

Membership of the re-convened Commission on School Reform is as follows:

- **Keir Bloomer (Chair)**: Education Consultant and former Director of Education
- **John Barnett:** Business consultant and former Parent Council Chairman
- Helen Chambers: Deputy Chief Executive of Inspiring Scotland
- Jamie Cooke: Head of RSA Scotland
- Carole Ford: Former Head teacher
- **Jim Goodall:** Former Head of Education and Community Services at Clackmannanshire Council and current Lib Dem councillor at East Dunbartonshire Council
- Anna Hazel-Dunn: Headteacher Royal High Primary
- Frank Lennon: Former Head of Dunblane High School
- Cllr Paul McLennan: SNP Councillor in East Lothian
- Ross Martin: Economic Agitator with experience in a variety of roles in education-including school teacher, voluntary tutor, chair of local education authority, member of college board & university court, Chair of a charity, and, most importantly, a parent and former student.
- Lindsay Paterson: Professor of education policy in the School of Social and Political Science at Edinburgh University
- Lesley Sutherland: Board member, the Centre for Scottish Public Policy

Please note that all members of the commission participate in an individual capacity and that the views of the commission do not represent the views of any other organisation to which the individual members belong.

Challenge Paper: Catching up the educational losses from Covid-19

Summary

- By the time that Scottish schools resume fully in March, at the earliest, pupils will have lost the equivalent of 16 weeks of proper education this year and last.
- There is an urgent need to plan for catchup of the lessons lost.
- The costs of doing so are large but feasible, and the practical aspects can build on the experience of pupils, parents and teachers during the lockdown.
- The Commission on School Reform calls on the Scottish Government to start planning for catch-up now.

Introduction

Scottish schools will not re-open fully until March at the earliest. By then, pupils will have lost the equivalent of about four months of schooling this year and last. ¹ Despite the best efforts of thousands of parents and teachers, the educational losses for pupils will have been large. One estimate suggests that to make it up fully would require the school week to be more than doubled in length for a year. ² What makes that estimate credible and relevant is that it was cited with approval by the Scottish Government's own economic recovery group. ³

This Challenge paper proposes some less drastic ways in which schools might enable pupils to recover from the worst of the losses. All pupils will have suffered from the closures, but the impact will have been greater for those in

¹ The lost time last year was estimated by the Education Policy Institute to be about 11.4 weeks (p. 32 in Eduction Policy Responses Across the UK to the Pandemic, October 2020). The present closure will be at a minimum 8 weeks (early January to 8 March). The Sutton Trust (p. 6 in Learning in Lockdown, January 2021) estimates that children are working at present about 3 hours per day, which is about half of a normal school day, but learning at home – even with the better support available this year – is not as efficient as learning in school. So an optimistic estimate might be that 8 weeks of closure with this level of home working represents about 3.5 weeks of learning. That brings the total lost time this year and last to about 16 weeks of learning.

straitened economic circumstances. Some estimates of the effect of the closure on socio-economic inequality are in an appendix.

Help for all children

Even the advantaged will have lost out. The report cited in footnote 2, which is by researchers at the London School of Economics, concludes from a review of the evidence on previous school closures under a range of circumstances that 'well over two additional hours per week might be needed over a year to compensate for each week lost to Covid-19.4

That is an astronomical figure. There would need to be about 32 extra hours per week to compensate for the 16 lost weeks, more than a doubling of the current length of the school week.

The LSE report does say that this figure might not be accurate for well-developed education systems with local autonomy, but even if — being optimistic — it was halved the school week would have to increase from about 25 hours to about 41 hours. Clearly that is not feasible, not just because of pupil fatigue but also because of a lack of qualified teachers.

What might be feasible would be to aim for this over two or three years, because that would bring the extra per week down to a more manageable 5-8 hours, depending on the duration of the recovery programme. There are two main means by which this could be done: Saturday morning clubs and late-afternoon homework clubs (as are common in schools in deprived areas, where many pupils do not have study space at home, and also in independent schools). Both have their merits, but

² p. 5 in Eyles, A., Gibbons, P. and Montebruno, P. (2020), *Covid-19 School Shutdowns: What Will They Do to Our Children's Education?*, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics.

³ p. 53 in Scottish Government (2020), *Towards a Robust, Resilient Well-being Economy for Scotland: Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government

⁴ p. 5 in Eyles, A., Gibbons, P. and Montebruno, P. (2020), *Covid-19 School Shutdowns: What Will They Do to Our Children's Education?*, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics.

