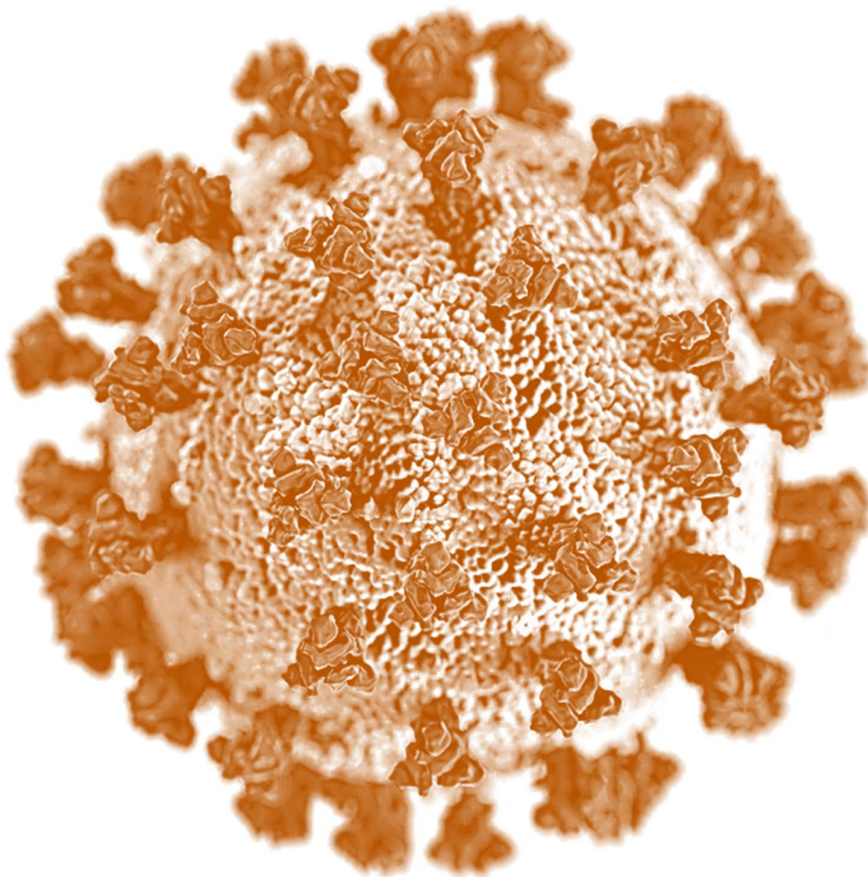


Can summer schools help disadvantaged pupils bounce back from lockdown?

.....
Ellie Mulcahy, Loic Menzies and Bart Shaw



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Ellie Mulcahy is Head of Research at The Centre for Education and Youth. Ellie ensures that research continuously shapes our thinking and underpins our work, as well as supporting the team to conduct high quality, robust research that leads to changes in policy and practice.

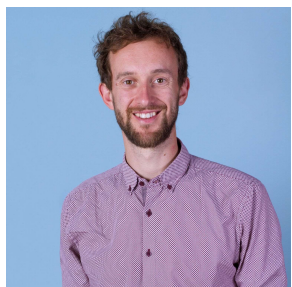
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Loic began working with young people as a teenager when he was a youth worker for Cambridge City Council and the charity Changemakers. He then moved into schools, eventually joining the senior leadership team of St. George's R.C School in North West London and becoming Head of History and Social Sciences. During his time there, St. George's overcame its turbulent history and became the country's fifth most improved school.



Bart Shaw is a Head of Policy at The Centre for Education and Youth and has spent the last 8 years working in education in the UK and overseas. Bart leads our work on developing education and youth policy. His research focus has been on disadvantage as well as special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). He is the lead author of our reports 'SEND and poverty' and 'Disadvantaged pupils' progress in secondary school'. He combines experience of policy making at the heart of government with hands-on experience as a teacher and middle leader in school. He is lead author of The Centre for Education and Youth and Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report Special Educational Needs and their Link to Poverty, as well as the The Centre for Education and Youth and Social Mobility Commission report Ethnicity, Gender and Social Mobility. He recently completed a report on good practice in mentoring for the Office of the Children's Commissioner providing evidence-based advice to mentoring organisations on how to maximise their impact. He was co-author of our study of school cultures for the Department for Education.

