

## Written evidence submitted by the Education Endowment Foundation

Robert Halfon MP  
Chair, Education Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

10<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Robert,

Thank you for opportunity to contribute to last week's oral evidence session. Please see below for the EEF's response to the queries outlined in your letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

- **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?**

Opening schools over the summer period will require a great deal of resources – planning, staff time, utilities, cleaning – and it is likely that schools will require significant support from third sector organisations and volunteers to plan and deliver activities.

Since March, disadvantaged children have engaged in high-quality home learning at lower rates than their peers, and we know that getting pupils into optional provision is difficult. This has been shown to be a persistent challenge in the research literature on summer schools. Supporting attendance for those who are likely to benefit most – children and young people from low-income backgrounds – will be crucial in ensuring the greatest impact. The negative effect of absence is a risk as disadvantaged children typically have lower rates of school attendance and could lead to a widening the attainment gap.

For summer schools to have an academic impact, there must be an academic focus. Teachers would therefore have a key role in ensuring any additional activities link to the content of the main curriculum. Sustained support will be required to help disadvantaged pupils catch-up after they return to school; short-term initiatives are unlikely to deliver the level of catch-up support needed to mitigate the impact of school closures on the attainment gap.

- **If catch-up proposals were to be funded through the pupil premium, what mechanisms could be put in place to ring-fence the catch-up component?**
- **What accountability and reporting measures could be attached to ensure the extra funding's use on catch-up initiatives?**

Schools publish an annual pupil premium strategy on their website, detailing their current performance, strategy aims for disadvantaged pupils, spending priorities, rationale, monitoring and implementation. To support schools to develop effective strategies, the Department for Education

has published a template and guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-strategy-statements>.

We think the current level of reporting on pupil premium spending is appropriate and offers the right amount of information for parents, governance boards and Ofsted. We do not think a ring-fenced mechanism is necessary as the catch-up strategy should be aligned with the overall pupil premium strategy. The Department may wish to update the template to reflect future funding decisions, but we feel schools provide enough information to be held accountable for their spending decisions.

Schools should be encouraged to use their pupil premium funding to the maximum possible benefit by focusing on evidence-based interventions. The EEF has identified a list of [18 promising projects](#) that have been evaluated through randomised controlled trials and shown to have positive impacts on learning, with particularly strong effects for disadvantaged children in most cases.

One way of encouraging schools to spend money on high-quality effective catch-up interventions, such as one-on-one or small group tuition, is through a match-funding mechanism whereby the cost of accessing high-quality programmes are offset.

- **Looking ahead, how should catch-up interventions be best measured; for instance, in terms of tracking the destinations of those who were supported?**

Rigorous, independent evaluation is essential to the EEF's mission. It ensures that we can accurately identify the impact of EEF-funded projects and provide teachers and senior leaders with the reliable information they need to improve outcomes for children and young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. When scaling-up programmes, evaluation should be in-built to identify barriers and enablers to take up, engagement and effective delivery, as well as successful approaches to overcoming barriers and challenges.

When implementing catch-up interventions, schools should monitor impact by gathering data that is fit for purpose. The EEF has developed a guide to implementation to support school leaders and other staff putting research evidence to work in their setting which offers practical and evidence-informed recommendations:

[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Implementation/EEF\\_Implementation\\_Guidance\\_Report\\_2019.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Implementation/EEF_Implementation_Guidance_Report_2019.pdf)

There is a strong likelihood that the educational attainment gap between children from low-income backgrounds and their peers will increase, at least reversing the gains made to narrow the socio-economic gap in attainment since 2011. Looking ahead, the government should closely monitor the academic achievement and destination outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who are likely to be affected in the long-term.

- **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?**

The EEF's charitable mission focuses on evidence and not accountability. In response to an urgent need for an accessible overview of the evidence, the EEF conducted a rapid evidence assessment on remote learning: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-supporting-students-to-learn-remotely/>

The review found remote learning can be effective, given the right conditions and high-quality pedagogy is more important than how teaching is delivered. While efforts to support remote learning are likely to have been of considerable benefit to many children, there are indications that the remote learning that has taken place during school closures is likely to have further widened rather than narrowed the gap. Surveys of teachers and parents in England from the Sutton Trust and the Institute for Fiscal Studies show that many pupils are not engaging in high-quality home learning and that disadvantaged pupils appear to be learning less than their peers.

In last week's oral evidence session, I referred to the need for a common minimum standard of remote teaching and learning. To support schools, it would be valuable to identify and share good practices within the sector, focusing on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning for children and young people from the poorest households. In addition, ensuring teachers are provided with support and training to deliver effective remote learning is essential.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss catch-up interventions to mitigate the potentially devastating impact of school closures on the educational progress of disadvantaged children. I look forward to reading the full report of the inquiry in the coming weeks.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Becky Francis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Becky Francis  
Chief Executive  
Education Endowment Foundation

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