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the management of late afternoons would probably be more feasible in most schools than using Saturdays. Late afternoons could be timetabled as an extension of the school day, thus integrating them into the school as a whole. Therefore they have several advantages over using Saturdays:

- 1. It is easier to persuade pupils to stay on for an extra couple of periods in the late afternoon than to get them to come out again on a Saturday.
- Using weekdays would leave pupils free to get on with other activities on Saturdays

 such as paid employment, or sport or music.
- 3. Making schools available on weekdays involves only keeping them open, rather than opening them specially.
- 4. In rural areas, school transport could be adapted on weekdays more readily than on Saturdays.

Planning of catch-up lessons

The planning of the catch-up lessons would be up to individual schools, because only the school will have an idea of how much has been lost and how best to recover from it. The needs of individual pupils will vary widely. Some will have made reasonable progress during the closures, aided by good-quality material from schools, frequent online interaction with teachers and peers, and parents who have been in a position to supervise their work. The majority have not had these advantages. When the schools return, the first task of teachers will be the very difficult challenge of finding out who needs what.

Although the staffing costs of catch-up will be met by Councils, schools will need some funding for other purposes. They should also be empowered to use volunteer assistance under teacher supervision in the classroom. Consideration could also be given to mentoring schemes. Priorities will need to be established within the curriculum, taking account of the assessment of pupils' needs.

Primary and early secondary

In primary schools, the main aim should be to recover losses in the core curriculum of reading, writing and mathematics. In early secondary, the losses might vary from subject to subject. Although there has been general research on pupils' losses during the shutdown, none has focused on how the losses might vary by subject. The challenge of establishing what each pupil needs requires careful consideration which, to date, it has not received.

<u>Highers, Advanced Highers and university</u> entrance

The loss of coverage of the syllabuses is particularly serious in the case of young people seeking recognised national qualifications. Examinations have now been cancelled for a second year with teacher judgment now being the primary consideration in determining success or failure.

Reliance on teacher judgment in 2020 led to a substantial increase in pass rates. It seems certain that this will happen again. This brings with it a number of serious problems — such as the credibility of passes gained in these years and the mechanism of returning to the standard of previous years — which are not the subject of this paper.

It seems likely that remote learning and the use of online material may have been more successful at this level where students are more able to work on their own under guidance from teachers than in the case of younger pupils. However, for many students, the loss of coverage of the syllabus may be too great to be made up in a year. In that case, they may have to postpone sitting Highers for a year. In a few cases, they may even have to be offered the option of repeating the year. If these extensively mechanisms are used. implications for staffing, timetabling and even possibly accommodation will create problems in some schools.

Even where young people complete their courses within the planned timescale and are then

publications by the Education Policy Institute and by the Sutton Trust, cited in footnote 1.

⁵ Green, F. (2020), *Schoolwork in Lockdown: New Evidence on the Epidemic of Educational Poverty*, University College London;

assessed internally, a further difficulty arises because of limitations on syllabus coverage. The judgment being made in this cases is about whether the pupil would have achieved the required standard in a normal year when they would have been able to complete the course. This has important implications for further learning, particularly progress into Higher education. These implications will be more serious in some subjects than others.

To allow flexibility in students' progress through fifth and sixth year, universities will have to adapt their entrance requirements, especially moving away from the insistence on specified numbers and types of Higher in a single year. They will also need to meet the needs of students whose prior knowledge is likely to be less than that of the usual first year student. The task of catching-up educational losses is thus not a matter for schools alone.

National and local leadership

Although the management of catch-up would be most effective if done locally, there should be national guidelines to ensure a minimum of provision. These guidelines should, if possible, be produced consensually, perhaps by the Scottish education recovery Government's Education involving Scotland, the local authorities, and the teacher trade unions. Changes to university requirements will require leadership from the Scottish Funding Council.

The statutory and regulatory position regarding school attendance is very complex. Extending compulsory attendance to catch-up times might require a change to the law. This is something that the Scottish Government could investigate. In any event, a strong expectation of attendance would help, preferably including strong statements from Scottish ministers, local authorities and other national organisations.

Extra help to children in disadvantaged circumstances.

Although all children have lost out from the school closures, the impact is particularly great on children who are disadvantaged. The estimates in the appendix to this Challenge Paper suggest that the closures are probably the equivalent of imposing at least five years of extra educational inequality on children's progress. Catch-up cannot solve all the problems of inequality, because about two thirds of it happens before children even start school. What might be feasible is to compensate for the addition to the other third which the lockdown has caused.

