



House of Commons
Education Committee

**Is the Catch-up
Programme fit for
purpose?: Government
response to the
Committee's Fourth
Report of Session 2021–22**

**First Special Report of Session
2022–23**

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The Education Committee

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First Special Report

The Education Committee published its Fourth Report of Session 2021–22, [*Is the Catch-up Programme fit for purpose?*](#) (HC 940) on 10 March 2022. The Government's response was received on 10 May 2022 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

1. The Education Select Committee (ESC) published its report, 'Is the Catch-up Programme fit for purpose?' on 10th March 2022. This document sets out the Government's response to the Committee's report.
2. The Committee's recommendations are identified by italic text in the Committee's report. The numbering of recommendations below is based on the order they appear in the report, with the relevant paragraph number in the report outlined underneath in the response.

Introduction

3. The Government welcomes the ESC's continued interest in the Government's programme to support pupils to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have considered the findings and recommendations of the report carefully.
4. The Government recognises the Committee's concerns about the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's academic progress and the need to ensure pupils recover that learning. We know that the pandemic has caused considerable disruption to the education of our nation's children and young people, with disadvantaged pupils even further behind than their peers, particularly in areas of high deprivation.
5. As a priority, we have taken action to understand the impact of the pandemic on children and young people at each stage of their education. Evidence shows that recovery is taking place: on average, primary pupils have recovered around two thirds of progress lost since Spring 2021 due to the pandemic in reading, and around half of progress lost in maths. But we know that there is still more to do. Research, which includes pupils in Year 4–9, shows that secondary school pupils in Key Stage 3 are on average around 2.4 months behind in reading, having seen further losses since the Summer, and children with SEN and their families have also been particularly impacted.
6. To support children and young people to catch up on missed learning caused by the pandemic, we have committed almost £5bn for an ambitious and evidence based, multi-year education recovery plan. Our investment includes funding for up to 100 million tutoring hours for 5–19 year olds, extra time in 16–19 education, 500,000 training opportunities for school teachers and early year practitioners, as well as multi-year direct funding so schools can deliver evidence-based interventions based on pupil needs.
7. We have consistently targeted recovery funding where evidence tells us it will be most effective – on tutoring, teaching, as well as direct funding targeted at those that need it most. Our support is especially focused on helping the most disadvantaged, vulnerable and those with the least time left in education, wherever they live.

8. Alongside direct recovery funding, overall core schools funding is increasing by £4 billion in 2022–23 – a 7% increase in cash terms per pupil from 2021–22. This funding boost will give schools the resources they need to raise attainment, provide the right support to all pupils and students, increase teacher pay and continue to rise to the challenges of Covid response and recovery.

9. Evidence shows that pupils with additional needs are more likely to fall behind and need extra support to reach their full potential. This is why the national funding formula (NFF) allocates 17% (£6.7bn) of mainstream schools funding in 2022–23 through additional needs factors based on deprivation, low prior attainment, English as an additional language and mobility. The total amount allocated through the deprivation factors in the NFF is increasing by £225 million, in 2022–23. In addition, the 2022–23 supplementary grant will provide significant additional funding for deprivation.

10. Pupil premium funding rates are also increasing by 2.7% in 2022–23, meaning that the per pupil funding rate will be the highest, in cash terms, since the introduction of the pupil premium in 2011. Total pupil premium funding will increase to over £2.6bn in 2022–23, from £2.5bn last year.

11. This all sits alongside our wider commitment to long-term reform. Our recent Schools White Paper – “*Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child*”,¹ published 28 March 2022, sets out how our education system will deliver recovery, not just through specific recovery investments, but through a wider programme of ambitious reforms that truly level up outcomes and ensure we build back better from the pandemic. The Parent Pledge makes the Government’s vision clear that any child who falls behind in English or maths will receive the right evidence-based targeted support to get them back on track.

12. The publication of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) Green Paper – ‘SEND review: right support, right place, right time’² on 29 March 2022, alongside the Schools White Paper, and the forthcoming recommendations of the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care creates an important opportunity to join up vital work across schools, children’s social care and SEND services. The SEND and AP Green Paper sets out proposals for a system that will allow children and young people the opportunity to fulfil their potential and lead happy, healthy and productive adult lives. This will help ensure that all children and young people, regardless of background, leave education better educated, skilled and equipped for successful and productive careers.

13. As part of the Levelling Up White Paper – ‘Levelling Up the United Kingdom’,³ published 2nd February 2022 – we have also announced we will drive further school improvement in England by delivering a package of new measures in 55 new Education Investment Areas. In education, ability is evenly spread but opportunity is not. We need to ensure that in every area children are able to access excellent schools, progress to high quality technical and higher education, and go on into good jobs.

