarding this, and what consideration was given to those pupils from BAME backgrounds?

Anne Longfield: We wrote to the Department and had communication with the Department expressing many of the concerns you have just heard raised by others here, about being marked down and low levels of accuracy for predicted grades overall. We were worried about centre-assessed grades, and we were also worried about the algorithm. Once it emerged that the algorithm had actually produced a system that had thrown disarray into the lives of so many kids at A-level, we wrote and asked for the GCSEs to be put back to centre-assessed grades as well.

So much of this has, again, shone a light on a system that was imperfect when it went into the coronavirus period, but the fragility of that and the inadequacies in terms of what that means for some children, who continue to miss out in many ways, is shown here. I agree with all the things that have been said about the potential measures to address that. It comes down to one thing, though, and it is about having the will to do it. If you have the will to do it, of course you can make it happen, but you have to start with that. If you are looking at what a good outcome is for any kind of system, the starting point is, which kids do we need to make sure don't miss out? If you do that—if you actually make sure they don't—you get a good system for everyone. It is not about putting the balance the other way; it is about making sure the system works very well. It is always the test that I would look at for anything. For this, it is similar, but it needs the will to do it.

- Q25 Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Thank you, Anne. Finally, obviously a system like this should rightfully be expected to comply with equalities legislation. What assessment did you make of Ofqual's equality impact assessment—the literature review of centre-assessed grades?

Anne Longfield: We looked at it in terms of the overall policy and what we were being told were the problems, but we did not do an in-depth



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technical assessment as such. We are quite a small office and if we did that on everything, we would never do anything else. We assessed it, we looked at it and then we acted on it, in terms of raising those concerns.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: Thank you very much. That is all from me, Chair.

- Q26 **Chair:** Can I go back to something Halima said about centres in affluent areas being more likely under the algorithm to get better results? I can use a real-life example: Peter Symonds College in Winchester, which is one of the finest sixth-form colleges in the country but is also a very large centre that had, relatively speaking, quite poor results under the algorithm. Has any research been done on whether BAME young people were more likely or less likely to attend these large centres? We know they were disproportionately affected particularly badly by the algorithm.

Dr Begum: I cannot speak to any specific research on that point, but I understand the point that you are making, which is around some inconsistencies and anomalies and the exceptions that might be emerging. We do not have the data for that. On the point about standardisation in approaches and so on, those biases are not unconscious; they are systematic. The reason why we want an equality assessment is that you could disaggregate the ethnicity and the gender of those affected. If it looks as though all students from a particular background, a particular gender and a particular socioeconomic background are not doing so well, you know the system is not designed well. I just wanted to add a bit of caution in terms of unconscious bias. It is not an individual bias; it is something in the system that is forcing an outcome for certain groups of children. But I would be keen to come and research the point that you just made. I just do not have the data with me at the moment.

- Q27 **Chair:** I was a little concerned that you were giving the impression that we knew—we don't—that there had been an unconscious bias in favour of centres in more affluent areas. I can certainly point to a number of examples, particularly in the sixth-form college sector, where the reverse is true.

Dr Begum: It is not a challenge to the centre assessment-based approach; it is more our knowledge and insight that black and minority children generally come from socioeconomic backgrounds that are poorer. Therefore, a system that is standardised to look at the overall success and higher grades tends to privilege wealthy areas rather than disadvantaged areas. It was not a challenge to the centres that they deliberately did something wrong. That is my point back to you about unconscious bias. It's not that people deliberately discriminate against a certain number of people, but if an approach is looking at aggregates and wealth and for the overall system that has always performed well, students from socioeconomic backgrounds that are already not especially doing well but who have worked really hard—they might be the brightest person in their school, but if that school overall is showing average results that are lower, that shining star won't really emerge, because the algorithm—

- Q28 **Chair:** No, I absolutely get that point. But you were suggesting that



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perhaps centres in more affluent areas were, under the algorithm, advantaged, whereas we know that if they were larger centres, they were disadvantaged. I just make that point.

Dr Begum: I cannot point to that evidence, because I do not have it, but we will reflect on that.

Chair: Thank you.

Q29 **Theo Clarke:** I have a question for Ruth, just to pick up on the point about unconscious bias. What discussions have you had with Ofqual and the Department for Education about addressing unconscious bias, particularly in the grading process, and is there any evidence that training and guidance for teachers is being effective?

Ruth Davies: We have asked for additional guidance for teachers specifically on this point, and it has not been received. The point that I really need to make is the fact that this system, last summer, didn't work for anyone. Halima has picked up some really critical points that also need further clarification and investigation. Our concern, following on from the findings of Ofqual, is that we should not leave it until next March or April to start scratching our heads about what we are going to do next, because the indications at the moment don't seem to suggest that summer 2021 is going to look that much different from summer 2020. It was only a few weeks ago that I heard a Government Minister actually utter the words, in response to a question about the potential disruption next year and the plans to mitigate such disruption, "It's early days." It's not early days; we are three weeks into the new year. We need clear guidance now, not next April, May or, God forbid, June. We need clear guidance now about how we are moving forward to ensure that the same fiasco does not occur next summer that disadvantaged so many of our learners this year and that that is not repeated in summer 2021.