It is very difficult to give extra help to disadvantaged children in a way that is not invidious to them and is not unfair to other children who have also lost out but who are not disadvantaged. One way would be to have standard subsidies (see below) given as funding to each school – earmarked for catch-up lessons – with a supplement to that standard amount calculated in the same way as for pupil equity funding (which attempts to enable schools to deal with the effects of social disadvantage). Local councils would have a general oversight of the local plans, as employers of teachers and as owners of the schools. But the detailed planning should be under the control of headteachers. The reason to emphasise this local autonomy is that only the school will know how and in what ways their pupils were affected by the lockdown. Only they will know how to use the second tranche in a way that does not invidiously label the disadvantaged.

Who would staff the catch-up lessons?

The core staff would be teachers of the school, agreeing on a voluntary basis to take on the catchup lessons either for a fee (analogous to supply teaching) or for time off in lieu. But to provide the number and range of staff that would be required, there would have to be other sources of staff. There would be some retired teachers, and some

⁶ Green, F. (2020), *Schoolwork in Lockdown: New Evidence on the Epidemic of Educational Poverty*, University College London. Publication by Education Policy Institute cited in footnote 1.

trainee teachers near the end of their courses. There could also be a role for other university students, not as accredited teachers but analogously to the way in which students work with schools to encourage widening of access to university. For either group of students, the universities ought to be offering this kind of work as a novel kind of course, with credit. For example, a student who worked on catch-up lessons could be required to write a long essay about it, or could write their Honours dissertation on it (which in most universities would require them to do some empirical research on what the children were learning). That work would replace some other option that the student might do, and so would cost the university almost nothing.

Another category of staff might be after-schoolclub staff. They would be valuable, but it is crucial for the credibility of the catch-up clubs that they are led by qualified teachers on the school staff. There would also have to be some general oversight by school management, unlike for most after-school clubs or holiday clubs.

The use of extra staff would be a matter for headteachers to decide. In some circumstances, it might be most effective to schedule some of the catch-up lessons during the normal day, with the core class teachers, and paying for cover for their other classes in that time. In the senior years of secondary school, it might be appropriate to use extra staff to provide dedicated tutorial help in the run up to the annual exams in spring 2022. Some of the extra staff could be used to strengthen the support for children with additional support needs during the catch-up lessons.

How many staff?

This has to be at best an informed guess: only the local authorities could calculate more accurate numbers. If most of the work of the clubs would be revision and working on tasks set by the class teacher, then the role would be as much supervisory as direct teaching, and so staff-pupil ratios could be reduced from the norm.

⁷ There seems to be no published official figure on this, but an estimate appears on various job-search sites, and is plausible,

Unfortunately, many pupils would not attend optional classes, even if there was a strong expectation that they ought to do so. The staffing needs would be more intensive at secondary, because of the need for specialist knowledge. So it might be reasonable to assume that on average each primary school would require seven staff to supervise the work, and that each secondary would require 14 staff. There are about 2,000 local authority primary schools and about 350 local authority secondary schools. So the clubs would need about 19,000 staff.

Costs

This is very crude, but some rough calculations give an indication of what catch-up lessons might cost, and thus of how feasible they might be. The average gross salary of teachers in Scotland is about £34,000 per year. ⁷ The agreement for supply teachers is that their daily rate is (1/235) of their salary, and so this would be £145 per day. Eight hours of work is approximately equivalent to 1.3 days of work. If these lessons ran during 30 weeks, and assuming employer's costs of 18%, the gross annual salary cost of these would thus be about £127m.

It seems reasonable to assume no rental charge for the school premises, but there will be the cost of a janitor. Janitors are paid on average £9 per hour, and so this would be an extra about £54 per week in 2,350 schools. For 30 weeks with 18% employer's costs, this becomes £5.9m.

There would also be some smaller costs – for example, the cost of early registration with the General Teaching Council for student teachers, and the cost of protecting-vulnerable-people checks for other university students. But these would not be large in total, and many would already have been covered (for example, by accepting provisional GTC registration, and by accepting PVG checks for students who already work in university-access schemes). There would also be some administrative costs in starting up

because it corresponds to point 4 of the 6 points of the main teacher salary scale.

the scheme, for example communicating it to parents.

So the grand total is around £130m annually. Because these are gross costs, they would not be affected by the details of staffing, for example by the various flexible combinations of existing staff and cover staff mooted above. The estimates would have to be revised with more accurate information about costs. The sole purpose here is to indicate the scale of the challenge.

Conclusion

The reason to estimate the challenge is to say that it is not wildly impossible. The Scottish Government has already allocated £100m for educational recovery⁸. The UK Government has repeatedly said that it wants a more visible presence in Scotland: what could be more visible than this? It might also be possible to attract some funding from philanthropists, which would help to guarantee the independence of the work from government. All of these details would have to be worked out.