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-for-all-strong-schools-with-great-teachers-for-your-child>

2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-review-right-support-right-place-right-time>

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

Response to Committee's recommendation on 'The pandemic and learning loss'

The Department must continue to establish the full effect of the pandemic on children and young people. This must consider the impacts felt by children from disadvantaged backgrounds and on the regional disparities of support offered. This must not be confined to solely academic factors but should also focus on understanding how children and young people's mental health and wellbeing have been affected, as this is critical to academic attainment. All data should seek to identify where pupils with particular characteristics (including ethnicity, free school meals eligibility, or those with special educational needs) have been differentially impacted. The Department should utilise real-time data and the results of school and local authority assessments of pupils' lost learning to better target catch-up and mental health support immediately, so education recovery is not 'on hold' or delayed while the latest data is being collated. Funding must be committed by the Government to tackle the digital divide and boost broadband infrastructure to ensure that all children have the support they need to catch up on lost learning. Where data already exists, significant funding must be committed to targeted catch-up interventions to tackle the growing educational inequalities that are leaving some children with worsening academic outcomes and life chances.

(Response to Page 29, para 2 of the Committee's report) (Response to paragraph 2)

Effect of the pandemic on children and young people

14. We recognise the need to ensure we understand the full impact Covid-19 has had on children and young people, including establishing the effect on attainment and mental health and wellbeing. This is why we have invested in research into academic progress over the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years with Renaissance Learning and the Education Policy Institute. The [latest findings](#) from this research, published 28 March, include data from the first half of the 2021–22 Autumn term, and we launched, via the Research & Insights Marketplace, our invitation to tender for the first tranche of further research on 19 April to cover future terms. Our research with Ipsos Mori in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University and the Centre for Education and Youth is gathering evidence from schools to understand how they have responded to the impacts of the pandemic and what further support they believe they need. In January 2022, we published [findings from the first year of research](#). The full report will be published in early 2023. We also collect and collate various management information, evaluation, and delivery data on a regular basis which informs our recovery work. Our data and research consider the impacts on pupils with particular characteristics including ethnicity, gender, free school meal eligibility, pupils with SEND, Children in Need, as well as considering regional disparities and area-level deprivation.

15. We understand that the pandemic and the associated public health measures and restrictions, including social distancing and school closures, has impacted on the mental wellbeing of some children and young people. Our State of the Nation 2021 report: children and young people's wellbeing⁴ found that following a reduction in wellbeing in 2020, there were some signs of recovery in the last academic year, responding to improvements in pandemic conditions. Data also illustrates the rates of mental health problems in children and young people have not continued to increase from 2020; although they remained at elevated levels in 2021. The report supported the value of children being in school for

4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2021-children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing>

their wellbeing. Evidence shows that older children and young people, females, those with existing mental health needs, those from disadvantaged backgrounds or SEND were more likely to show greater impacts. We continue to monitor emerging data and wider publications in this space.

Digital Divide and Broadband

16. As the overall lead department for digital, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), works closely with the rest of Government to ensure the needs of digitally excluded people are taken into account in policy making. We want to build a world-leading digital economy that works for everyone. That means ensuring that as many people as possible can reap the benefits of being online and the technologies that can transform our lives, benefit society and drive prosperity and growth.

17. Since the start of the pandemic, the Government has invested over £520 million to support remote education and online social care services. We have delivered over 1.9 million laptops and tablets to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education providers for disadvantaged children and young people, including those with a social worker. The programme also provided support for over 130,000 families to get online through uplifts in mobile data and 4G wireless routers. This included partnering with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help over 33,000 disadvantaged children get online and delivering over 100,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

18. Every school in the country should have the right infrastructure to allow them to make the most of modern digital technology for their children, including the high-quality tools provided by England's flourishing EdTech market. The Government is accelerating the full-fibre internet connectivity rollout to all schools in England. DCMS funded broadband programmes have already supported over 1000 schools in the UK.⁵ Government will work with commercial providers to accelerate gigabit capable broadband rollout to schools, to enable all schools to have access to a high-speed connection by 2025.

19. Ensuring good connectivity to school buildings is just the first step. The actual internet speed experienced is also affected by the technology and Wi-Fi arrangements in place within institutions. We have published a set of standards to help steer schools, colleges and other providers through the key questions and issues to consider when implementing technology infrastructure, including broadband and local infrastructure issues.⁶

20. To ensure that teachers and schools can make the most of the benefits that digital technology can have in the classroom, we will invest up to £150m to upgrade schools that fall below our Wi-Fi connectivity standards in priority areas by 2025. It also builds on the £30 million investment made available for the Connect the Classroom pilot programme, announced in 2021, which is upgrading school Wi-Fi connectivity, to ensure that teachers and schools can make the most of the benefits that digital technology can have in the classroom. This will ensure that outdated systems do not prevent schools from realising the benefits of technology to improve efficiencies, cut workload and ultimately improve pupil outcomes.

