

Written evidence submitted by Action Tutoring

Further written evidence submitted by Action Tutoring

Response to additional Questions from the Education Select Committee

What role do you think schools, teachers and school support staff will need to have in ensuring the success of summer schools, through liaising with parents, and opening up their school buildings and playing fields to summer camps?

The role of schools, teachers and support staff would be essential to the success of summer schools, even if external organisations were then providing support (e.g. tuition, extra curricular activities). Teachers would play a fundamental role in selecting the right pupils for any summer programmes, liaising with families and encouraging pupil attendance. Teachers would also play a key role in selecting the right external providers to work with for their pupils, or providing the teaching/activities themselves. Our experience at Action Tutoring has shown it's very difficult to drive and encourage pupil attendance without strong messaging and support from teachers to ensure buy in; you can't just rely on external organisations to be able to drive attendance.

However, as we flagged at the committee hearing, we are concerned that time is getting very tight both for teachers and external providers to be able to deliver summer schools this summer, if this is going to be a national strategy with additional resource provided. Teachers need time to plan the activities (which could include recruiting external providers), engage families and pupils. Schools will also need time to ensure summer schools could be resourced properly from a staffing and space point of view. To give an idea of time scales, at Action Tutoring we normally allow a minimum of 6 weeks to set up a programme with a partner school, including planning timings, logistics plus recruiting, training and carrying out DBS checks for the volunteer tutors.

This would mean for any summer school starting in late July or early August we would really want to be carrying out the set up and planning by mid June.

We have been testing this lead in time for many years and have found that trying to do it in less both for ourselves and for the partner schools, usually results in a more chaotic start, needing to start with lower volunteer numbers and often less strong buy in from pupils.

More immediately, given we are hearing that there have been good and bad examples of schools' approach to supporting remote learning, what work should Ofsted be undertaking now, if any, in assessing schools' performance in this regard?

I do not think it is appropriate for Ofsted to be undertaking assessment of school's performance at the present time. Schools have been thrown into an unprecedented situation with very little time or guidance to prepare and I genuinely believe school leaders have tried to do their absolute best with the resources and knowledge they have had available. Each school will have faced unique challenges depending on their cohorts, demographics and what resources they already had in place (e.g. for online learning) so I don't believe trying to make judgments and comparisons at the moment would be helpful or beneficial. For some schools, moving to online provision has been relatively straightforward, with pupils already well resourced with equipment; for others, like the schools Action Tutoring works with, simply trying to get devices for learning to the right pupils was a huge initial challenge and cost. I think this is a time for really trusting school leaders in the decisions and actions they have taken at this highly unusual time.

However, I do think it could be useful in the autumn for Ofsted or another body to carry out a review of examples of best practice during this time, highlighting where schools have done particularly well at supporting remote learning and what it has taken to achieve that. This could then be shared and used as a resource for schools to use to plan for any future closures, so that if this happens in the future, they can be better prepared and so that the learning from the current closures around what's worked and what has been less successful is captured. Such a review would be limited though and would likely need to rely on case studies, anecdotes and teacher assessment (e.g. it would not be RCT standard or able to rely on exam grades for impact measurement at the moment).

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