But the main point is this. Pupils will have gone 29 weeks without proper schooling. Inequality will have worsened. Schools know what is to be taught and teachers have great experience of enabling pupils to recover lost ground. The costs of doing all this are not inordinate. The main extra ingredient that is now required is leadership.

Educational inequality due to lockdown

There is quite a wide range of published estimates of how much inequality widens over the summer in normal circumstances, from which an estimate of the widening during the shutdown may be derived. This can become an uninformatively technical discussion, which is not helpful here, but it is useful to have a range, and also to know what part of total inequality is due to schooling and what not.

As a preliminary, we need an idea of how much inequality increases during the whole period of primary schooling in normal times. From research in England 9, using a variety of data sources, researchers have found that inequality probably increases by about 45% during the whole of primary (6 years in England). That would correspond to closer to 53% for the 7 years of Scottish primary schooling. Another way of putting this is that, by the end of primary in Scotland, about one third of total inequality has grown up during the primary years (the other two thirds having grown from conception to age 5).

Educational Endowment Foundation estimated that the effect of the lockdown last spring was to increase total inequality in England by the end of primary school by 36%. 10 In Scotland, the total period of school closures (11.4) weeks) was about 2 weeks less than in England, because of the accident of where school holidays fell (footnote 1 above). But then the 11.4 has grown to about 16 with this year's closures, as calculated above. So the estimate is of a growth of inequality of about 43%, which is about four fifths of the total inequality that arises during primary school in normal times. So this EEF estimate implies that lockdown has imposed about the equivalent of the same as the whole growth of inequality during 5-6 primary-school years.

Appendix:

⁸ https://www.gov.scot/news/return-to-full-time-schooling/

⁹ Sacker, A., Schoon, I. and Bartley, M. (2002), 'Social inequality in educational achievement and psychosocial adjustment throughout childhood: magnitude and mechanisms', *Social Science and Medicine*, 55, 863-80; p.100 in Hobbs, G.T. (2007), *Investigating Social Class Inequalities in Educational Attainment:*

the Effects of Schools and the Validity of Free School Meal Status as a Proxy for Socio-Economic Status, PhD thesis, Institute of Education, University of London.

 $^{^{10}}$ Coe, R. (2020), *Impact of School Closures on the Attainment Gap*, London: Educational Endowment Foundation.

A different way of arriving at a similar conclusion is to note that research from England¹¹, Ireland¹², Germany¹³, New Zealand¹⁴ and the USA¹⁵ has suggested that most or all of the inequality in children's progress while at primary school arises during the long summer holiday, reinforced by differences in home learning during holidays by different social groups. Schools were closed last year for 21 weeks (including holidays). They will have been closed for at least 8 weeks now. That total of 29 weeks is the equivalent of just under 5 years of summer holidays, and so the effect is likely to be similar to the growth of inequality during 5 years of primary school.

In short, there seems quite general agreement – implicitly supported now by UK Government funding for the tutoring scheme in England run by the Educational Endowment Foundation ¹⁶ – that the growth of inequality during the lockdown has been similar to the growth of inequality during around 5 or 6 years of primary school.

¹¹ Eyles, A., Gibbons, P. and Montebruno, P. (2020), *Covid-19 School Shutdowns: What Will They Do to Our Children's Education?*, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics

¹² Doyle, O. (2020), *COVID-19: Exacerbating Educational Inequalities?*, University College Dublin: Childhood and Human Development Research Centre.

¹³ Meyer, F., Meissel, K. and McNaughton, S. (2017), 'Patterns of literacy learning in German primary schools over the summer and the influence of home literacy practices', *Journal of Research in Reading*, 40, 233-53.

¹⁴ Tiruchittampalam, S., Nicholson, T., Levin, J.R. and Ferron, J.M. (2018), 'The effects of preliteracy knowledge, schooling, and summer vacation on literacy acquisition', *Journal of Educational Research*, 111, 28-42.

¹⁵ Alexander, K.L., Entwisle, D.R. and Olson, L.S.(2007), 'Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap', *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-80.; Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J. and Greathouse, S. (1996), 'The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: a narrative and meta-analytic review', *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 227-68.; Downey, D.B., Von Hippel, P.T. and Broh, B.A. (2004), 'Are schools the great equalizer? Cognitive inequality during the summer months and the school year', *American Sociological Review*, 69, 613-35; Rambo-Hernandez, K.E. and McCoach, D.B. (2015), 'High-achieving and average students' reading growth: contrasting school and summer trajectorie', *Journal of Educational Research*, 108, 112-29.

¹⁶ https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/national-tutoring-programme/