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¹ Cover image US Government department: Public Health Image Library, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

1 Introduction and summary of recommendations

1.1 Introduction

School-closure and lockdown is having a serious impact on children and young people, especially those that are disadvantaged or vulnerable. As of the 8th May, pupils in England will have missed 13% of the school year due to school-closure. If schools do not reopen in the final term of this school year, pupils will miss 38% of the school year.

Researchers in the USA have used data on the 'summer slide' over a typical summer holiday to model the potential learning loss due to Covid-19 closuresⁱ. The 'covid slide' follows the trajectory of summer learning loss and finds that pupils there could return to school having made only 70% progress compared to a normal year in reading and only 50% in Maths. In some cases for Maths, pupils could fall a full year behind.

It is important to note several caveats to these projections. Firstly, estimates of 'summer learning loss' are subject to important critiques due to issues with replicability and measurementⁱⁱ. Secondly, these 'covid slide' estimates assume learning during school closures will follow a similar pattern to a 'normal' (and long, American) summer holiday. This is flawed in both a positive and negative sense; pupils are more likely to be taking part in some sort of learning through home learning at present, which is not typical of summer holidays. On the other hand, during lockdown, pupils may be less likely to have enriching experiences outside the home than they would in a summer holiday. They are also more likely to have challenging experiences, with rising rates of domestic violence and bereavement resulting in potential for extensive trauma.

Negative effects are likely to be particularly pronounced for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils since they are:

1. Less likely to be involved in learning at home during lockdown
2. More likely to experience summer slide in normal years
3. Less likely to have enriching learning experiences in summer holiday
4. More likely to experience the damaging effects of material deprivation and financial uncertainty.

Existing evidence suggests that summer schools are far from a magic bullet. Any decision to run such provision should therefore be carefully considered. This paper explores three of the main anticipated challenges caused by school closure:

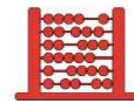
- the widening attainment gap,
- the social-emotional impact of lockdown
- a lack of support for pupils' major year-group transitions.

It then explores the evidence on summers schools' impact on both academic and non-academic outcomes.

As of the 8th May, pupils in England will have missed 13% of the school year due to school-closures.



If schools do not reopen in the final term of this school year, pupils will miss 38% of the school year.



50%



70%

If the 'covid slide' follows the trajectory of summer learning loss pupils could return to school having made only 70% progress compared to a normal year in reading and only 50% in Maths (Kufeld & Tarasawa, 2020)

1.2 Summary of recommendations

We argue that any government, or sector led initiative to provide summer schools should have a dual focus on supporting pupils' academic progress and their social and emotional needs. They should include small group and one-to-one tuition.

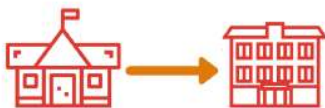
Careful consideration should be given to ensuring priority students access any initiatives since this is a frequent concern. Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that pupils who are facing the most critical transitions between phases and schools should be a key focus, namely: pupils starting Reception, Year 1, Year 7 and Year 12.



Summer school provision should have a dual focus on academic outcomes and supporting pupils' social and emotional wellbeing.



Schools should deliver summer provision as a universal offer to all their students but should make particular efforts to reach out to priority pupils.



Special consideration should be given to pupils transitioning between phases or schools



Any government effort to roll out summer provision should include additional funding to pay staff and ensure learning is delivered in line with this report's recommendations

2 The Impact of School Closures

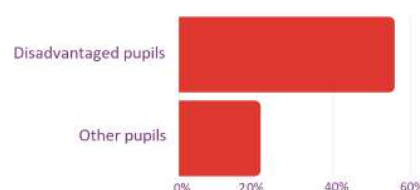
2.1 The widening attainment gap

There are widespread concerns that the Covid-19 pandemic will widen the disadvantage attainment gap. In the UK disadvantaged pupils in the Early Years are on average 4.3 months behind their peers. This gap widens to 23.4 months by Key Stage 4ⁱⁱⁱ and in recent years progress closing the gap has stalled^{iv}.