5 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1000-schools-connected-to-top-of-the-class-full-fibre-broadband>

6 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges>

21. The EdTech Demonstrator network has provided free peer to peer training and advice to state-funded schools, trusts and colleges on how they can make the best use of technology during the pandemic. Teachers are more confident in their use of technology, and schools have more resilient systems in place like online learning platforms. Now that schools have returned to face-to-face teaching, DfE will be winding down the programme. Schools, trusts or colleges can continue to receive support until the end of the summer term. We will build insights gained from the EdTech Demonstrator programme and the knowledge base developed through working with Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and other experts into relevant DfE services and support guidance, so that teachers and leaders are able to make informed decisions about technology.

22. Social tariffs offer low-cost landline and broadband services for those on certain means-tested benefits. The Government is encouraging those providers who do not currently offer social tariff packages, to do so.

23. In September 2021, the Government partnered with industry leaders to launch the Digital Inclusion Impact Group (DIIG) to tackle digital exclusion. One of the pilot programmes is Dell Donate to Educate, which will support children with the right access to technology at school and at home.

24. Public libraries also play an important role in tackling digital inclusion. Around 1900 public libraries in England provide a trusted network of accessible locations with staff, volunteers, free WiFi and assisted digital access to a wide range of digital services.

Funding for Targeted Support

25. We have targeted additional funding towards those pupils that need it most. Our recovery premium is allocated linked to pupil premium eligibility, which means that schools with greater proportions of disadvantaged pupils will receive greater amounts. Pupils in specialist settings also receive additional funding, with the per pupil rate double that in mainstream schools during this academic year. The recovery premium was extended at the recent Spending Review with an additional focus on secondary schools, where the amount per eligible pupil is expected to nearly double from the current allocation. By 2024 schools will have received almost £2bn through the catch up and recovery premium that they can spend on evidence-based support to help pupils to recover. that they can spend on evidence-based support to help pupils to recover.

26. The Parent Pledge announced in the recent Schools White Paper makes the government's vision clear that any child who falls behind in English or maths will receive the right evidence-based targeted support to get them back on track.

27. It is critical that our focus on closing the attainment gap is underpinned by the very best evidence of what works. That is why we will re-endow the EEF with at least £100m and have introduced a new menu of recommended evidence-based approaches which will make it easier for schools to make decisions about pupil premium spend, maximising its impact for disadvantaged pupils.

28. The £1bn National Tutoring Programme (NTP) is enabling access to high quality tutoring for those who need it most. The programme will deliver up to 90 million tutoring hours for children aged 5–16 by 2024. The programme focuses on those who need the

most support to catch up, and in particular pupils eligible for the pupil premium. In light of the success of this year's school-led tutoring route, next year we will allocate all tutoring funding directly to schools. This will simplify the system and give schools the freedom to decide how best to provide tutoring for their pupils.

29. The 16–19 Tuition Fund is expected to deliver around 700,000 courses each year to accelerate the progression of lower attaining students, with eligibility in 2021/22 academic year broadening to also include economic disadvantage. Providers can therefore offer tuition to all disadvantaged pupils who have been impacted by the pandemic, while still maintaining focus on improving the academic outcomes of those with low prior attainment. Changes and expectations for the fund in the academic year 2022/23 include additional flexibilities which will allow more students to benefit from the funding. The opt-in and end of year reporting process has been changed to reduce the administrative burden on institutions.

30. Furthermore, £828m will be provided across the Spending Review period to fund an average of 40 additional learning hours per student each year in 16–19 settings to help them catch up on the vital teaching and learning they need to progress.

31. The Government also gave providers of 16 to 19 education the option to offer students in year 13 or equivalent in FE settings the opportunity to repeat up to one year in the 2021/22 academic year if they have been particularly severely affected by the pandemic.

Response to Committee's recommendations on 'A spaghetti junction of funding'

Teachers and school staff know their pupils and know what interventions are likely to bring the most benefit. The Catch-up Programme to date has been fragmented, and a complex bureaucratic system for applications may have hampered some schools' ability to access some elements of the Government's support as effectively as possible. The funding schemes should be simplified and merged into one pot for schools to access and spend where the recovery need is greatest. and any future catch-up initiatives should direct funding to schools using existing mechanisms for identifying disadvantage such as pupil premium eligibility and the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), to ensure schools in the most disadvantaged regions receive more. Schools should also be held accountable for how they spend their catch-up funding. When carrying out inspections, Ofsted should be looking for evidence that catch-up activity has been effective. When inspecting school leadership and management, Ofsted should check that effective governance and scrutiny of resource allocation extends to catch-up funding.

