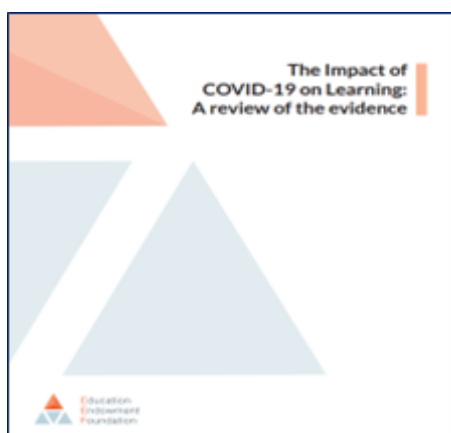


# Moving forwards, making a difference

June 2022

*"For two years, schools have been grappling with real uncertainty. Questions from whether they would be open one day to the next, to how best to support learning, both remotely and in-class, have loomed large over daily life in schools. Amidst these challenges, teachers and school leaders have worked tirelessly to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on the children and young people in their care. Initially, they did so whilst working without a map, lacking evidence of how their pupils' learning had been affected. However, over time, studies have been conducted and research evidence published. This has enabled us to begin to piece together a more robust understanding of how partial school closures have affected children, and the measures that will need to be taken to facilitate their recovery and move learning forwards."*



These were the words last week of **Professor Becky Francis, CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation**, in her post to launch the latest EEF Evidence review [\*The Impact of COVID-19 on Learning: A review of the evidence\*](#).

The key findings are sobering, but perhaps not surprising to those of us who work in schools.

## Key findings:

- COVID-19-related disruption has negatively impacted the attainment of all pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- There is evidence that the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their classmates has grown.
- There is some evidence that in primary schools, younger year groups (Key Stage 1 pupils) have been the most significantly affected, with lower attainment than previous cohorts across all subjects. Other recent research shows particularly negative impacts for pupils in KS3 (DfE, 2021, 2022).
- Most evidence shows that despite some recovery by summer 2021, on average pupils were not performing as well in both maths and reading as pre-pandemic cohorts.
- Aside from the impact on attainment, which this report focuses on, teachers have frequently reported concerns around the effect on pupil wellbeing. There is also emerging evidence that suggests the pandemic has negatively impacted children's mental health.

The report goes on to explore these findings in more detail, and the text is interspersed with vignettes from schools, outlining the issues they have identified, and the curriculum adaptations they are making to address these.

*“The impact on Covid presented itself in a variety of ways in our classrooms, from challenges around resolving conflict between peers, to lack of fluency in reading and number work. This is particularly apparent for our lower Key Stage 2 children, whose entire experience of Key Stage 1 was disrupted.*

*One of the most significant challenges we have identified has been with children’s writing, in particular, their handwriting. In pre-pandemic times, our children would enter lower Key Stage 2 having received regular explicit teaching with careful feedback throughout Reception and Key Stage 1, ensuring their readiness to build and grow a focus on composition. However, this current cohort of children has developed a range of handwriting styles in lockdown, due to long periods away from the careful monitoring and guidance of teachers. To remedy this, we have focused on letter formation across the school, with teachers monitoring and providing feedback on children’s handwriting process, rather than the product.”*

**Cragside C of E Primary School, Cramlington**

*“Due to partial school closures, pupils in Years 7 and 8 missed important opportunities in Key Stage 2 to become ‘secondary ready’. The proportion of pupils who require support with decoding and reading fluency is rapidly increasing, creating a sense of urgency to prioritise high quality literacy teaching across subjects.*

*To address the issue, we are equipping all teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the growing literacy needs within the classroom. We truly believe that every teacher is a teacher of literacy and have therefore prioritised the development of explicit literacy instruction across the curriculum to support pupils to become strategic readers, resilient writers and confident speakers.”*

**Manchester Enterprise Academy, Wythenshawe**

*“In the wake of the pandemic, we have noticed pupils struggling with vital social aspects of nursery, with some disliking personal touch, or interacting in large groups of children. There have also been many who have struggled with separation anxiety from their parents. There also appears to have been a negative impact on our pupils’ speech and language development after many months of limited exposure to language. Their expressive language, which they use to communicate during role play activities or in small world play seems to have been particularly affected.”*

**Highfield Nursery School, Suffolk**

Towards the end of the report is a summary of guidance and resources that are available from The EEF to support ‘education recovery’ planning.