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) point out that differences in the home learning environment will likely widen this gap during the current crisis^{iv}. Similarly, our own research in partnership with the University of Exeter^v found that 73% teachers anticipate a negative impact on pupils' attainment and progression. In March, Teach First^{vi} surveyed teachers teaching in disadvantaged areas and found that 98% believed that some of their pupils would not have the necessary access to technology to continue learning online.



73% of teachers anticipate a negative impact on pupils' attainment and progression



Teachers are much more likely to say that they are 'very concerned' for their more disadvantaged pupils.

(University of Exeter and CfEY, 2020)

2.2 The social and emotional impact of lockdown

Serious concerns about the social-emotional wellbeing of all pupils - and the potential severe trauma to some, have been a consistent theme throughout our research on the Covid-19 crisis. Our survey of 2,200 teachers, parents and young people asked about the impact of school closures and home schooling.

- 72% of teachers said the school closures will have a negative impact on pupil wellbeing and safety. Concerns were greatest with regard to disadvantaged pupils: 56% were very concerned about disadvantaged pupils, with only 21% reporting they were as concerned for all pupils in general.
- 76% of teachers said that emotional and wellbeing support for pupils is the 'support from policy makers that would do most to improve outcomes for those students most negatively affected by school closures'.

Furthermore, during our roundtable on supporting vulnerable pupils during Covid-19 attended by over 100 teachers and school leaders, concerns were highlighted about pupils' wellbeing and the need to provide pastoral support:

"This will be an issue of social justice. How much hardship families face, and their living conditions whilst socially isolated will impact on young people's ability to maintain their wellbeing."

p.16

EPI's recent report and recommendations to avoid the widening of the disadvantage gap also cited wellbeing challenges. The report argued that some pupils will have suffered 'neglect abuse, anxiety or bereavement' and suggested that supporting pupils pastorally should be 'the first priority for the sector'.

Emerging evidence supports these concerns. Domestic violence reports are up 50% and social services anticipate a rise in child protection referrals once schools go back, due to vulnerable children becoming 'invisible' to services during school closures. Summer school provision will therefore need to respond to this by supporting pupils' social and emotional wellbeing, with intensive support available for the most vulnerable pupils.

Moreover, pupils are likely to have lost some of the routines required in school, and David Thomas (Principal of Jane Austen College in Norwich) therefore suggests that if schools do not re-open in term six, they may have to reintroduce these habits over the summer.

"What we do will depend what happens before the summer. If summer school is students' first experience of school since closure then we'll orient it much more towards bringing them back into the habit of school. If we've been back already then it will be more academic."

EPI touch on similar concerns, noting that pupils may return to school with challenging behaviour which could drive a further rise in exclusions if support is not put into place. Given that disadvantaged children, including looked after children and those receiving social care support, are more likely to be excluded under normal circumstances, a proactive approach is likely to be needed to ensure pupils are 'school ready' when they return.

2.3 Transition challenges

Transitions that involve starting a new phase of education, sometimes in a new location, can present particular challenges and usually draw additional support from schools during term six. These challenges will be exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Key transitions include: starting school, transitioning from Reception to Year 1 out of the Early Years, from primary to secondary school and from year 11 to post-16 education in year 12.

2.3.1 Transitions in the Early Years

Even in typical circumstances, parents and children are often worried about early years transitions including starting school in Reception and moving to Year 1. Concerns are likely to be exacerbated by the cancellation of induction visits and activities in term six.

Teachers identify the transition from a play-based approach to more structured, formal teaching as the main challenge in the Reception to Year 1 transition. In particular, younger children, children that are less mature and those that speak English as an additional language or have SEND find this transition difficult^{vii}. Being able to complete tasks independently and listening



and maintaining focused attention are the key skills that support children with this transition.