(Response to Page 30, para 5 of the Committee's report)

Simplified Catch-up Funding Schemes

32. We recognise the need to ensure that access to recovery funding is efficient and reduces the administrative burden on schools and keep this under regular review.

33. Many of the initiatives that form part of our recovery strategy are designed to empower schools to determine how funding is targeted, directing it to those most in need and led by the evidence of what works to improve outcomes. On 31 March 2022, we announced that the National Tutoring Programme will be simplified with all £350m of tutoring funding

provided in academic year 2022/23 going directly to schools. Building on the success of the school-led tutoring route in 2021/22 this will give schools freedom to decide how best to arrange tutoring for their pupils. Allocations will take account of the number of pupils in each school eligible for the pupil premium.

34. The recovery premium is also distributed directly to schools and allocated on the basis of disadvantage. Schools can choose to spend their recovery premium on a wider cohort of pupils than just those who attract the funding, directing spend where they think the need is greatest. The EEF's [pupil premium guide](#) supports schools in developing a pupil premium strategy based on the best evidence, while the new pupil premium templates enable schools to report on all three grants – the pupil premium, recovery premium and service pupil premium – in one place.

35. In terms of directing funding to the most disadvantaged regions, the recent Schools White Paper, published 28 March 2022, re-commits to the Levelling Up White Paper's education mission, introducing Education Investment Areas (EIAs). These will increase funding and support in parts of the country that need it most, including substantial investment in priority areas facing the most entrenched challenges.

36. Overall, core schools funding is increasing by £4 billion in 2022–23 – a 7% increase in cash terms per pupil from 2021–22. This funding boost will give schools the resources they need to raise attainment, provide the right support to all pupils and students, increase teacher pay and continue to rise to the challenges of Covid response and recovery.

37. In 2022–23, we will be allocating approximately £2,000 per pupil, for all pupils who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years (FSM6) – through the national funding formula, the pupil premium and the 2022–23 school supplementary grant together.

Ofsted scrutiny of catch-up funding

38. Ofsted already considers the use of catch-up funding within its school inspections, as outlined within its school inspection handbook. Inspectors gather evidence about the use of the pupil premium and catch-up funding, particularly regarding the level of funding received by the school in the current academic year and levels of pupil premium funding received in previous academic years. Inspectors will consider how leaders and governors have spent the funding, their rationale for this spending, its intended impact and the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Response to Committee's recommendations on 'Disadvantaged pupils and regional variations in learning loss'

The Department must take steps to address the issue of persistent absence and ensure no more children become 'ghost children'. We welcome the Department's formation of an 'attendance alliance' and its consultation on reducing avoidable absence in schools, however these children need tangible action now. The Department must urgently set out proactive measures, working with schools and local authorities, to get these pupils back into school. The Government should also implement, as a matter of urgency, a national register of children not in school, as recommended in our previous report Strengthening Home Education.

(Response to Page 30, para 8 of the Committee's report)

39. We recognise that the lessons we have learned during the pandemic must help us strengthen and improve the overall system. That is why we are in the process of reviewing the school attendance system as a whole and have recently consulted on proposals aimed at transforming the consistency and quality of attendance support for families across England. We set out more detail about this approach in our recent Schools White Paper.

40. We published our [response to the 'Children Not In School' consultation](#) in February 2022. This reaffirmed our commitment to create local authority registers for children not in school and duty on local authorities to provide support to home educators. The system will help local authorities undertake their existing duties to ensure children receive a suitable education, as well as safeguard children who are in scope. We hope to legislate for this at the next suitable opportunity.

41. As the Committee has noted, we have also formed an attendance action alliance who are already taking action to reduce absence. The Children's Commissioner, who is a member of the Alliance, made a pledge to undertake a review to understand more about where missing children are and why they may be falling through the gaps. She has consulted the Alliance on her interim findings and her review continues apace.

42. Additional work by members of the Alliance includes a pledge by the Chief Social Worker, Isabelle Trowler, focussing on boosting attendance for children in need and fostering better communication between social care and schools to support this. Dame Clare Gerada from the Royal College of General Practitioners is raising awareness about the importance of school attendance amongst GPs and recently wrote to GPs on this subject.

