Sutton Trust – Supplementary Evidence (LOL0134)

The digital divide

- As a matter of urgency, every pupil should have access to a device and internet access for remote learning. Laptops, internet dongles and other learning devices should continue to be rolled out at speed through the government programme.
- Educational websites and online learning services should be 'zero rated' by internet data providers. While there are technical obstacles to this, telecoms companies should continue to work with the sector to find solutions to excluding online learning from mobile data allowances.

Catch-up

- An ambitious, long-term catch-up plan is needed. This should be guided by the best possible evidence with a strong focus on quality of provision.
- Given the scale of the problem, this plan must be well-resourced. Schools should receive a £750m 'boost' for their disadvantaged pupils via the pupil premium, as part of a new package of catch-up funding. The cumulative impact of the new school closures on top of 9 months of disrupted schooling on learning and the attainment gap is likely to be of an unprecedented scale. It is vital that schools are resourced to help those who have suffered the most 'bounce back' once schools are open again. This £750m one-off pupil premium boost would give schools £400 additional per pupil to spend on catch up as they see fit, which could pay for a block of high-quality paired tutoring, and other effective interventions.
- Funding for the National Tutoring Programme should be extended in the next Comprehensive Spending Review, to establish it as a long-term contributor to narrowing the attainment gap. Tutoring will play a vital role in helping education recover from the pandemic, but given the scale of the challenge, it will not be sufficient on its own, and must be accompanied by a wider investment in catch up.
- There needs to be a renewed focus on 16–19-year-olds, with eligibility for the National Tutoring Programme extended to students in post-16 education, alongside targeted funding support. Pupils beginning post-16 courses this autumn are at a critical stage in their education, and will have faced huge disruption to their learning, including the cancellation of their GCSEs. In order to help get those hardest hit back on track for A Levels, T Levels, BTECs, and for those who need GCSE passes to progress, it is vital that these students are included in targeted funding support, including a consideration of the extension of the Pupil Premium to FE.

Protecting pupil premium rates

- The pupil premium should, at the very least, be protected in per head terms from 2022/23. While it is welcome that the Pupil Premium has been

protected for 2021/22, the impact of the pandemic will continue to be felt beyond the next school year.

Learning in Lockdown – January 2021

Key findings

Attendance at school

- In the first week of the January 2021 lockdown, more than a quarter (27%) of primary school age children were reported to be at least partially attending school in person, compared to just 8% of secondary age children.
- Of those children attending school in person, less than half (47%) of them had been attending school during the first lockdown last March.
- As a result, 37% of teachers in primary schools report they now have 1 in 5 or more of their usual pupils in attendance, compared to just 1% last March.

Devices

- 19% of parents overall report their children do not have access to a sufficient number of devices suitable for their online learning, however this is 35% for households with the lowest incomes, and 11% in households with the highest.

Remote learning

- School provision for online learning has changed radically since the beginning of the first lockdown. Over half (54%) of teachers are now using online live lessons, compared to just 4% in March 2020. The use of offline methods to provide work has fallen, with just 15% now using physical workbooks, compared to 34% in March.
- However, disparities remain. 86% of private schools are using online live lessons, compared to 50% in state schools, a gap which has widened since the first lockdown.
- The proportion of primary pupils doing more than 5 hours of learning a day has risen from 11% to 23%, and for secondary students it has increased from 19% to 45%.
- However, 40% of children in middle class homes are reported to be doing over 5 hours a day, compared to 26% of those in working class households.

Support for home learning

- 41% of parents with children learning at home report that they have not very much time or no time at all to help their children with online learning.

- Parents were split in their experience of learning from the home this time around. 28% of those on low incomes were finding it more difficult, compared to 15% of those on the highest incomes.
- 31% of those with the lowest incomes had not been able to spend anything on their child's learning from home since September 2020, while 29% of those on the highest incomes had spent more than £100.

The attainment gap

- Over half (55%) of teachers at the least affluent state schools report a lower than normal standard of work returned by pupils since the shutdown, compared to 41% at the most affluent state schools and 30% at private schools.
- Most teachers (84%) thought the lockdown and associated disruption would increase the attainment gap, with a third (33%) saying it would increase substantially. This is up from 28% in November.
- Teachers in the least advantaged schools were much more likely to say there would be a substantial increase in the gap.
- A majority of teachers (52%) cited a faster rollout of laptops as the single most helpful intervention to help disadvantaged pupils during the period of closure, with 20% of headteachers citing online tutoring.

Remote Learning: the Digital Divide – January 2021

Key findings

Access to devices

- In the first week of the January 2021 lockdown, just 10% of teachers overall report that all their students have adequate access to a device for remote learning. 17% report that more than 1 in 5 of their students don't have such access. This is not substantially different to the situation in last spring's lockdown.
- Just 5% of teachers in state schools report that all their students have a device, compared to 54% at private schools.
- While 32% of teachers in the most deprived schools report more than 1 in 5 lacking devices, this is just 5% at the most affluent state schools and even lower, 3%, at private schools. This gap appears to have increased since March 2020.
- 11% of teachers overall report than more than 1 in 5 of their pupils don't have adequate internet access for learning, slightly more than the 9% who reported this in March 2020. 21% of those in the most deprived schools report more than 1 in 5 pupils lack internet, compared to 3% in the most affluent state schools, and just 1% at private schools.
- Increased expectations from government for more intensive remote learning, along with greater awareness among teachers of their pupils' home situation may be contributing to the apparent lack of progress.

- Almost half (47%) of state school senior leaders report their school has only been able to supply half of their pupils or fewer with the laptops they have needed.
- In the most deprived schools, 56% of leaders report they haven't been able to help half or more of their pupils who needed devices. This compares with 39% at the most affluent state schools.
- As the government roll-out of laptops stalled in the autumn, many schools have used their own resources to address the issue. Two thirds (66%) of senior leaders in state schools reported needing to source IT equipment for disadvantaged pupils themselves while waiting for government support.

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