Having missed the final reception term children might struggle with these skills. Similarly, for children starting in reception, social skills and familiarity with school routines are important for a successful transition but missed time at nursery or in other childcare settings will likely negatively impact on these skills.

There is a risk that summer school initiatives particularly target older pupils nearer exam years, but it is worth recognising that summer support for children in the early years could potentially be valuable, particularly if it involves parents and provides opportunities for children to get to know their new learning environment and teachers. Any such provision should focus on building personal and social and executive function skills and in the case of older children, greater independence.

2.3.2 Primary to secondary transition

Parents of year 6 pupils who participated in our recent research on experiences of home learning^v said that their children had found the lockdown particularly challenging and were worried about starting their new school.

Longitudinal research shows that prior to the primary to secondary transition, social concerns - including losing old friends and bullying - are at the forefront of pupils' minds^{viii}. Yet pupils also express excitement about the opportunity to make new friends. Unfortunately, Year 6 pupils have lost opportunities to say goodbye to friends and to meet new classmates during induction days and it is likely that this will result in increased worries. Thus, transition support over the summer and during the first term should capitalise on pupils' excitement about making new friends by providing opportunities for them to build relationships and have positive shared experiences, online or in person.

Beyond the initial point of transition when social concerns are chief, academic struggles become more prominent. While all pupils can experience challenges in this transition, pupils from poorer backgrounds seem to face greater difficulties and are more likely to stop making progress^{ix,x}. Our current large-scale research (in press) drawing on national datasets corroborates findings of a 2008 study^{xi} showing that the risk of a disadvantaged pupil falling behind in their academic progress is greatest at the primary to secondary transition.

Research suggests the following academic challenges are of critical importance during the primary-secondary transition:

- **Lack of continuity between KS2 and KS3 curricula:** In a study^{xii} looking at maths during transition, only 21% of secondary and 12% of primary teachers 'agreed' that there is a fluid transition between Maths curricula. Teachers' limited knowledge of the other key



stage's curriculum and a lack of communication between teachers from different key stages were highlighted by teachers.

- **Lack of trust and communication between key stages:** This leads to primary school teachers' knowledge of pupils being under-utilised^{xiii,xiv}.
- **Increased linguistic demands:** The quantity of vocabulary pupils are exposed to increases by three to four times compared to primary school and teachers use a wider academic vocabulary that is not familiar to pupils^{xv}. This results in pupils being unable to access the secondary curriculum.

There is good reason to anticipate that academic challenges could be exacerbated next year. Additionally, disadvantaged pupils who have had access to fewer learning opportunities during lockdown are particularly likely to struggle in bridging the academic gap.

Any summer school provision to support pupils at this transition stage should therefore bring together teachers from both key stages and include academic input that builds pupils' vocabulary, something for which numerous word-lists and strategies are available.

2.3.3 Secondary to Post-16 Transitions

In many cases year 11s have been 'de-prioritised' by secondary schools following the announcement that summer examinations would be cancelled. This means the post-16 sector is likely to face considerable challenges come September. As Sarah Waite, Chief Executive of the charity Get Further points out, many of these young people will have had very little education for the best part of six months.

"There's a massive issue coming down the line with year 11s moving into post-16 education. One in three are going to need to "retake" or work towards GCSE English and maths in post-16 education - after what is shaping up to be a six-month gap in their education. Around 90% of these young people will do so at a further education college - and have just weeks to prepare for an autumn resit at a brand new institution. On top of this, colleges are likely to be suffering financially far more than schools, due to the loss in the part of their income that doesn't come from public funding."

According to Sarah, the cancellation of exams also creates additional uncertainty that will make appropriate targeting of summer provision particularly challenging.

"Summer provision could help students get ahead before the start of college. But careful thought needs to be given to how students are selected or invited to have this support, ahead of GCSE results day on 20th August. Similarly, these young people would benefit from an earlier start to onboarding them to a new college and supporting their transition to post-16 education - but this is tricky when young people won't know what grades they will be allocated or what courses they will have the entry requirements for, before the end of the summer."