43. The alliance also includes work from Rob Tarn, CEO of the Northern Education Trust, a multi academy trust serving areas with high levels of disadvantage, who is working with other school and trust leaders to identify and disseminate best practice. Alongside Rob's work, we are running a programme of attendance webinars for schools, trusts and local authorities aimed at sharing effective practice from those who have significantly reduced absence and persistent absence. Cumulatively, over 9000 school and local authority staff have registered to join these events so far and we have more planned for the rest of the term.

44. We also have a team of expert attendance advisers who are playing an important role working closely with a number of local authorities and multi-academy trusts with higher levels of persistent absence to review their current practice and develop plans to improve.

45. Of course, alongside this, the Government's Supporting Families programme in local authorities is working closely with families where attendance is a significant concern. And we continue to make clear that schools can and should use their pupil and recovery premium funding to support efforts at re-engaging their most vulnerable pupils.

Response to Committee's recommendations on 'The National Tutoring Programme and Randstad'

The Department must commit to publishing statistics on a half-termly basis on the number of starts under the National Tutoring Programme with a greater degree of granularity. This must include information on the proportion of children accessing the programme on a regional basis, and the data should be published in a way that has regard to disadvantage and special educational needs. This information should also be broken down for each tutoring provider. If the National Tutoring Programme fails to meet its targets for the number of pupils receiving tuition, and the proportion of these who are disadvantaged, by Spring, the Department should terminate its contract with Randstad and re-run the tendering process.

(Response to Page 31, para 10 of the Committee's report)

46. We began publication of half-termly data from March 2022. This includes data on participation by local authority, region and school. Data on pupil characteristics such as disadvantage and special educational needs will be published on an annual basis. The Secretary of State wrote to all schools in early May promoting the programme. In his letter he indicated he is planning to publish data in the autumn term on each school's tutoring delivery, alongside the funding allocations and numbers of pupils eligible for the pupil premium who have received tutoring.

47. We announced our plans for the NTP next year on 31 March 2022. These involve allocating all tutoring funding directly to schools, which will give them the freedom and flexibility to develop a tutoring offer that works best for their pupils. Alongside we will be procuring for one or more delivery partners, who will focus on quality assurance of tutoring organisations, recruitment and deployment of academic mentors and providing training for new tutors.

48. These changes will require our delivery partners to support schools to make best use of the NTP funding they have received, rather than acting as an intermediary between tutoring organisations and schools. This is a substantially different ask of our delivery partners, it is right therefore to reprocure, which means that we will not be extending Randstad's contract beyond its initial term, which expires on 31 August 2022.

Currently it appears that the school-led tutoring pillar is more attractive than tuition partners or academic mentors (with 230,000 starts as of 1 December, compared to 52,000 and 20,000 respectively), although we have heard concerns about the quality assurance underpinning that part of the programme. The Department should ensure that all resources are focused on the school-led pillar to ensure more schools are able to access the National Tutoring Programme. The Department should also assess the accessibility of tutoring across the regions and create a quality assurance framework to enable schools to make informed decisions about the tutoring organisations or individuals they employ.

(Response to Page 31, para 11 of the Committee's report)

49. School-led tutoring has been well received by schools this year; our statistical release on 31 March 2022 showed an estimated 76% of tutoring is being delivered through this route. On 31 March 2022 we announced that we will allocate all tutoring funding directly to schools next year. This will enable schools to choose how best to organise their tutoring;

this could include contracting with accredited tutoring organisations, employing new specialist staff as academic mentors and providing the support through existing school staff.

50. In order to ensure a high standard of tutoring, any staff without qualified teacher status must complete high quality, bespoke training devised and delivered this year by the Education Development Trust to ensure they have the skills to deliver effective small group tuition. Our feedback suggests much of the school-led tutoring is being delivered by fully qualified teachers.

51. The plans for academic year 2022/23 (announced 31 March 2022) include procuring one or more delivery partners, to deliver quality assurance of tuition organisations, high-quality training for new tutors and recruitment of well-qualified academic mentors. Taken together, these three measures represent a clear focus on quality within the programme.

52. Take-up across the regions is broadly similar, with regions that experienced most learning loss showing higher school participation. With the estimated national average currently at 59.9% of schools participating in NTP in this academic year, the range is from 55.9% in the South East, and 56.4% in the South West, to 64.4% in the North East and 65.3% in the North West (Figures as of March 2022). We continue to work through bespoke communication plans to drive up participation. As we have done this academic year, school funding allocations for NTP for academic year 2022/23 will take account of the numbers of disadvantaged pupils in schools.