These include [\*\*Moving Forwards, Making a Difference: A Planning Guide for Schools, 2022–23.\*\*](#)



This new guide is designed to support teachers and school leaders in identifying and addressing the key areas for development in their setting for the coming academic year. It offers practical advice and signposts evidence-informed resources on a variety of areas of teaching practice, from ensuring high quality teaching to removing non-academic barriers to attainment.

You may find these particularly useful, among others:

### Page 7 of the document - High quality daily teaching: the 'five-a-day' approach:

#### High quality daily teaching: the 'five-a-day' approach

Teaching is complex but there are certain key elements that can be integrated into daily practice to enhance its quality. The 'five-a-day' approach identifies these evidence-based 'best bets', which

research evidence suggests can have a positive impact across phases and for all pupil groups, including those with SEND. The five elements of the approach are summarised below:

- 1

**Explicit instruction**

*Teacher-led approaches with a focus on clear explanations, modelling and frequent checks for understanding. This is then followed by guided practice, before independent practice.*


- 2

**Cognitive and metacognitive strategies**

*Managing cognitive load is crucial if new content is to be transferred into pupils' long-term memory. Provide opportunities for pupils to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning.*


- 3

**Scaffolding**

*When pupils are working on a written task, provide a supportive tool or resource such as a writing frame or a partially completed example. Aim to provide less support of this nature throughout the course of the lesson, week or term.*


- 4

**Flexible grouping**

*Allocate groups temporarily, based on current level of attainment. This could, for example, be a group that comes together to get some additional spelling instruction based on current need, before re-joining the main class.*





- 5

**Using technology**

*Technology can be used by a teacher to model worked examples; it can be used by a pupil to help them to learn, to practice and to record their learning. For instance, you might use a class visualiser to share pupils' work or to jointly rework an incorrect model.*



### Page 11 of the document - Using diagnostic assessment to identify learning gaps

Diagnostic assessment	Purpose	Practicalities
<p><b>Hinge questions</b></p> 	<p>These targeted questions, at a pivotal point, offer immediate indicators of learning and can identify misconceptions</p>	<p>Multiple choice questions work well with plausible 'distractors' for wrong answers. They can lead to valuable class discussion.</p>
<p><b>Quizzing</b></p> 	<p>Low stakes quizzing can offer curriculum-sensitive insights into pupils' learning.</p>	<p>Short answer quizzes do not assess complex understanding, but they can offer a quick identification of knowledge gaps or related issues.</p>
<p><b>Pre-topic 'mind map'</b></p> 	<p>Mind-maps (or concept maps) before a new topic can both establish crucial prior knowledge but also generate curiosity for the learning ahead.</p>	<p>Pupils can benefit from pre-specified graphic organisers, such as mind-maps, to trigger prior knowledge and allows for adaptive teaching.</p>

For more details you can find the full EEF resource on Diagnostic Assessment here:

[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Diagnostic\\_Assessment\\_Tool.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Diagnostic_Assessment_Tool.pdf)

## Page 18 of the document – Successful academic intervention: the TARGET model

<b>T</b> iming	Intervention sessions are often brief (e.g. 15–60 mins) and regular (e.g. 2–5 per week).
<b>A</b> ssessment	Assessments are used to identify pupils, guide areas of focus and to track pupil progress.
<b>R</b> esourcing	The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans, with clear objectives and possibly a delivery script.
<b>G</b> ive it time	Careful timetabling is in place to enable consistent delivery. Sessions are typically maintained over a sustained period (e.g. 8–20 weeks).
<b>E</b> xpert delivery	Interventions are delivered by a qualified teacher, or if they are unavailable, a trained teaching assistant. The intervention programme is followed precisely and suggested delivery protocols are followed.
<b>T</b> eacher links	If not delivered by the classroom teacher, the intervention deliverer and the teacher/s communicate regularly and make appropriate connections between out-of-class learning and classroom teaching.

The report also points us back towards the updated **Teaching and Learning Toolkit**, which may lead us to reflect on when we last revisited the Toolkit and really explored it in depth. After all, now more than ever we really need to focus on the evidence of what works in closing gaps in pupils' learning and accelerating their progress.

The **Toolkit** will therefore be the focus of our next Spotlight article. In the meantime, you may want to revisit it yourself [here](#).