3 The potential for summer schools

Given that schools are unlikely to resume 'normal business' before the end of the school year it has been argued by some that the summer holiday period could provide an opportunity to deliver initiatives that help pupils bounce back and start the new school year on surer footing. For example the charity Teach First has submitted evidence to the education select committee advocating summer schools as a means of providing "intensive catch up"^{xvi}. Chief Executive Russell Hobby said:

"Fully resourcing summer schools, particularly in the most disadvantaged communities, will be essential to getting the support to the children who need it most."

"Summer schools are one way to provide the foundations to re-engage pupils with ongoing school life, re-establishing routines so that when schools fully resume young people can hit the ground running with learning."

However, the sector is far from united in believing that summer schools are the right answer. Stuart Lock, CEO of Advantage Schools argues that:

"This is not the first time summer provision has been on the agenda and money was thrown at this in the past. The problem was that as well as being expensive, firstly, the most needy did not turn up and secondly, it didn't work for those that did. That's why it was scrapped... Overall I therefore think it is a bad bet and I can't see it working"

Rachel Snape, Head Teacher Milton Road Primary School Cambridge and National Leader of Education is also sceptical but for differing reasons:

"The pseudo panic about kids catching up, or kids falling behind only applies if you believe a good education is getting a high score in tests. Kids have been learning powerful lessons at home and summer schools would feel like a punishment for an evil the children did not cause."

On the other hand, while some children will no doubt have had positive learning experiences at home, this is unlikely to be the case for all children and young people. David Thomas, Principal of Jane Austen College in Norwich therefore suggests that that summer schools could play an important role:

"Given the loss of learning our children have just experienced, we will want to do as much as we can do get them back on track."

Executive Principal Ed Vainker OBE also reports that Summer Schools have already played an important part in transition support at Reach Academy Feltham in the past:

"Summer Schools have been an important part of our induction for new Secondary pupils - reassuring them, setting the tone and giving us helpful insight into what support will be required come September. We are now exploring what we can offer to our community this Summer given the circumstances."

It therefore seems increasingly likely that summer schools will be a common strategy for helping pupils get back on track, whether or not this a centrally driven initiative by government, or at the behest of individual schools, local authorities and multi academy trusts. However, there are crucial questions about whether this is the best approach to take. Evidence on the impact of summer schools is mixed. Furthermore, as Stuart Lock highlights, ensuring those most in need attend is a perennial challenge. On the other hand, this summer provides a very different context to that of previous years and there are therefore questions over how conclusions from previous studies might translate into these very different circumstances.

3.1 Evidence for impact

The EEF^{xvii} reports that on average, summer schools can result in two months of additional progress, though this is not the case for all programmes and findings mainly relate to literacy.

The EEF also notes that intensive, well-resourced provision, led by experienced teachers and involving small group or one-to-one tuition is found to be most effective and can result in up to four months additional progress.

A meta-analysis^{xviii} examining the impact of increased learning time programmes similarly highlighted that delivery by qualified teachers improves impact. They also found that programmes with a 'traditional instruction style' had positive impact on academic outcomes. David Thomas, Principal of Jane Austen College echoes this saying:

"In my experience, the more summer school is like school, the more effective it is. If we believe our schools are effective then our summer schools should emulate them"

The same meta-analysis also suggests that programmes taking a more 'experiential learning instruction' approach, involving hands-on activities or inquiry projects, impacted social- emotional skills such as self-confidence and self-management.

However, the effects for both were small and the review also found that some programmes had no impact on pupil outcomes. The review goes on to provide insight into impact on different groups of pupils taking part in increased learning time programmes (such as summer schools):

- Pupils at risk of poor attainment showed positive gains in literacy performance. This impact was stronger where programmes used explicit instruction to teach 'well specified skills'.
- Pupils with ADHD experienced progress on social-emotional outcomes such as emotional wellbeing and externalizing behaviour.