Q30 **Theo Clarke:** Can I push you on that point? Do you think that, if we are in a similar situation next year, the centre-assessed grading system should be used again?

Ruth Davies: The centre-assessed grading system was used this year because quite clearly algorithms failed. I think there is a much more complicated and complex conversation to be had about how we arrive at a system that is fair for all, so no, I don't believe that centre-assessed grades are the panacea in terms of directing the way forward entirely, but that certainly has an important part to play. How we synthesise that system with another system, which increases opportunity and equity for all, is something that we desperately need to get talking about now. Well, we should really have been talking about it in the summer, but we cannot leave these conversations that need to be had for much longer. I would encourage the Government, and all concerned, to engage with the profession now with regard to establishing the plan for summer 2021.

Theo Clarke: Thank you.

Q31 **Nicola Richards:** My first question is for Ruth and Angela. We know that



there is a gap in educational attainment between girls and boys. What evidence is there of educational disparities between boys and girls as a result of the pandemic?

Ruth Davies: It is a little early to tell what the longer-term effects are, but we know that any vulnerabilities that were already in the system and already identified are likely to be exacerbated by the increased risks brought about by the crisis. We have had conversations about the fact that boys tend to do better in exams. Girls might be affected in different ways by lockdown. For instance, figures suggest that they have greater caring responsibilities and so forth. So, while we don't have any specific data to contribute at this moment in time, it is important to know that any risks and vulnerabilities that were already in the system with regard to gender, opportunity and outcome were just exacerbated by the crisis from March.

Dr Donkin: We can give some insight into that. I mentioned earlier that, on average, children are about three months behind—there is a variation around that. We did ask whether teachers had seen a gender difference; 80%—four fifths—of teachers had not seen any gender difference, but a fifth had. That fifth said that boys were further behind than girls. That suggests that, in fact, there may be some falling back, but it is not evenly spread out across schools.

Q32 **Nicola Richards:** There is concern that white working-class boys underperform educationally against girls as well as against other ethnic groups. What is at the root of that and how has the pandemic affected that group of children? Halima and Angela, could you answer this, please?

Dr Begum: This question about white working-class boys in particular keeps coming up. We have thought about this and about how we would like to contribute to the discussion. It might be worth pointing out that that figure actually comes from the figure for free school meals. For example, how many children in schools are on free school meals? Some 13% of all school children are on free school meals, of which 12% are white working class. Even within that white working-class group, there are figures for Traveller communities and so on, who tend to do really badly on education outcomes. What you cannot do with that figure is disaggregate the Traveller community from white working-class communities, so there is a concern there about how accurate that representation is.

Within that figure, if 13% kids on free school meals are showing worse educational outcomes, you also have to ask the question, "Well, what is going on with the 87% who are not on free school meals?" about the majority of the kids in school and what is happening there. With that 87% figure, BME children are actually showing worse results. We care about all children who are showing poor attainment results—white working-class children, BME children and non-working-class children overall—but the overriding factor and concern that we have is not around ethnicity. White working-class boys are not discriminated against because of their skin colour; their outcomes are poorer because of their socioeconomic status.



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There is something additional to the outcomes that we see for black Caribbean boys, and that is not all to do with socioeconomics. We know this. We know that black boys might face higher rates of exclusion because of racism and with anti-racism not being in place in schools and so on. I wanted to put some caution on that statistic that you pointed back to. We care about all children who are suffering disproportionately, but that figure about white working-class boys being disproportionately affected is not entirely accurate, because 60% of children identify as ethnically white, but we need to look at the free school meals figures, for example.

Nicola Richards: Thank you—that is really helpful. Angela?

Dr Donkin: I mentioned this before with regards to other groups, so we probably need to be careful, but focusing on that particular group, we know that they are in households that tend to care about education a little less. Part of the reason for that is potentially because of the kind of intergenerational disassociation with education because it has not necessarily done their parents any good—that kind of discussion. They are also likely to be living in areas of higher unemployment.

The issue right now is about aspiration, which is actually highly linked to future outcomes. To some extent, you might think that aspiration could be linked to what your innate ability is, but there is something here about making sure that groups of disadvantaged children are shown different experiences and given examples of different jobs, especially if they are in areas of high unemployment. One paper that I was flicking through yesterday when reading up on this noted that there is a concentration in certain areas—for instance, in coastal towns. However, right now, when we cannot do very much about moving around, it might be good to think about how we are motivating children to think about why they might want to do more studying, especially if they cannot see much of a future around them.

Q33 **Nicola Richards:** Anne, I know that you want to speak. My next question is for you, so is it okay to group them?

Anne Longfield: Yes, go on; throw it in.

Q34 **Nicola Richards:** Thank you. The Social Mobility Commission says that where you grow up matters significantly, but that in areas of most deprivation, education is not the key factor. What is your view about the importance of place in disadvantage, in the context of the pandemic?

Anne Longfield: They are not entirely not linked. The first thing I was going to say was that children start to fall out of the education system—in terms of reaching their potential—really young. Some 13% of children do not reach half the developmental goals before they start school, so something like speech and language support would be really important at that time. If they do not catch up, which many won't, they are much more at risk of exclusion, of falling beneath their potential at 16 and of needing a social worker. It is vital that we do not think that this is just something that emerges, because the signs are actually there the whole way through.



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We have a check for two-and-a-half-year-olds, which is a very good place to start identifying some of those issues.

The next part of what I was going to say, on place more broadly, is that I believe that it clearly has an immense impact. I did a piece of work about children growing up in the north a couple of years ago, looking at some of the communities where there was entrenched disadvantage—intergenerational poor experiences of not only schooling, but of opportunity and what they thought was there for them. One thing I was really keen to look at was the difference between children on free school meals in some of those communities, which had some of the worst-achieving schools, and their peers on free school meals in London, who were many times more likely to get good GCSE results and go to university. That is largely because of the very good and proactive programme in place in London, the London Challenge.

In terms of place and coronavirus, you are talking to someone who is in lockdown north at the moment. Where there are high levels of infection, children will have particular challenges in getting to school and staying in school, and some of those areas are where there is greatest disadvantage as well. There is a circle here going back to the economic inequalities, housing inequalities and the like, and once again this virus has shone a stark spotlight on the lack of resources that so many families have to draw on when adversity hits, in terms of everything that they have had to cope with.

However, I would also say that, going forward, those are the children who will need the greatest sets of skills, resilience and resources available to them, because those are the areas where the economic impact of any recession coming down that track will be worst. It does not stop now that they are back at school, but that has to be a starting point for a next phase of really skilling those kids up to be as resilient as they can be, in terms of any economic downturn, which we pretty much know is already there.

Nicola Richards: Angela, do you want to add to that?

Dr Donkin: The only thing I would say is that we are likely to see an increase in the numbers of children who are in severe disadvantage because of the unemployment situation. The Government need to have a look at the funding for schools, and especially at the weighting to disadvantaged children, given that the gap in attainment has widened over this crisis. They are going to need more help, which means more money.

Currently, the new funding formula for schools goes in completely the opposite direction of that. So, it will actually advantage more advantaged families rather than disadvantaged families, because they are giving proportionately more to those schools. So, I think that, really, we need to kind of think through that, and address whether or not it is the right balance.



Dr Begum: I just wanted to add a little bit of context and colour to that statement from you. Place matters, right? So, of 17 local authorities that have the highest rates of child poverty, of which 10 are in London, almost every one of these local authorities has 50% more BME young population. That tells you something about the poorest local authorities and where they are, and actually, although we have poverty distributed across the whole of the UK, we mustn't forget that 10 out of 17 of those local authorities with the highest child poverty incidence are actually in London, and almost all these local authorities have higher populations of BME children and young people. So, I guess I am agreeing with you: there is something very strong in that correlation between vulnerability, BME children and child poverty.

As you were saying, Angela, it's not just about the short to medium-term response. What we do know about child poverty is that it has impacts going on for 50 years. So, children living and born in poverty actually become adults living in poverty unless you do something very significant to reverse those fortunes, so we remain very, very worried, and I would just go back to, I guess, my general point that if you are going to redesign the school system to be fit for purpose, maybe start with the most vulnerable children and their needs, and then you'll actually create an equitable system that would work for the next 50 years, and not just for this pandemic. Certainly, in every other sector, if you look at the economic sector, if you look at green new deals, they are certainly on that agenda. Redesign the education system completely as though we need to for a new future, rather than tinkering at the edges, and I think we would leave our BME children and young people much safer if we did that.

Nicola Richards: Thanks, Chair. That is all my questions.

Q35 **Chair:** Thank you. I am going to pick up on that message from Halima at the end about making sure children are safer. When it comes to vulnerable children—children who might be living in households where there is domestic violence, young people who might be at risk of falling prey to criminal gangs, and I think specifically these questions are for Anne and for Ruth—what help has there been for schools? What support has there been from the DFE for them, and what more needs to be done for those young people who may have spent the last six months in a very vulnerable and precarious position? Can I go to Anne first, please.

Anne Longfield: Again, going back to the starting point—those children who were vulnerable before and are likely to have heightened vulnerability now—through the work that we have been able to do with the data, we have been able to show the scale of vulnerability. So, 2.3 million children are living in a household that has either domestic violence or addiction or severe mental health conditions within it—high levels of fragility, and most of those will have increased over the pandemic. We know, as well, that reports of domestic violence have increased during that time. So, it has been a priority for Government. I am pleased to have seen the inter-ministerial group led by the Cabinet Office looking at vulnerable children over this period. I think that is a welcome move and one that needs to continue.



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The decision by the DFE to keep places open for vulnerable children in schools was a very important move to make. The numbers of children attending wasn't high. It was about 8% in May-June. I think it might have gone up to slightly higher figures—15%—nearer the end of June, but for the majority it floated just under 10%. That was a mix, I think, of that really strong message that came out for everyone to stay at home, but also the anxieties that those families had about going into school but also the stigma that that might be. I would prefer to have seen those children called priority children, rather than vulnerable children. Ruth might have a view on that. Certainly, children's services worked hard and worked well to support those children who were known to them, who had social workers, who were on their books and who they were concerned about, albeit through a screen, and worked well with schools on that. My concern was about the children who do not fall into the box of already having been identified. I often speak to a school on the Old Kent Road, which, out of a roll of 400 primary school-age children, had identified that 250 were at risk. When we asked them how many of those children had a social worker, they said eight. Even though you had some identified children who were getting very strong support, there were still an awful lot of children living in very precarious situations.

There are particular numbers of children who were homeless during that period or living in B&Bs, who were probably in a very difficult situation there, but the group that I looked at in particular were the older teens, who probably were not keen on school beforehand and may have been low in attendance rates and were now much more at risk of being identified in terms of exploitation, be that sexual exploitation or criminal exploitation in gangs. They were likely to be the children who lived in households where parents weren't working at home; their parents probably had to go back to work to keep income coming in. There are also particular vulnerabilities about those kids who did not have outdoor space at the home, so they had to go outdoors.

I have stayed in touch with the police over this period and I have heard that, while there was a drop in numbers of children being used in county lines to deliver drugs, because they were more visible, that quickly came back up and is now back up to business as normal, with an even more buoyant drug market. Those are a group of children that I am particularly concerned about engaging back into school. I think one of the ways that might be possible and strengthened would be to harness the potential of youth workers, who will be able to have a more informal relationship with the kids, were much more likely to be able to have a relationship in the first place and will be able to support them and engage them back into school. I think there are real risks about losing that group of children from education otherwise, possibly forever.

There have clearly been heightened risks around girls, particularly around sexual exploitation and, indeed, child abuse within the home. What we know from research over the years is that only a very small number of abuse cases ever come to be known by the authorities. Again, there is a real emphasis here on all those who have contact with those children,

particularly teachers and social workers, to ensure that they can spot the signs. The referrals from schools to social services dropped to about half around May time. They have grown back over recent weeks, but still there is expected to be a spike in referrals when the extent of those traumatic experiences for children is realised.

- Q36 **Chair:** I am going to bring Ruth in. May I ask the witnesses to be as brief as possible? I am conscious that we have about 30 minutes left. Ruth, from the perspective of a school head, we have just heard what Anne said about a spike once schools came back and you and your teaching professionals were seeing those cases. What impact has that had in the school setting?

Ruth Davies: You mentioned at the start the terminology to use: are they “vulnerable” or are they “priority”? A colleague of mine was told by one of her pupils during lockdown, “I come in to school at the moment because I am very important.” She had overheard somebody describing her as vulnerable and misheard it as very important, so I am going to call them these very important pupils who come back to us. You are absolutely right that they need to be our priority, but for them to be a priority, before we can seek guidance or solutions, we must know about them.

Quite simply, to put it frankly, schools are often, sadly, the last people to know when things have happened outside. You have your vulnerable group, but it is not the families I know about that I worry about as a school leader; it is all those who do not meet the threshold for vulnerability. That threshold will vary from school to school, area to area and local authority to local authority, which is why schools are so dependent on independent organisations such as Operation Encompass giving us the information in the first place, highlighting and signposting that there is a problem. It is only when we have that information in place that we can even start to think about putting in place remedies.

Regarding the solutions for this particular area, first and foremost, we need to ensure that schools are prioritised, in terms of being the recipients of the necessary information. They should be top of everyone’s list. And if something has happened that perhaps compromises wellbeing in any shape or form, we really must look at our lines of communication with schools to ensure that they remain adequately and properly informed.

Then, in terms of moving forward, it is about making sure that, as you said, there is appreciation that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but that schools remain sensitive to the right approach and are also supported by the services that they need. Schools are in desperate need of support for children’s mental health and wellbeing. We are also in desperate need of support for families. Schools have held these things together for us during the lockdown and during the period from March to September.

For schools to continue providing a safe service for our learners and our families, we need two things. First, as I said, we need the information; we need to be prioritised and not be a second thought. However, we also

need to be supported by the services, which will help us to meet the needs in their entirety.

- Q37 Chair:** Thank you for that, Ruth. I have just another quick question, which could receive a very short answer. I think that both Anne and Ruth have mentioned anxiety levels and stress levels, and the importance of pastoral care. Has there been any noticeable difference in the levels of anxiety between boys and girls? Shall I go to Anne first?

Anne Longfield: We had a survey in June and the anxiety levels in girls were higher. Girls said they were more stressed about their schoolwork. When boys were asked if they had felt stressed once in four weeks, fewer of them said that they had felt stressed. So, girls are stressed more often, and their stress is much more likely to be school related than it is for boys.

Chair: Thank you. Ruth?

Ruth Davies: I don't have any information about any disparity or discrepancy between the genders in terms of anxiety, but it is right to highlight anxiety as a major feature, in terms of the plans for reintegrating pupils back into school. We need to be responsive, because there will be many reasons for those anxieties and there will be many stories behind those anxieties.

Schools need to be supported—I come back to the point that I made earlier. We need the support to be properly responsive to those needs, because it is only when those anxieties are properly addressed and properly quelled that we can move forward with any sort of learning programme that will achieve anything for these learners.

So, keep the conversations going, make sure that schools are top of the priority list when it comes to the sharing of information and make sure that we are adequately supported by specialist services.

Chair: Thank you. Can I bring in Alex Davies-Jones, please?

- Q38 Alex Davies-Jones:** Thank you, Chair. Ruth, siwmae? My first question is to you. The current attendance estimates for England include pupils who are absent for covid-19 and for reasons that are not related to covid-19. Clearly, that is problematic, because in Wales we are obviously just reporting attendance figures for the children who are actually present in school. I am interested to know your thoughts on that discrepancy, because with education being devolved to the Welsh Labour Government, I am concerned that this situation could produce year-end figures for attendance that are wildly different as between Wales and England.

Clearly, the Department for Education has a responsibility to publish figures that are accurate. To me, it seems obvious that pupils who are absent for covid-19 or non-covid-19 reasons should not be included in attendance figures. As a headteacher yourself, I imagine that this is causing you headaches. I know that teachers across the UK are working hard to keep pupils safe, and I pay tribute to them all today, but if pupils are not attending, they cannot be attaining, so we are also likely to see



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discrepancies between Wales and England in terms of awarded grades in the future. So, what are your thoughts on this, and do you think that the Department for Education has a duty to publish accurate attendance levels?

Ruth Davies: Well, whatever attendance levels we are recording and whatever data we are publishing must be for a purpose, and that purpose is usually an informative one, isn't it? From my point of view as a school leader, I need the information not to sit and read it, but to know what I am going to do next. So, you are absolutely right to request accurate and up-to-date information. We also need to be sure that the information that is being provided to schools empowers them to move forward and to answer any follow-on questions arising from it.

We have rehearsed a number of reasons why there may be covid-related absence, and how that might differ, or might correlate, with the absences that normally appear anyway. My interest, as a school leader, is not in the overall attendance figures but the reasons behind that attendance—or lack of attendance—so that I can put in place the sort of plans that are needed to remedy that discrepancy.

It is every child's entitlement to attend school and to attend regularly. The Education Act 1944 ensures that. In my experience, when that does not happen there are reasons behind it that can be remedied if we work together in a positive, productive frame of mind, with the support of other agencies. So, I am less concerned about the overall figures and more concerned about the stories behind those figures, and making sure that schools are furnished with the fullest picture so that they can then develop plans that can be properly and appropriately responsive.

Q39 **Alex Davies-Jones:** It seems bonkers to me that they can count pupils who are absent, for both reasons, as being present in school, and that goes towards the attendance levels. Do you have any predictions about how this could impact schools across the devolved nations given the difference in reporting?

Ruth Davies: Again, the difference in reporting will have different purposes behind it. I can't go into the decisions to present attendance figures, because I simply don't know what the thoughts or the conversations were behind them. The endeavours of schools across the three nations will be the same, in the sense that we want to maximise pupils' opportunity to engage with us in a school setting, so that pupils can learn, can be supported in their mental health and wellbeing, and their families can continue to be supported in terms of their wider role within the community.

That is the information we need. Those are the information figures that schools need. We need to be clear that the information should be given to schools in a way that means they can use the figures to produce plans that are responsive to need.

While we are on the issue of attendance, seeing as I am speaking to you from Wales, I will just harken back. We started the conversation by talking



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about what happens when children can't attend school. Online learning serves a certain point—it is not a complete point, but it serves a certain point. We have to be realistic in our own minds about the limits placed on individual schools to meet that attendance gap. For example, small schools might find it difficult to put up a learning programme that is responsive to needs. When pupils are not able to attend school, for whatever reason, there needs to be a comprehensive and consistent approach to meeting that deficit and that gap in entitlement.

As you know, here in Wales we have a national online learning platform, which helps to provide consistency from school to school. Children shouldn't be disadvantaged simply because of the size of the school they are in or their personal circumstances. Whatever the approach to attendance figures, or whatever else, we need to be clear that it is not the figures themselves that are important but the stories behind them, and the sufficiency and efficiency of the plans that they then help generate.

Taking that step a little bit further, when we are looking at planning for mitigating the risks caused by non-attendance, there needs to be, surely, a national programme, so that we can limit the risks that are then introduced by local or regional inconsistencies in availability of the right programme.

Q40 Alex Davies-Jones: Thank you, Ruth. That brings me on nicely to my next question, which is aimed at Angela. According to last year's Welsh index of multiple deprivation stats, my own local authority of Rhondda Cynon Taff is home to some of the most deprived areas in all of Wales. I am also a member of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee where we regularly raise the issue of digital poverty and digital exclusion, so I wanted to combine both those interests today.

It is clear the pandemic will have widened the gap for deprived families. I know you have already touched on IT access, and the challenges around that and online learning, but we have seen a huge reliance on technology over the past few months. The digital nature of today's Committee is just another good example of it. Apart from increased funding, what support do you think low-income families or children in care specifically need to ensure that they aren't left behind in the future? As you have already mentioned, we are going to see an increase in reliance on digital educational resources.

Dr Donkin: Gosh, that's a good one. Absolutely—every child who goes to school needs to have decent broadband/internet and a computer to do their homework. Hopefully this will go away, but some form of remote learning will continue. That is because currently lots of schools are setting their homework online. That is No. 1. The other thing is that schools can do only so much to reduce the attainment gap. So many things are to do with wider social determinants. We can't always talk away poverty, and with that comes experiences and the ability to go outside the home and expand your horizons when you are young, and your brain is forming—really basic needs.



The importance of housing that is adequately sized so that people have space to do their homework; the importance of the kind of wrap-around help that Ruth talked about earlier from local authorities, so that children can afford to go to school or to sixth form; decent quality free school meals—all of that wrap-around stuff is incredibly important for reducing inequalities in attainment. On the difference between schools, in terms of explaining variation, what schools can do is limited. Obviously, schools in deprived areas should have as-good teachers and as-good resources, if not arguably more, because it sometimes takes more effort to move those children up. I would say, in terms of inequalities and reducing the attainment gap, absolutely resource schools well but also look at the wider environment.

- Q41 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Anne, I know you wanted to come in there, so maybe I will ask my next question to both of you and you can tag it on. Have you had any conversations with the Department for Education about these concerns, and do you think that the Department for Education understands the extent of the issues?

Anne Longfield: Briefly, I was going to say that I have seen some really good packages of support around children in care, where there was one-to-one contact. A teacher was in touch with a child, or children, regularly, there were support packages around that child, and there was marking and lots of encouragement. Where a school has been able to work closely with the local authority around supporting children in care that has been really positive.

I guess there are a few real basics for managing our life with this, if you like. One is that there now has to be an expectation of what teaching online is, because there wasn't before; it was very variable. We need, for this next phase, to be very clear about that. The DFE has now issued guidance. I know that issuing guidance does not always make things instantly happen, but the clear expectation is that all schools will be able to work online now. Ruth would be able to fill many hours, I am sure, telling us that it is not that easy, but I know that there has been some initial training for teachers on things like Zoom and the like, as they come back.

The second, of course, is making sure that the kids who need the tech have it, but so much of this comes back to having that personalised support. If there is any time when schools have to close, even just in an area, those places for vulnerable children must remain open, and the expectation must be that those vulnerable children go into school. We have to find ways to make that possible, whether it is the way that we refer to those groups or the support that we provide. Getting those kids into the stability of the school and the structure will be really important. Wider than that, I think there needs to be a huge recovery package for children. We put a report out yesterday that talked about that, which is about family support, early intervention and the like.



I can guarantee that we have had those discussions on an ongoing basis. I have had good access to Ministers and indeed the Secretary of State over this period, so I have raised many of those issues.

The scale of the challenge is something that is yet to be seen as an entirety. What I have found in this post is that things are seen as individual problems rather than being inherent inequalities as such. Actually, that is needed to tackle those root causes. It does need a whole of Government response.

Some of those things were being looked at as part of the spending review. Of course, that is an opportunity to do that, but I have been saying that I do not think children have had their Nightingale moment yet to show how brilliant we can be as a country, and actually this is the time to do it.

- Q42 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Thank you. One more brief question from me. I know we are pressed for time. Angela, so if you could keep your answers brief, that would be great. I have spoken to teachers in my constituency of Pontypridd who have raised concerns with me about parts of the curriculum. For example, vocational subjects, including drama, music and art, may now have to be squashed or cancelled altogether to make room for the traditional subjects such as English and maths to make up for the time that was lost when schools were closed. The Welsh Government have clearly committed to funding arts and culture through the £55 million cultural recovery fund. Does your current research suggest that that is a possibility and note any specific trends about deprived children in vocational versus non-vocational subjects?

Dr Donkin: Some work that we did looking at subjects taken at GCSE a couple of years ago suggested that because of the EBacc push and progress 8, there had been a reduction in children taking some of those arts subjects in favour of what you might call more traditional subjects, including a foreign language. That would have had a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged children because they were more likely to take some of those wider subjects in the first place.

I support the announcement made yesterday to widen support for vocational training and for a broader view of education that is not just about those pure academic subjects. Certainly, both my children are quite creative, and I am supporting them going down that route. It is also incredibly important that we need to be creative. If we are looking forward to an economy that utilises new technology such as AI and so forth, those creative subjects have to be seen to be important.

We have been seeing a downward trend in creative subjects. I am hoping that that will reverse. I can absolutely understand right now that teachers are worried about covering the basics, but to reiterate one of the recommendations from our report, although those exam years probably need to be the focus, for other year groups, the catch-up can be a bit slower. We should not think about catch-up as necessarily being over just one year, so there is room to make sure that there is a broad and balanced curriculum for the majority.



Chair: Thank you. I will bring in Kim Johnson.

- Q43 **Kim Johnson:** Good afternoon. I have a couple of questions about what action needs to be taken by the Government and others to address the inequalities that you have discussed. My first question is addressed to Halima. Schools, Government Departments and other public bodies have legal obligations to advance equality. Do you think there has been a sufficient focus on the specific needs of children from different ethnic groups and on boys and girls in response to the pandemic and if not, why do you think those equality issues have been overlooked?

Dr Begum: Thank you. That's the big question, isn't it? We have all known that children from BME communities have suffered disproportionately. We did not know in March, but we probably knew by April and we still know today. But we also know that no action has been taken. In preparing for this evidence session, I put out a question to everybody else to say, "Has anything actually been done to specifically address the vulnerability of BME children or BME households, given that they have been the communities that have suffered disproportionately?" The answer was no. This is quite an indictment. We know that something needs to be done, but it has not been done.

By the way, it did not really help last week when there was a difference in the scientific opinions about who is vulnerable as a group. One group of scientists from Oxford said that the elderly generation are vulnerable. Another group from Oxford said that, actually, BME communities in their entirety of age groups are vulnerable. As they could not agree, the Government was sitting on the fence a little. I would suggest that if the figures are showing that BME communities are most vulnerable and have been disproportionately impacted on, we surely need to think about different safety nets for those communities.

My response to you, Kim, would be that if you had to break down what a comprehensive national recovery would be, you would actually have to target vulnerable groups that had been disproportionately impacted on, which would be BME communities. I would probably argue for safety nets for BME communities who have been impacted on, both on health grounds and on secondary economic grounds as well, because they will have lost jobs. Are we thinking about increasing child benefit, if we are concerned about child poverty? Are we thinking about increasing universal credit or statutory sick pay? These would be two measures on the economic front that we need to tackle, because schools by themselves cannot solve this challenge.

So far, a lot of the questions have focused on schools and school responsiveness but, actually, this is a bigger problem than what the schools can manage or, indeed, what the communities can manage. I would say there are two responses there. Teachers themselves need additional support within schools, but how can they be more inclusive and how can they think about the risks that BME children face? Teachers need that support, and it is not the kind of support that we have talked about today around unconscious bias, because that is quite a small effect



compared with training around anti-racism that teachers can take, which looks at biases in the system. It is really important that we keep talking about biases in the system, not unconscious bias that any individuals can have. When you talk about unconscious bias, these are individual acts by one or two bad apples in the system. If we were to fix that, would all the learning outcomes for BME children be fine? That is not the issue—white racism in school is not the issue. The issue is that the system itself needs to be more equitable. I would like to see more training around anti-racism and getting the system to be more responsive, and for teachers to be supported in this space.

Finally, I would probably want to look at the grading system. I know we have talked a lot about this today, but we stopped at centre-based assessments and grading. I think the conversation is a little deeper than that. Okay, algorithms didn't work, but mock results, predicted grades and centre-based assessment—is this it? Ultimately, if we are going to go into this for the long term, we need to look at assessments of a different kind. Formative teacher-based assessment based on pupil progress would ultimately be the way forward for grading, so that we see equitable outcomes for BME children.

Q44 Kim Johnson: Thanks, Halima. You mentioned earlier the disproportionate impact in terms of young black boys being excluded from schools and then ending up being criminalised. What do you think needs to happen to prevent that from further expanding going forward?

Dr Begum: So Kim, I would suggest a moratorium on school exclusions, precisely because these are impacting on young black men in schools at the moment—in the middle of a pandemic, when nobody can deal with this pandemic. These young men are being excluded at a time when there are perhaps all sorts of other issues going on in school or at home. They then go into a system that criminalises them. I would ask for a moratorium on school exclusions at this precise moment, because it is having a disproportionate impact on young black men. It is about building trust and confidence in our community, and school exclusions or fines do not do that. We should think about confidence-building measures rather than penalising measures.

Q45 Kim Johnson: Thank you so much. My next question is to Ruth. Can you explain how you believe the catch-up funding is able to level up for black and disadvantaged children? How do you ensure that the funding goes to those most in need? I think Angela mentioned that there is some disparity in terms of how that funding is allocated.

Ruth Davies: You are right to raise the question about the allocation of that funding. It sounds such a neat process, doesn't it? "Catch-up will happen if you do this, this and this, and here is the money to do it." In actuality, it has not mapped out that way at all. Catch-up, as I said at the start, is not going to happen overnight, over a term or over a weekend. The way that funding has been allocated to schools is not transparent enough. We have been mandated to provide significant additional activities

until at least next March, and the majority of those activities are simply not being funded.

As the other witnesses have mentioned, the catch-up is going to happen not just in a single event, but by a change in mindset. When we look at the reasons behind disadvantage, when we look at the challenge around BAME pupils having equity of opportunity and when we look at anything to do with equality, ultimately, with schools, we address that not just because the law says we have to, but because it is the right thing to do. Only when communities totally, 100% buy into that can progress really be made; otherwise, it just becomes a tick-list of exercises. Yes, obviously, training and upskilling play a part, but it cannot be just about that—it is a mindset change that we need to move towards.

As my fellow witnesses rightly say, schools simply cannot do this on our own. Lockdown did not cause this gap in opportunity; lockdown did not cause the inequality and inequity. Systemically, Government have failed to address opportunity in outcomes. We need to be sure that we move together as a community, that schools are properly resourced and funded to meet all those additional needs, and that they are properly supported by intelligent, inter-agency communication and support.

I do apologise for my rather lengthy answer to a simple question, but it is something that I believe, as I said, is not just down to a lack of funding, although that is a key determinant of how well, or otherwise, schools are able to lead our communities on from the position that we find ourselves in. We have to be clear that we are looking perhaps to rebuild a fractured world around us. As I said, we will move forward as one if we buy into, totally understand and commit to the central premise that we are doing this not because the law says we have to, but because it is the right thing to do.

Do you know what? It is possible, as we start perhaps to put the pieces of all our lives back together, that we might do it in a way—this would be my ambition—that finally breaks the link between the hand that you are dealt at birth and the life that you go on to lead. If the Equality Act is to become anything more than a bit of paper, we must commit to the central premise that we are doing this, and will continue to commit to this, not just because legislation tells us we have to, but because it is something that we, as a community, see as the right thing to do.

Kim Johnson: Thanks, Ruth. I agree with the panellists who have said that it is not schools, but a societal issue. I do not suppose that 10 years of austerity have helped us in where we are at the moment. Those were all my questions—thank you for answering.

Q46 Angela Crawley: Thank you to the panellists for your contributions so far, from which it is clear that you are very passionate and, of course, that covid has exacerbated some of the most fundamental inequalities that we face in society, with many of the most vulnerable being left behind.



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You will appreciate that education is, of course, devolved in Scotland, as it is in Wales. This question is probably best answered by Ruth. Plan UK has said that there is an opportunity to “reassess and reconfigure” the education system. Is that really accurate, and is this the time to assess whether fundamental changes should be made to the education system? Is the rhetoric of returning to normality even practical or possible for the foreseeable future in education?

Ruth Davies: Oh, that we knew what the new normal is going to look like! You are right to raise the question about what sort of normal we want to return to and what sort of normal we envisage ourselves returning to. In terms of whether now is the right time to review our approaches, there could not be a better one. I am speaking to you from Wales this afternoon and, as you know, we are about to roll out a new curriculum here. The new curriculum was due to start on 1 September. That curriculum has wellbeing right at the heart of it, as its key driver. We have stopped thinking about the issues of core values as being the soft options and realised that the core values of respect, self-awareness and tolerance are absolutely the key drivers towards any ambition with regard to standards. If the conversation this afternoon has shown us anything, it is that you cannot separate the two.

Schools, at their heart, have an identity and a sense of purpose, and that is what drives the commitment to standards. Standards are not stand-alone ambitions; they are absolutely driven by a school’s or community’s core values. We are at the point where we have already questioned whether we have an assessment and accountability system that is fit for purpose, where we have talked about whether our funding streams are responsive enough to 21st-century requirements, and where we have talked about the need for more intelligent inter-agency support and a truly combined approach to a solution-focused pathway forward. If ever there was a time to review and reconfigure the way that we feel something has always been done, surely it is this point, when we are indeed trying to put together a world that seems to have broken.

I will repeat what I said to the last question: if we can find a way of doing that that finally breaks the link, as far as disadvantage is concerned, between the hand that you are dealt and the life that you can go on to lead, we will have put ourselves on to a path for ultimate success, but that success will only be success if it offers equity of opportunity for all.

Angela Crawley: I absolutely share those sentiments and appreciate the challenges of implementing new curriculums as well. I think we can all agree—I think Angela also touched on this—on the importance of rounded learning and having skills for outcomes as well.

Is there anything else that any of the panellists would like to tell us or anything they feel they would like to add that has not been covered so far in the questions? No? Perfect. Thank you very much from me. I will hand back to the Chair.

Chair: Thank you very much, Angela. May I take this opportunity to thank



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all the panellists for their contributions this afternoon? They have been much appreciated. As usual, if there is anything that you feel you have not said and would like to send us in writing afterwards, we would be very glad to receive it. That concludes this afternoon's meeting.