We heard that the Department's plans to taper the subsidies for the National Tutoring Programme are a "real concern", which may inhibit school take up in some of the most disadvantaged areas. Therefore, to ensure that it does not unfairly prevent schools in more disadvantaged areas from taking up the tutoring offer, the Department must also review the plans to reduce the subsidies to the three tutoring pillars and consider maintaining the existing subsidy rates in the most disadvantaged areas, until the data suggests these children have caught up with their learning.

(Response to Page 31, para 12 of the Committee's report)

53. We have announced our plans to align subsidies across all routes next year to cover 60% of the unit cost. Allocations will be based on the numbers of pupils in schools eligible for the pupil premium, which means schools with higher numbers of disadvantaged pupils will receive larger allocations, ensuring funding levels reflect areas of higher deprivation. To encourage schools to plan for tutoring the subsidy rate will be 25% in 2023/24. Schools can use other parts of their budget, such as the pupil premium, to pay for the non-subsidised portion. Pupil premium allocations are based on the number of disadvantaged pupils on roll and so reflect local deprivation.

The Department should commit to undertaking a review of the impact that Covid-19 has had on children with special educational needs and disabilities.

(Response to Page 31, para 13 of the Committee's report)

54. We recognise the need to ensure we understand the impact Covid-19 has had on pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), understanding that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted these pupils and exacerbating the challenges that already existed within the system.

55. This is why we are continuing to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on the educational progress of children with SEND with our research into academic progress over the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years, and our research with Ipsos Mori gathering evidence from schools to understand how they have responded to the impacts of the pandemic and what further support they believe they need. We are committed to continuing our research into academic progress and note there is still progress to be made and will soon be going out to tender so we can continue to deliver this research in future academic years.

56. The publication of the SEND and AP Green Paper on 29 March 2022 marks the conclusion of the SEND Review. This sets out proposals for a system that offers children and young people the opportunity to thrive, with access to the right support, in the right place, and at the right time. Going forward, SEND reforms will ensure children and young people with SEND can access the same opportunities and benefit from the same excellent teaching and high-quality curriculum as their peers.

57. We have consistently prioritised children with SEND in our recovery programmes – for example, by providing additional uplifts for those who attend specialist settings, including special units in mainstream schools, in both the catch-up premium in the 2020/21 academic year (triple the rate of mainstream schools) and the recovery premium for the 2021/22 academic year (double the rate of mainstream schools). Specialist settings were also given an uplift to deliver summer schools in 2021, at three times the normal rate.

58. Similarly, specialist settings through National Tutoring Programme receive weighted funding for their children who are more likely to need one to one tutoring. This route gives schools the flexibility to select those tutors most suitable to support pupils either through taking on local tutors or use of existing staff to supplement those employed through the existing National Tutoring Programme.

59. The Schools White Paper, published 28 March 2022, sets out our vision for a school system that helps every child to fulfil their potential, including SEND pupils. The Parent Pledge will be an essential part of this, ensuring every child who falls behind in English or maths receives the right evidence-based targeted support, appropriate to their needs, to get back on track.

Response to Committee's recommendations on 'Mental health resilience and an extended school day'

The Department must introduce a pilot of optional extra-curricular activities for children to help improve academic attainment and wellbeing. The pilot should be trialled in areas of disadvantage across the country. If this pilot proves effective, the Department should include the necessary funding to support a wider provision in the next spending review bid.

There are some examples of positive collaboration between local private and state schools in terms of offering the use of sports centres or theatres to support enrichment activities which should be further encouraged. Primary and secondary state schools should also be encouraged to utilise local youth centres, local community groups and charities to help support schools in providing enrichment activities, so hardworking teachers and school staff are not impacted where possible.

(Response to Page 32, para's 15 and 16 of the Committee's report)

60. Extra-curricular activities, alongside a rich and engaging curriculum, can support children's development, behaviour, attainment and wellbeing. That is why in the Schools White Paper we committed to a richer, longer average school week which makes the most effective use of time in school and ensures children enjoy a rounded education.

61. We will ensure that all children have fair access to quality time in school by introducing a minimum expectation of a 32.5 hour school week in state-funded mainstream schools, which will support all children to achieve their academic potential. We will expect all mainstream schools to work towards meeting this expectation as soon as possible and by September 2023 at the latest. Alongside the Schools White Paper, we published a document explaining the key facts of the policy to help schools start to prepare for changes where necessary. This can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/length-of-the-school-week-minimum-expectation>

62. We will also encourage all schools to consider whether an extension to their current school week might be appropriate to provide more opportunities for learning, socialisation and enrichment, recognising the significant benefits that additional time in education can bring.

63. We will publish guidance on best practice in the summer to support both the minimum expectation for mainstream schools and the wider ambition for all schools to consider increasing time in school where appropriate. This will include case studies from schools that deliver longer weeks and examples of how additional time can be used, including to support pupils' literacy and numeracy.

64. The Schools White Paper sets out the Government's commitment to ensuring that there are more opportunities for young people to be involved in schemes that are aimed at developing and strengthening active citizenship and other life skills. These will include supporting the Government to achieve the National Youth Guarantee, expanding access to the Duke of Edinburgh Award and Cadet schemes.

65. We want to promote the best use of local facilities of all kinds to ensure there are as many opportunities as possible for children and young people to take part in enrichment activities inside and outside school. We want the offer to be broad and varied to encourage all children to be involved.

66. DfE continues to encourage partnerships between state and independent schools. In May 2018, the Department and the Independent Schools Council (ISC) agreed a joint understanding designed to expand the participation of independent schools, such as by encouraging schools to offer support targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

67. The 2020 Census by the Independent Schools Council (ISC), covering the period immediately before the pandemic, found that 87 percent of its member schools were involved in partnerships with local state schools. 30 percent of these reported sharing sports fields, 28 percent swimming pools, and 22 percent a concert hall or theatre.

68. The Department supports a range of initiatives to expand access to high quality enrichment and extra-curricular activities through schools. These include:

- Investing over £200m a year in our Holiday Activities and Food programme for the next three years. All 152 local authorities in England are delivering this programme.
- Working in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence on the Cadet Expansion Programme, the aim of which was to establish cadet units in schools, Further Education colleges and academies.
- Working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to offer the Duke of Edinburgh's Award to all state secondary schools in England. The DfE's expansion programme is committed to support the Duke of Edinburgh's Award to expand into more schools in the most deprived areas of England and enabling access to young people who may previously have faced barriers participating in the Award.
- Working with DCMS and the Department of Health and Social Care on the cross-government School Sport and Activity Action Plan (published in July 2019). It aims to provide children with greater opportunities to do 60 minutes of sport and physical activity every day inside and outside school. We will publish an update to the plan later this year to align with publication of the Government's new sport strategy. This update will not only recover ground lost during COVID-19 restrictions, but will boost momentum to deliver an action plan for all pupils regardless of background.
- Investing nearly £30m per year to deliver on the manifesto commitments to open up state school sport facilities in England, as well as to improve the teaching of Physical Education at primary school.

69. DfE has, and will continue to, work closely with DCMS as they roll out the National Youth Guarantee, ensuring that every opportunity for collaboration is utilised.

The Department must fast-track its commitments to ensuring all schools have a designated mental health lead. All catch-up plans, including enrichment activities and longer school days, must include a specific role for activities that focus on mental health and wellbeing.

(Response to Page 32, para 18 of the Committee's report)

70. Mental health and wellbeing are a priority for the Government, and we remain committed to promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.

71. As part of the Department's commitment in the ['Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper'](#), by 2025 all state schools will have had the opportunity to train a senior mental health lead in how to lead a 'whole school' approach to promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing. Over 8000 schools and colleges have already claimed a Senior Mental Health Lead training grant.

72. Participation in varied activities can bring many benefits to children and young people's mental health, confidence, social skills and general wellbeing. They are part of a rich school week and can also play a key role in engaging pupils and supporting attainment as part of recovery and catch-up. Decisions about what activities to offer are

made by schools, who are best placed to design an enrichment offer to meet the needs of their pupils. To support them to do this, DfE intends to work with schools and MATs with broad enrichment and extracurricular offers to develop a handbook for schools focused on enrichment and extracurricular activities, which will emphasise include how such provision can be used to support pupil mental wellbeing. Government funding such as pupil premium and recovery premium may already be used by schools to tackle non-academic barriers to success by introducing evidence-based approaches to providing emotional support and promoting wellbeing.

Throughout our inquiry, we have heard that pupils' wellbeing and mental health have been one of the greatest challenges as schools return. All pupils should undergo a mental health and wellbeing assessment to understand the scale of the problem and schools may wish to direct some of the recovery funding to address mental health difficulties. They should be supported to invest in evidence informed interventions to help pupils. We know that Ofsted inspectors will be looking at how subject leaders and teachers have identified and responded to pupils' learning gaps as a result of the pandemic. We would like Ofsted to make it clear in their guidance that they will also look for evidence that schools have sought to identify and respond to the mental health and wellbeing needs of their students.

(Response to Page 32, para 19 of the Committee's report)

73. We recognise the challenges schools face in supporting children and young people to recover from the mental health and wellbeing impacts of the pandemic and the associated measures and restrictions. Our guidance provided when children and young people returned to schools encouraged settings to devote time to supporting wellbeing. The return to full time, face-to-face education presents an important opportunity for schools to identify children and young people in need of support through their pastoral role, as well as using their behavioural, SEND, and safeguarding responses. Training for school senior mental health leads covers the importance of measuring need. However, we do not believe that it is practical, nor necessary, for every child to undergo a clinical assessment of their mental health and wellbeing.

74. As part of Ofsted's personal development judgement, schools are expected to develop pupils' confidence, resilience and knowledge so that they can keep themselves mentally healthy. Inspectors also expect schools to provide effective pastoral support which includes being alert to factors that increase a child's vulnerability, or potential vulnerability, such as mental ill health. This requirement is outlined within Ofsted's published school inspection handbook. The evidence is clear, however, that a safe, calm and supportive school environment is the best protective factor for a child's mental health. That must be the primary focus for schools.

The Government should introduce a levy on the profits of social media companies, and use the revenue derived from this to fund online harms and resilience training for pupils which could be distributed through schools.

(Response to Page 32, para 20 of the Committee's report)

75. The Government agrees that pupils need to be taught about online harms and supported to develop resilience as part of schools' role in supporting all children and young people grow up happy, healthy and safe. That is why, in September 2020, we made

statutory in all schools a Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum in which pupils are taught about online relationships, mental wellbeing, internet safety and harms, and online and media.

76. To support teachers to deliver this content effectively we have invested over £3m in a support package for teachers which includes online teacher training modules, guidance on how to implement the curriculum and training for teachers. Because of the importance of teaching about online harms, in 2019 the DfE published specific Teaching Online Safety in Schools guidance. This non-statutory guidance aims to support schools in teaching pupils how to stay safe online within new and existing school subjects, such as RSHE, Citizenship and Computing. DfE is reviewing this guidance with a view to ensuring it remains up to date. The revised guidance will be published in autumn 2022.

77. We are also developing an additional support package following the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges which was published in June 2021. This will cover topics relevant to online harms and resilience, and we have already delivered a series of teacher webinars on domestic abuse, pornography and sexual exploitation which can be viewed on the Personal Social Health and Economic (PSHE) education Association's website: [Department for Education Sexual Harassment webinars](#) and the development of non-statutory guidance which will provide practical advice to teachers on when and how to teach particular topics.

78. In addition to the above, the Department for Education is providing over £2m of funding, between August 2021 and March 2023, to five anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying. The organisations are delivering tailored resources that meet the needs of students and school staff, including training and resources developed to tackle online bullying, for example the Anti-Bullying Alliance have developed a CPD module aimed specifically at online bullying.

79. The Government has now introduced the Online Safety Bill to Parliament, the Bill passed its second reading in the House of Commons on 19 April 2022. This ground breaking piece of legislation will deliver our manifesto commitment of making the UK the safest place in the world to be online. For the first time tech companies are going to be accountable to an independent regulator to keep their users, particularly children, safe with the strongest protections in this framework for children.

80. All companies in scope of the legislation will need to assess whether their service is likely to be accessed by children and if so, deliver additional protections for them. Those safety measures will need to protect children from inappropriate and harmful content like pornography, and behaviour such as bullying. Government will set out in secondary legislation the priority categories of harmful material to children, so that all companies are clear on what they need to protect children from. Ofcom will then set out the steps companies can take to protect children from harm on their service.

81. Alongside the Online Safety Framework Government has published the Online Media Literacy Strategy which is a non-legislative measure to support citizens, including children, to make safe and informed choices online. Through this we have already provided over £250k grant funding to media literacy organisations working with schools to adapt their educational resources for teachers working with children with special educational

needs and disabilities. We recently published the [Year 2 Online Media Literacy Action Plan](#) which sets out our ambitious work programme to continue supporting citizens to stay safe online.

Concluding remarks

82. The Government agrees with the overarching ambition of the report and is taking steps to help children and young people catch-up from the effects of the pandemic. To this end, we have committed to an evidence-based, multi-year plan that will ensure support gets to those who need it most. Building on this, we will embed one-to-one and small group tuition as a feature of our school system. We want to make sure that we take what we have learnt from our response to the pandemic and the evidence of what works, embedding it into our school system through the Parent Pledge set out in the Schools White Paper.

83. We accept and are acting on most of the recommendations. In many cases we are already taking action to address the points raised. Where we do not fully accept them or only partially accept them, this is because our existing or planned policies will support our vision to raise the quality of teaching, deliver high standards of curriculum, behaviour and attendance and deliver targeted support to pupils who need it most.