Other studies referenced in the EEF's analysis reviewing the impact of summer programmes provide the following notable findings:

- Reading interventions which involve a teacher-directed literacy lesson format have a significant positive impact on pupils' reading skills, more so than other methods of instruction^{xix}.
- Where out-of-school hour interventions targetting 'at risk' pupils in the US involved a tutoring component, they had larger positive effect size^{xx}.

- More recent reviews have found positive impacts for interventions targeting low-income pupils or those at risk of falling behind^{xx}. However, earlier studies suggested greater effects for middle income pupils^{xxi}.
- Interventions based on child-initiated home reading have similar positive impacts on reading skills as in-school summer programmes^{xix}. While this is positive news for parents and children keeping up with reading activities during lockdown, pupils without access to reading materials or who have insufficient support with reading at home will not feel the benefits of these activities, putting them at greater disadvantage and strengthening the argument that provision that is led by a teacher and which replicates the format normally used in literacy lessons, should be delivered this summer.
- Studies comparing programmes provided at different time-points found it did not make a difference whether interventions took place during summer or after school in term-time. This suggests that, if the public health guidance means that summer schools cannot take place in August to prepare pupils for September, after school provision during term time could provide a feasible alternative, as suggested by Teach First.

Other studies have found limited impact on academic outcomes. NfER's evaluation^{xxii} of the government's summer school programme in 2013 found that the initiative supported pupils' emotional and social wellbeing and appeared to provide a positive foundation for supporting transitions. However, there were limited reported impacts on academic attainment, though this may be due to the fact that many programmes seemed not to focus on these outcomes.

3.2 Challenges

Aside from designing provision that maximises impact and navigating logistical and public health challenges, there are two key challenges to consider when providing summer schools:

1. Ensuring the intended beneficiaries attend
2. Managing demands on staff.

Various studies find that targeting the right pupils and ensuring disadvantaged pupils attend is challenging and many programmes struggle on this front. NfER found that only 50% of invited disadvantaged (FSM eligible) pupils attended the summer schools and that is despite the fact that the attendance measure was minimal, defined only as 'for at least a day'.

There is some reason to believe that attendance patterns would be different this summer as parents and pupils are concerned about missed school time in a way they never have been before, but this needs to be balanced against additional worries about safety since, as Stuart Lock points out, *"it's important to recognise that both teachers and families are very fearful at the moment."*

Janice Allen, Head Teacher of Falinge Park High School, Rochdale highlighted the challenge of targeting, and suggested that a universal offer, coupled with working closely with families and utilising staff knowledge of pupils will be key in overcoming this.

"An important consideration is making sure that any academic catch up doesn't feel like a punishment by unfairly targeting more disadvantaged pupils. The message can't be... 'you are disadvantaged so we want you to give up your holidays and work on your English and Maths' That's why working with partners is so important, and why it has to be part of the universal offer. We can then use our knowledge of our pupils, alongside existing relationships to encourage pupils to participate."

School leaders also point out that asking staff to work over summer could be problematic. This needs special consideration in light of the evidence that staff experience and qualifications influence impact. Eleanor Bernandes, Head of Development and Opportunities for Aspire Schools Multi Academy Trust in Buckinghamshire, emphasises this challenge in the context of Alternative Provision schools which have had to provide highly intensive support for vulnerable pupils, throughout the pandemic, and who can expect to continuing having to do so for the foreseeable future:

"There is a real challenge in balancing the need to be there for our students and families given that we're a key safety for them, whilst acknowledging that we have been asking a lot of our staff. We know we need to protect them and ensure they have the opportunity for a proper break – particularly given that we're anticipating that the next phase of this may well be even more demanding than this period."

However, teachers seem to be willing to get involved in summer provision in considerable numbers. Teacher Tapp finds that 61% of teachers would be willing to work in a national summer school, with 29% willing to work for more than week and 32% willing to work for one week.^{xxiii} However this would generally be contingent on being paid overtime and school leaders said they would need additional funding for this and Stuart Lock questions how responsive staff will be to financial incentives:



61% of teachers would be willing to work in a national summer school (TeacherTapp and Teach First)

"Given that teachers are one group who have largely not been economically disadvantaged during the pandemic, financial incentives to work over the summer will have limited impact"

Stuart Lock, Chief Executive Advantage Schools

There may also be scope for working with volunteers (preferably former teachers) and other local services.

"Maintaining connections is a big priority so we have agreed with that when we return youth services will come in every dinner, to cement the link we have, and I'm going out with youth service starting next week on detached youth work so that the parents see the provision as joined up... It is possible to do this work in partnership, the people are out there but you just have to know where to look and be a bit tenacious"

Janice Allen, Head Teacher of Falinge Park High School, Rochdale

The National Youth Agency has recommended^{xxiv} that youth services and schools work together to allow youth practitioners to provide wrap around support to vulnerable young people, their involvement in summer schools could provide a way of beginning this work.

4 Conclusion and recommendations

There is good reason to believe that the covid-19 pandemic will result in a widening of the attainment gap and impact on pupils social and emotional wellbeing. There are also likely to be particular difficulties for pupils transitioning between phases and schools.

Evidence suggests that summer schools can result up to four months academic progress when delivered well. They may therefore hold some promise for helping pupils bounce back from lockdown. However the evidence base is patchy and some evaluations, such as the NFER's evaluation of the 2013 programme, show limited academic impact.

It is also clear that summer provision frequently fails to involve the pupils it is intended to benefit, a concern echoed by the school leaders who contributed to this report.

On the other hand, we are reminded on a daily basis that the current situation is "unprecedented". The evidence base therefore needs to be considered carefully in light of these circumstances.

If schools, MATs, the government or the third sector decide to pursue summer provision as part of efforts to counteract the impact of school closures, we therefore recommend the following:

1. Summer school provision should have a dual focus on academic outcomes and supporting pupils' social and emotional wellbeing.

- i. Activities to support pupils' academic progress should be delivered by experienced, qualified teachers and should include elements of small group and one-to-one tuition.
- ii. Activities to support pupils' wellbeing should be differentiated with different levels of support available for pupils depending on their experiences during school closure. In many cases, support is likely to need to continue well into the new school year.
- iii. Activities should re-introduce pupils to school routines and, where pupils struggle to cope, they should receive additional, one-to-one support that should continue into the new school year - rather than taking place in isolation.

2. Schools should deliver summer provision as a universal offer to all their students but should make particular efforts to reach out to priority pupils.

- i. Priority pupils and families should include those already identified as vulnerable or disadvantaged, as well as those that are likely to have suffered more during school closures.
- ii. Schools should work in partnership with children's services and the youth sector to ensure the intended beneficiaries attend and enjoy doing so.

3. Special consideration should be given to pupils transitioning between phases or schools (those starting Reception, Year 1, Year 7 and Year 12).

- i. Children starting school and their parents should engage in induction activities such as visiting classrooms and meeting teachers. These activities may need to be more staggered than usual to reduce the number of families attending at one time.

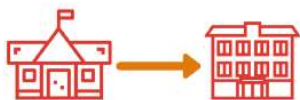
- ii. Children starting in year 1 should be given support to develop their independence and social and emotional skills. Reception teachers and year 1 teachers should work together to provide these activities, pass on information about children and link up the curricula.
 - iii. Pupils starting year 7 should be able to visit their secondary school, meet their form group and participate in activities alongside taking part in academic activities that prepare them for the 'gear shift' that comes with starting secondary school. This could include support with vocabulary as well as literacy, numeracy and oracy.
4. **Any government effort to roll out summer provision should include additional funding to pay staff and ensure learning is delivered in line with this report's recommendations.**
- i. Whilst volunteers and other services including play-workers and youth workers can play a role in delivering summer provision they will need to work alongside skilled qualified teachers.



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The Centre for Education and Youth is a 'think and action-tank'. We believe that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

"Society should ensure that all young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood"