

Education in times of crisis: Teachers' views on distance learning and school reopening plans during COVID-19

Analysis of responses from an online survey and focus groups

Lisa-Maria Müller and Gemma Goldenberg

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The Chartered College of Teaching is the professional body for teachers. They are working to celebrate, support and connect teachers to take pride in their profession and provide the best possible education for children and young people. They are dedicated to bridging the gap between practice and research and equipping teachers from the second they enter the classroom with the knowledge and confidence to make the best decisions for their pupils.

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Executive Summary

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This report presents findings from an online survey of nearly 1,800 members of the Chartered College of Teaching and discussions from six focus groups. Responses were collected between 7 May and 5 June 2020. The aim of this study was to investigate teachers' views on the impact of partial school closures on learning, wellbeing, school reopening plans and potential long-term implications for education. The key areas of discussion with participants were:

- What are teachers' views of distance learning?
- How has the crisis affected student learning?
- What has the impact of COVID-19 been on teacher and student wellbeing?
- How have vulnerable students been affected and what is the best way to support them?
- What are teachers' views on school reopening plans?
- Has the COVID-19 crisis influenced teachers' views on education and the teaching profession?

Views of distance learning

The majority of teachers in this sample feel confident with planning and delivering distance learning, but some would welcome additional training. Around half of teachers felt they had maintained good contact with their students but some felt that the crisis had strengthened their relationships with families whilst others had struggled to engage parents. Most teachers think that around half of their students are coping well with distance learning but nearly all are worried about at least some of their students. Strategies such as quality feedback, adaptation and a range of activities were thought to contribute to more effective distance learning.

Concerns were raised over children who are unable to access online learning. However, benefits have been reported for other students such as positive responses to learning more autonomously and at their own pace, spending more time with families and having the opportunity to learn new skills, including the use of new technologies.

Technology providing opportunities and solutions

Technology has provided many new ways of working which teachers would like to maintain in the future. These include setting and marking homework online, creating banks of video lessons to use for training, revision, flipped learning and remote teaching and using video conferencing for meetings and CPD. Teachers hope that embracing these methods may enable more flexible working and a better work/life balance for staff in future.

Schools as 'vital services' in society

Teachers described the extensive work that has gone into supporting families throughout this crisis. Parents turn to teachers for support with a wide range of issues, including financial worries, housing issues, domestic violence and coping with bereavement. In many cases school staff feel ill-equipped to deal with these issues. Teachers ask for funding and support from other services such as charities, social workers and psychologists, to enable them to continue meeting these wider societal needs. Teachers would particularly like training in promoting wellbeing and supporting children who are grieving or traumatised.

Public perception of, and communication with, the teaching profession

The negative portrayal of teachers in the media has had a significant impact on teachers' wellbeing and is considered a potential threat to the ongoing recruitment and retention of teachers. Many teachers have felt unsupported by the government throughout this crisis, finding communication unclear and inconsistent. They would like concise, consistent and timely guidance in future, including a clear plan to follow. Teachers called for more collaboration between policymakers and practitioners, with teachers' views being valued and trusted and would like to see a better public understanding of what teaching entails, leading to a more supportive and positive image of the profession.

Impact on wellbeing

The impact on teacher and student wellbeing is varied. Around one-third of teachers think that partial school closures have negatively impacted the wellbeing of most of their students. However, others have seen students' wellbeing improve as a result of less formal schooling and more time with family. 60 per cent of teachers reported that their work/life balance has been negatively impacted by the crisis whereas 25 per cent felt it had enabled them to have a better work/life balance.

Vulnerable students

The COVID-19 crisis has raised awareness of both social and educational inequity and the challenges faced by the most vulnerable students. Eighty per cent of teachers agree that their most vulnerable students have been most affected by the crisis. There is widespread concern for vulnerable students including those with mental health issues, those living in poverty, students with SEND, those without internet access, and students who will struggle to re-engage and re-establish learning behaviours when they return to school. Teachers are keen to know the best ways to support these students when they return. Teachers rated small-group tuition as the favoured method for helping students who have fallen furthest behind academically.

Views on school reopening plans

Teachers voiced concerns about staff and student safety and the difficulty of social distancing in most school settings, particularly with younger students, which is why they would generally prioritise older students in a phased return. They highlighted the need to allow time for students to settle back into school and to focus on their wellbeing when schools reopen to more students.

Looking to the future

This unprecedented situation has led teachers to reflect on what can be learnt from this crisis and how their views on education have changed. Many called for changes to the curriculum and to exam and accountability procedures, questioning whether the education system needs to prioritise differently in future. For many teachers, it has cemented their belief in the strength, adaptability and importance of the teaching profession.

Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak has led to an unprecedented level of partial school closures in the UK and the world more widely. Even though some countries are gradually reopening schools to more students, they continue to be closed to at least part of the student population in 116 countries, affecting over 60 per cent of the global student population (UNESCO, 2020) at the time of writing this report. In England, a gradual phased return was initiated at the beginning of June, with students in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 being encouraged to return to schools – but the latest available numbers show that only 26 per cent of children in Year 6, 20 per cent of children in Year 1 and 22 per cent of children in Reception are actually attending school (DfE, 2020). Initial plans for all primary school students to return to school before the summer holidays have now been abandoned and all students are currently expected to return to schools full-time from September. This means that, taking into account periods when schools would have been closed because of holidays, the majority of students will have missed roughly 14 weeks of face-to-face teaching by the time they return to school in September, making the current partial school closures unprecedented in scale and length.

In our previous report (Müller and Goldenberg, 2020), we discussed the potential implications of school closures on student learning and teacher and student wellbeing, and presented a selection of school reopening plans from different countries. The report combines evidence from previous epidemics and natural disasters with emerging insights from the current crisis and comes to the conclusion that school closures and the crisis more widely are not only potentially detrimental to student learning but may also affect their wellbeing due to the loss of routines, bereavement, trauma or increased stress levels. The report further argues that teachers' mental health and wellbeing is likely to suffer as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, possibly even more so than that of the general population due to a change in the nature of workload and supporting grieving and/or traumatised students and colleagues. We believe that the report provides important insights from previous healthcare crises and natural disasters which can help estimate the potential implications of the current crisis and inform approaches to school reopening. Furthermore, the school reopening plans that are outlined within the report provide an overview of the range of approaches countries have taken to tackling this crisis. While some countries have left schools largely open, others have closed them to all or the majority of their students and were planning on reopening them gradually to more students, with different countries prioritising different phases and others deciding relatively early on in the crisis that schools would not reopen before September.

Given the unprecedented scale and length of school closures and the fact that a lot of previous evidence stems from different national contexts during a time when online education was not as readily available, it is crucial to study the current crisis and its

impact on teaching and learning in more detail. This can help us to understand the specific effect this crisis is having on teachers and students and can inform school reopening plans.

Furthermore, data from the current outbreak can be used to inform action in any future crises, for example, if schools have to close during a second wave of COVID-19 or if blended learning needs to be implemented to limit the number of students in schools. Teachers work on the frontline of the education system's response to the current crisis and are hence ideally placed to judge the effectiveness of 'emergency remote teaching' (Hodges et al., 2020), how the current situation is affecting them and their students, what needs to be considered when planning for schools to reopen safely to more students and the support they require to guide students' learning. Their voices have to be considered and put at the centre of any school reopening plans.

Emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020) had to be put in place within a very limited timeframe to ensure children's continued access to education. This radical shift in education provision came without much warning, support or training. According to an analysis of PISA data (Moreno and Gortazar, 2020) only 65 per cent of 15-year-olds are enrolled in schools where principals think that teachers have the necessary pedagogical skills or training to integrate digital devices into their teaching, which shows that some teachers may lack the training or confidence to teach remotely.

Research has found a positive correlation between teachers' levels of self-efficacy and student achievement and motivation, as well as teachers' own wellbeing (Zee and Koomen, 2016). In other words, teachers who are more confident in their ability to teach effectively also tend to be those who create a more productive and high-quality learning environment. Higher levels of self-efficacy also positively affect teachers' stress levels and emotional exhaustion and are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment (Zee and Koomen, 2016). Given the link between teacher self-efficacy and student and teacher outcomes, it seems important to consider how confident teachers feel about facilitating distance learning and how they perceive distance learning to affect their students' learning, as well as their own and their students' wellbeing.

Positive teacher-student relationships are important for students' adjustment to school, their learning and their socio-emotional development (Reyes et al., 2012; Rudasill et al., 2006). Daily interactions inside the classroom and around the school building usually provide teachers and students with myriad opportunities to develop the strong, positive and constructive relationships that are important for learning. Distance learning may provide fewer such opportunities, potentially leading to students and teachers feeling disconnected from each other, which can have a negative impact on their wellbeing and learning.

Another important aspect of student engagement, motivation and achievement is positive parent-teacher communication. Good teacher-family communication has been found to have a positive impact on student learning by creating stronger teacher-student relationships, expanding parental involvement and increasing student motivation (Kraft and Dougherty, 2013). It also forms an important aspect of safeguarding.

This report therefore considers how teachers perceive communication with students and their parents to be affected by partial school closures and what strategies they have found to be most effective in supporting student learning and wellbeing from a distance.

The WHO (2020) has highlighted the potential negative impact of the current crisis on people's mental health and wellbeing and previous research has shown that working with traumatised individuals can have a negative impact on the wellbeing of those supporting them (Bride, 2004). Based on a combination of this research, studies that have previously looked at teachers' responses to crisis situations (Borntrager et al., 2012; Pfefferbaum et al., 2004a, 2004b; Zhang et al., 2016) and the anecdotal evidence that teachers' workload has increased as a result of balancing remote teaching, key worker provision, additional administrative tasks and their own family

commitments, we hypothesised in our previous report that the current situation may have a particularly negative impact on teachers' workload and wellbeing. In this study, we asked teachers to indicate how their workload and wellbeing has been affected, to identify reasons for any changes and suggest how these could be addressed.

At the time of writing our last report, only preliminary school reopening plans were available for England. Since then, a more concrete plan has been outlined for England and more countries have presented their approaches. We have surveyed teachers to find out what they think about the phases and student groups that should be prioritised in a return to school, how they could best be supported and what realistic expectations for social distancing and hygiene measures look like for different developmental stages. Results are discussed in relation to recently published guidance about school reopening in September (DfE, 2020).

Given the importance of work and social support as protective factors against secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Hensel et al., 2015; Setti et al., 2016), teachers were also asked about the levels of support they currently receive to tackle this crisis and what further support they would need. They were asked about support from their colleagues, the leadership team in their schools and the education system more widely to determine where further help might be needed.

Finally, we wanted to find out from teachers whether the current crisis has influenced their views on education and the profession. Will and should the current situation have a lasting impact on the education system and the teaching profession, or should we aim to return to 'business as usual' as quickly as possible when we reopen schools to more students? What have we learned from the current crisis about the knowledge and skills students can and need to learn outside the classroom and should this influence the content of school curricula going forward? These and other questions are tackled in the last section of this report and are an invitation for further discussion.

Nearly 1,800 members of the Chartered College of Teaching, the professional body for teachers in England, were surveyed and a sub-group participated in focus groups to determine teachers' views of distance education and school reopening plans. This report starts by presenting the results of the survey and the focus groups before discussing how they fit in with the wider body of research and recently announced school reopening guidance.

Method

Participants

Participants are a self-selected sample of members of the Chartered College of Teaching. All members of the Chartered College of Teaching were invited to participate in the survey via an email newsletter and 1,797 completed the online questionnaire. Broadly equal numbers of teachers from primary (41 per cent) and secondary schools (47 per cent) responded to the survey, making up 88 per cent of the total respondents. Eight per cent were from Early Years settings, two per cent from middle schools and three per cent from Further Education (FE) settings. Nine per cent were from 'other' settings, including special schools, upper secondary, sixth forms, infant schools, pupil referral units/alternative provision, all-through schools, initial teacher training (ITT), senior leadership team (SLT) members in multi-academy trusts (MAT), independent schools, specialist teachers and junior schools. Multiple selections were possible to account for people teaching in multiple settings or holding more than one role. (See **Figure 1**).

Within the survey, respondents had the opportunity to register their interest in participating in follow-up online focus groups. Six hundred and fifty-four respondents expressed such an interest. All of these respondents were subsequently contacted with the date and time for online focus groups and invited to register for the event. Sixty-one people registered. Out of all those who registered, a random sample of 34 Early Years, primary, lower-secondary, upper-secondary, FE and special school practitioners was selected to participate in the online focus groups. The final number of participants was 29 across six focus groups.

Consent

Active consent was sought from participants before the completion of the survey via an information sheet and online form at the start of the questionnaire. Respondents who did not agree for their data to be processed were not able to access or complete the survey itself.

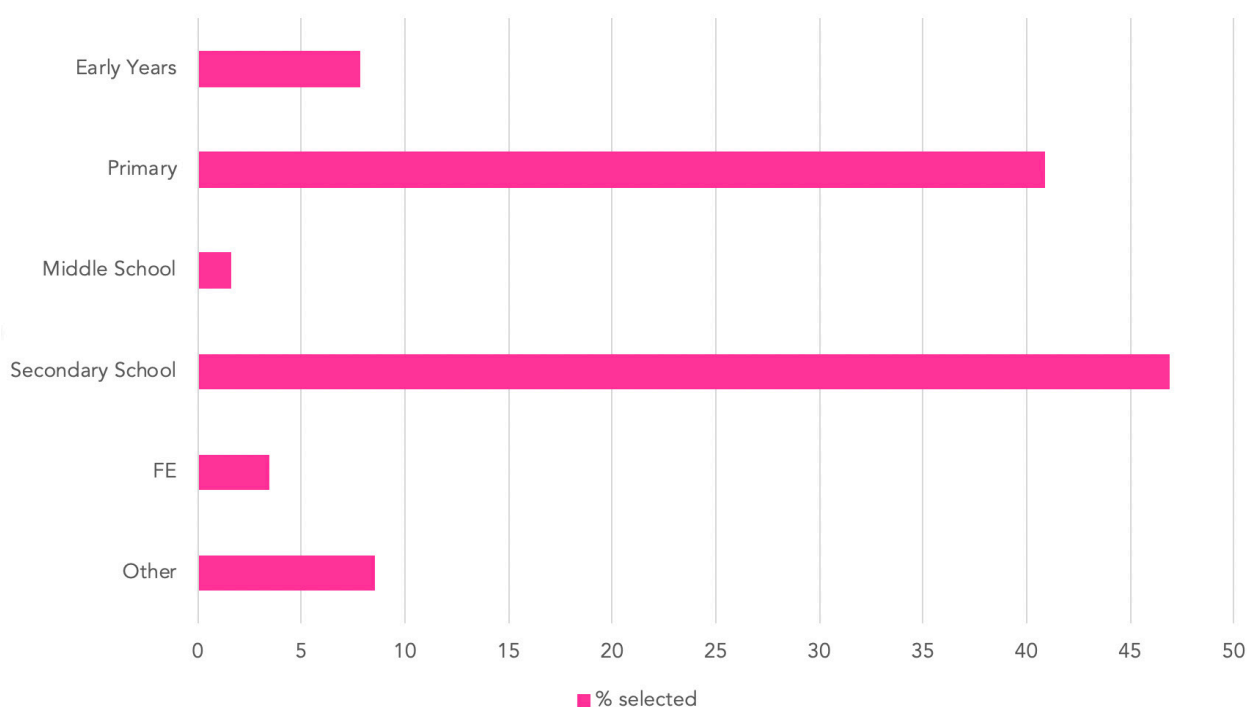


Figure 1: Phases respondents teach in

Survey

The survey contained a total of 21 closed and open questions (excluding questions about personal details), including two question matrices with 13 and 10 sub-questions respectively. 5-point Likert scales were used in these matrices. The open responses were coded and analysed thematically using MaxQDA.

Focus groups

Due to time constraints it was not possible for the research team to conduct each focus group individually. Each focus group was therefore facilitated by a participant who had expressed interest in facilitating discussions and writing up a summary during the registration process. Employees of the Chartered College of Teaching, including the two authors of this report, joined some groups as silent participants. Each facilitator was provided with instructions on how to facilitate the discussion and write up the summary prior to the meeting. These summaries were then collated by the research team and included in this report.

Each group participated in three focus group discussions which focused on different themes: teacher wellbeing, student wellbeing and vulnerable students. All participants listened to a brief stimulus presentation per theme and were provided with broad discussion questions before entering breakout rooms for their discussions. The discussion questions were:

Teacher wellbeing

- Have you had to support grieving/traumatised children during this crisis and if so, what effect has this had on your own wellbeing?
- Do you feel sufficiently prepared to support students in these difficult times and what support would you need in terms of training, time to speak to colleagues, professional mental health support, etc?

Student wellbeing:

- What are the key things that should be put in place to support student wellbeing when schools first reopen for more pupils – both for the most vulnerable pupils, and for all pupils more generally?
- What would be involved in a longer term plan of support? How will this be enabled? E.g. what will 'not happen/be postponed/be redirected' to create the time, energy and resources necessary to give pupil wellbeing the focus it needs?
- What additional (external) support would be required?

Vulnerable students

- What is your experience with vulnerable students and how this crisis is affecting them?
- How do you think the most vulnerable students should be supported once schools reopen to more students? How could this be managed and what additional support is required?

Limitations

Self-selection instead of probability sampling was used for the survey and the focus groups, although the final focus group participants were randomly selected from those who signed up for the event. Moreover, only members of the Chartered College of Teaching were invited to participate in the study. This means that the sample is not necessarily representative of the whole teaching population. It should also be noted that the data on student learning that is presented here is based on teachers' perceptions rather than student self-report or a direct assessment of their progress and perceptions of learning during lockdown. It will be interesting to compare results from studies collecting such data to the perceptions of teachers described here. Furthermore, only single coding was used for the qualitative data analysis due to constraints on time. Focus groups were conducted online due to the COVID-19-related social distancing rules, which enables a better geographical spread but can potentially influence group dynamics. Finally, focus group discussions were led by participants rather than the research team, which might have encouraged participants to speak more freely as they were engaging with a peer rather than a researcher, but this also means that the discussions were not led by independent researchers.

01

Teachers' views on distance learning

Teachers' digital self-efficacy and support for emergency remote teaching (ERT)

Teachers in this sample show relatively high levels of confidence in their ability to facilitate distance learning, although numbers are slightly lower than the estimates provided by headteachers in the PISA 2018 survey for school principals (Moreno and Gortazar, 2020). The majority of teachers (58 per cent) in this sample feel confident in planning and delivering distance learning and 52 per cent are confident that they know how to provide effective feedback online, but 20 per cent of teachers do not feel confident. The lack of confidence in some teachers may be due to insufficient support. While the majority of responding teachers (over 54 per cent) feel that they receive the necessary support to plan and deliver online learning, almost 20 per cent of teachers do not feel adequately supported. (See **Figure 2**).

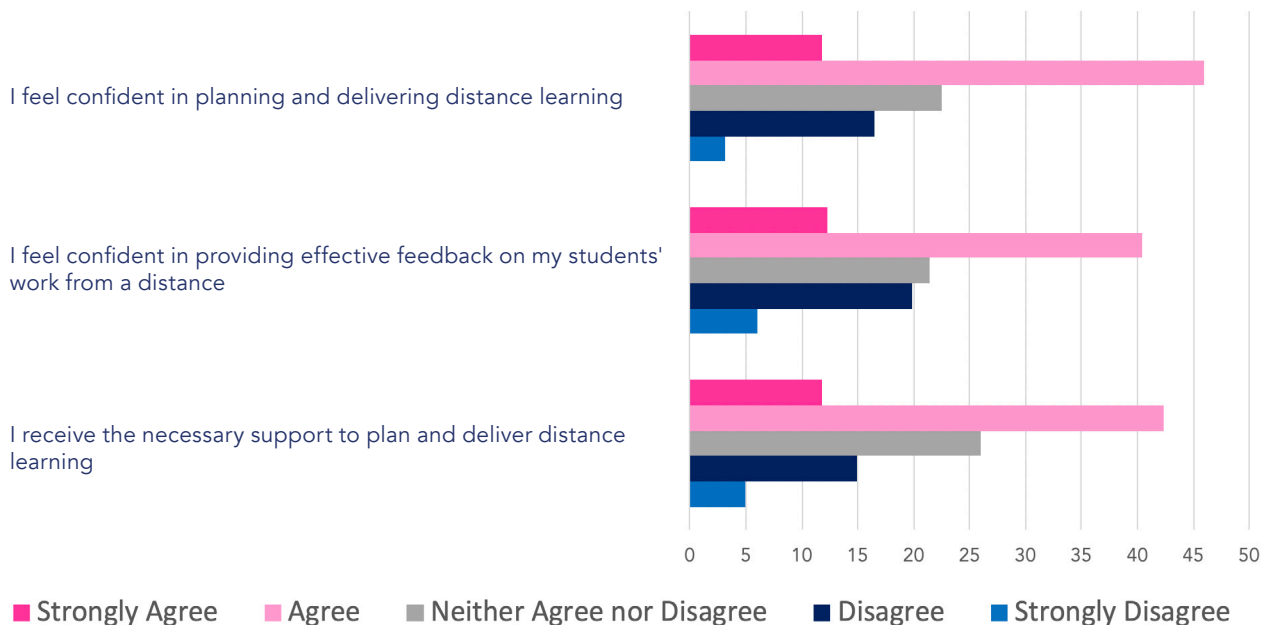


Figure 2: Teachers' digital self-efficacy in and support for emergency remote teaching (ERT)

Distance learning is also one of the two main areas in which teachers would welcome additional training. Live online teaching, remote teaching techniques, video creation, voice-overs for presentations, the use of digital platforms, online worksheets, the use of technology for student support and the use of online interactive whiteboards were mentioned as the main areas in which teachers would welcome additional training.

This indicates that the level of training and support that is available to teachers may have been slightly overestimated by headteachers in PISA 2018 (Moreno and Gortazar, 2020) or that the type of training required for current emergency remote teaching is different to the type of training that is generally available.

Student learning and wellbeing

Communication with students and parents

The data from this survey shows a mixed picture (see **Figure 3**). While 51 per cent of teachers still feel well-connected with their students, 28 per cent do not. This is possibly linked to how easily teachers have been able to communicate with their students and their parents. The majority of teachers (over 56 per cent) find it easy to reach most or all of their students. However, over 20 per cent have found communication with students difficult, reporting that they have only been able to reach a few students easily.

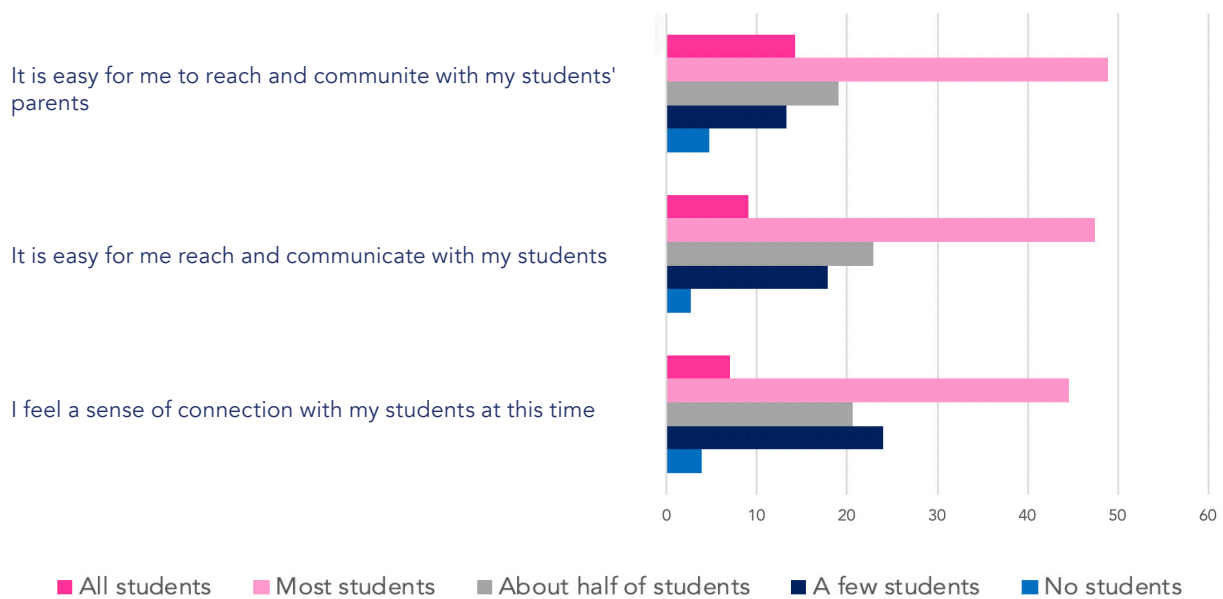


Figure 3: Teachers' contact with students and parents

Teachers are clearly aware of the important role regular communication with students and their parents plays for student wellbeing and learning, as it is the strategy they have adopted most frequently to support their students from a distance since the start of lockdown. Regular phone calls home are the single most mentioned strategy by respondents to our survey. It becomes clear from these responses that student learning tends not to be the sole focus of these calls. While some respondents do mention it as a strategy they use to catch up with students who have fallen behind in their learning, child and family wellbeing also tends to be discussed and supported. The frequency with which teachers call students and parents varies, with most respondents mentioning weekly calls but some teachers calling their most vulnerable families as often as daily.

'Although it has been a hard task, calling parents and children in your class on a regular basis and supporting within these calls supporting their individual needs as a family as well guiding them through home learning, reassuring them that they are helping their children and it's fine to have days where their plans have not worked out.'

Email contact is the second most mentioned approach to parent-teacher and teacher-student communication in this survey. The use of online platforms and pre-recorded video messages are also mentioned by teachers as ways to stay in touch with their students and for students to have an opportunity to talk to each other. This can be aimed at individual students or at whole groups, for example, where teachers host online form time or record messages for their assemblies. Some teachers also describe house calls and talking to parents from a safe distance outside their homes. In many cases, teachers use a combination of these approaches to reach students and their parents but even then, some families remain difficult to reach.

While the majority of respondents to this survey (63 per cent) indicate that all or most of their students' parents have been easy to contact and 70 per cent feel that most of their students' parents have been supportive and appreciative of their work during lockdown, 37 per cent of teachers have found communication with at least half of parents to be difficult.

In some cases, these phone calls, emails or house calls provide an opportunity for families to share their fears and anxieties with teachers. They report that parents are turning to them with concerns not only about their children but about wider issues such as financial concerns; they feel that schools have become like an 'emergency service' responsible for identifying and guiding families throughout the crisis. Participants reported dealing with issues including domestic violence, death of students' parents and grandparents and suicide, as well as needing to direct families to foodbanks and charities for support. In many cases they felt isolated and ill-equipped to provide this advice. Senior leaders in particular reported feeling pressure to maintain this level of communication and emotional support for families, which in many cases they are not trained for. In other cases, staff have reached out to try and support vulnerable families but have found it difficult to make contact or get families to talk freely on the phone. Where there are safeguarding concerns, school staff have been asking to speak to students directly on the telephone.

Student learning

Less than two per cent of teachers feel that all of their students are coping well with distance learning. While most teachers feel that at least half of their students are coping well with current arrangements for distance learning, most of them show concerns about groups of students who are not able to access remote teaching. (See **Figure 4**).

Access to the internet is clearly an issue. Eighty-eight per cent of teachers report that some of their students do not have access to the internet or the devices needed to enable online learning. In 20 per cent of cases, it is believed that only half of the students have adequate internet/device access.

The lack of access to the internet and digital devices is likely part of the reason why students appear to complete less work during the current partial school closures than they would usually do in school. While some students continue to complete a comparable amount of work, this is far from the case for all students. Only 1.2 per cent of teachers think that all of their students complete a similar amount of work now than they did when schools were open to all students and only 16 per cent believe that this is the case for most of their students. Forty-three per cent of teachers believe that only a few of their students complete a comparable amount of work and 14 per cent think that none of their students do so.

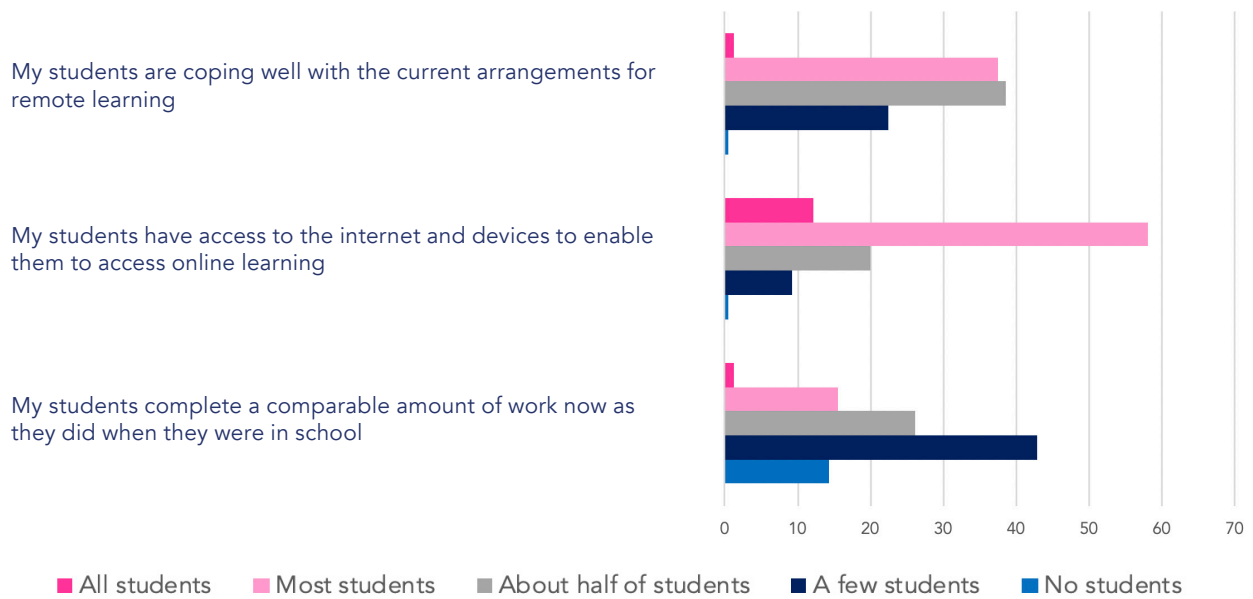


Figure 4: Students' access to remote teaching

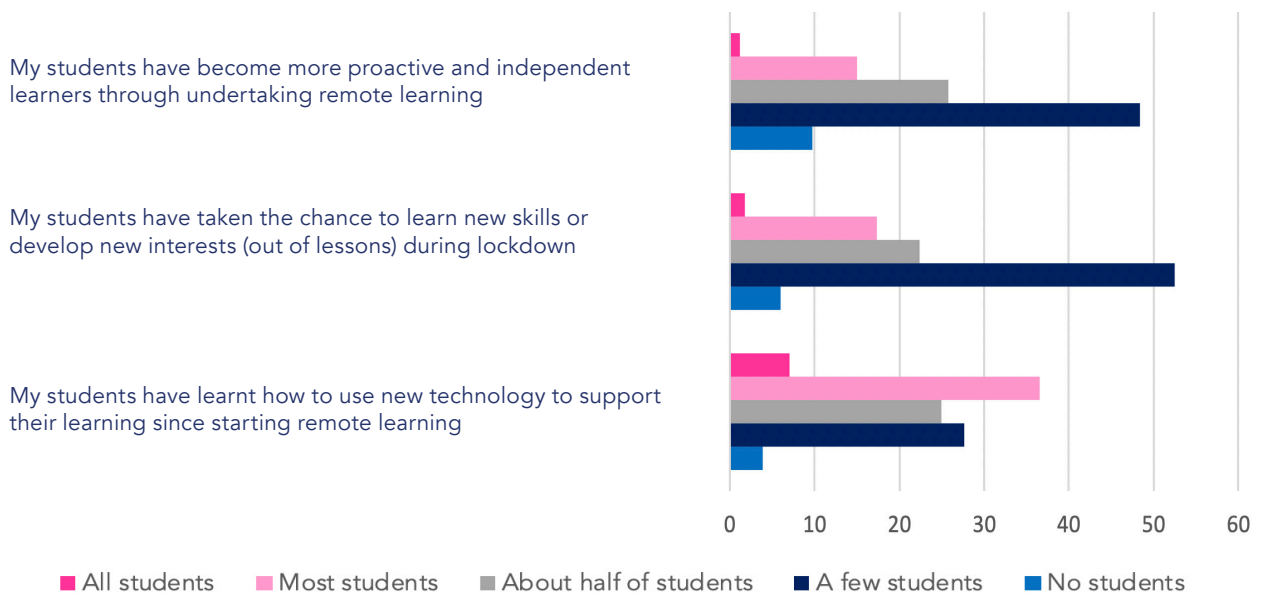


Figure 5: Students' development of new skills

Students' development of new skills

Even though most students seem to complete less school work, partial school closures and distance learning seem to have provided them with the opportunity to learn new skills and make new experiences. (See **Figure 5**).

All teachers reported that at least some of their students have become more proactive and independent learners as a result of distance learning. Over 42 per cent of teachers felt that this was the case for half or more of their students and 44 per cent of teachers also believe that most, or all of their students have learnt how to use new technology to support their learning.

This indicates that online learning and partial school closures have created the opportunity for students to engage in different forms of learning and to develop their IT skills.

Effective strategies to support student learning

As learning has moved from daily face-to-face interaction to distance learning for the majority of students, this survey aimed to find out more about the strategies that teachers are using to support student learning.

Use of technology

In addition to regular contact with students and parents, teachers have used a range of strategies to support their students' learning from a distance. The most obvious includes the use of technology. Teachers are using a wide range of platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Class Dojo, Show My Homework, Webex, Google Classroom, Seneca Learning, Seesaw, ActiveLearn or bespoke online learning platforms, which allow teachers to set and mark work, teach synchronous lessons, interact with students and parents, or organise group work. Some schools also provide access to external resources such as Oak National Academy or White Rose Maths to complement their offer and signpost to additional learning resources.

Some use powerpoint presentations with detailed notes for students to work through, narrated powerpoints or pre-recorded lessons. Teachers raise the importance of structure and clear instructions (possibly in spoken/video form) so students can work independently, allowing parents to work from home.

'Google classroom with specific worksheets for each lesson may not be amazingly exciting but for parents who work, they have told me it's the easiest way of ensuring they can do some form of working from home whilst children complete work. Then any additional work such as home science or investigation is put as extension so parents don't feel pressure to do it.'

Live lessons

Twenty-three per cent of respondents regularly teach live/synchronous lessons while over 37 per cent do not. Those who do teach live lessons tend to either use one of the learning platforms mentioned above or platforms such as Zoom. Teachers use a range of different live teaching approaches. Sometimes they teach the whole group, which also provides students with the opportunity to see their classmates, other times they teach one-to-one sessions to support students' individual learning needs. Some teachers mention that live lessons have improved student engagement levels and allow them to use interactive applications such as Pear Deck or Edupuzzle. Online assemblies are also a common approach to reaching all students and giving them an opportunity to feel part of a community.

'We are teaching online at primary age. Years 5 and 6 have two live lessons a day. Years 1 to 4 have a video from their teacher each day and then tasks set online. Actually seeing their friends and teachers faces has been very important.'

Providing feedback

Teachers also raise the importance of providing students with regular feedback on their work, which is usually done through one of the platforms mentioned above or during live video chats. Other approaches include peer assessment, whole-class feedback or self-marking. Common approaches include written or pre-recorded feedback as voice/video messages and quizzes that provide students with immediate

feedback. It is also mentioned that feedback is not only important for students but also their parents, carers or other people in their households who might be supporting students' learning during the current crisis.

Adaptation

While teachers generally highlight the need for structure so students know what to expect and do not entirely lose the habit of learning, they also ensure that students have a wide range of different activities they can choose from and that these activities adapt to students' needs. The use of technology can be particularly beneficial in achieving that as some platforms adapt automatically to students' levels through quizzing and other features. Such quizzes also lend themselves to using retrieval practice to support students' learning, which was mentioned by some respondents as a strategy they employ.

Engaging activities

Some teachers also mentioned the need for fun and engaging activities to keep students motivated, entertained and positive during lockdown. These include things like house competitions, mindfulness lessons, watching fun videos, podcasts, philosophy for children questions or making their own videos for classmates to watch. Generally the need to focus on students' wellbeing in addition to their learning was highlighted by many respondents.

Student wellbeing

Over 98 per cent of teachers feel that the wellbeing of at least some of their students has been negatively affected by partial school closures and lockdown measures and 33 per cent of teachers think it has negatively affected the wellbeing of most or all of their students.

They highlight the need to focus on students' mental health and wellbeing, not just students' academic progress, now and when schools reopen to more students. Teachers highlight that this crisis is likely to have a negative impact on students' mental health and wellbeing and schools cannot be expected to simply return to business as usual as soon as they reopen to more students. Time will be needed to settle (back) into (new) routines, to help students process past events, particularly for those who have experienced bereavement or trauma.

'The government needs to allow time for healing and adjustment and not expect 'performance' as measured in tables and statistics to recover immediately. They are children and we are all human. This crisis has had and is having a serious effect on all aspects of society.'

Some students may have experienced traumatic events and/or the loss of a loved one during this crisis, but most teachers do not feel confident in supporting children who are grieving or have experienced trauma. Less than four per cent of teachers strongly agree that they feel confident to support grieving children and less than five per cent strongly feel that they are confident to support those who have been traumatised. Over half of teachers report that they do not feel confident in these areas. This corresponds to findings from a recent study by Child Bereavement UK (2018), which shows that 90 per cent of teachers have not received any training on how to support grieving children. In this study, training in grief and trauma support was the single most mentioned type of training by respondents to this survey, which shows how desperately such support is needed. Now more so than ever. (See **Figure 6**).

Some practitioners, particularly those working with very young children, also highlight the potentially damaging effects of school settings that are quite different to what students are used to, referring in particular to strict social distancing measures and restrictions to play or to the equipment children would be able to use.

'Policymakers need to put less emphasis on returning to "normality" for children when the situations for schools reopening that is proposed is far from what

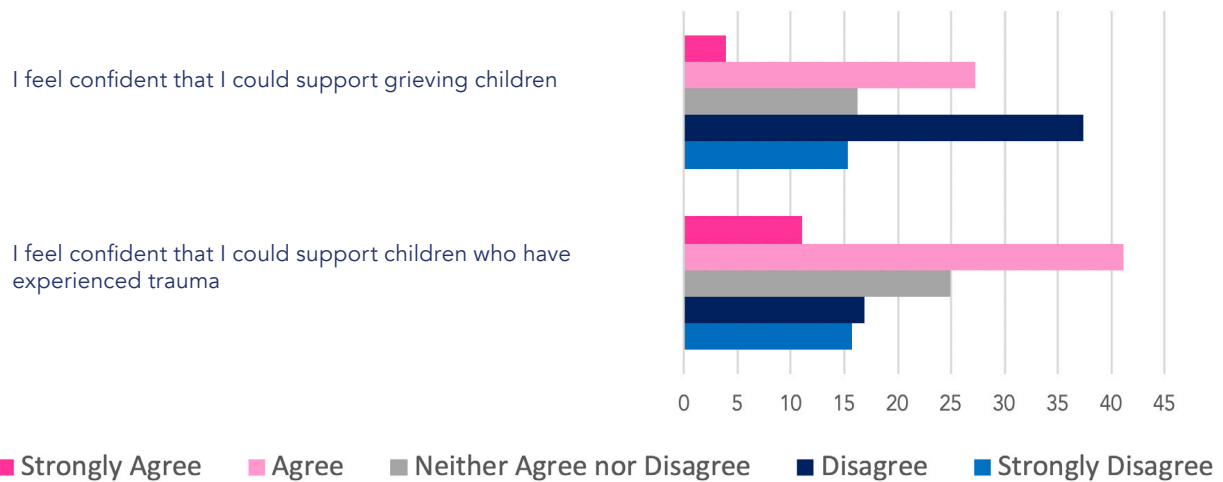


Figure 6: Teachers' confidence in supporting grieving and traumatised children

children normally expect in school and may be damaging to their mental health and wellbeing in the short and long term.'

Flexibility to support students' wellbeing

Schools feel that they will need to be flexible and adapt to students' needs in order to help them transition back into school life. In some cases, this might mean adjusting timetables to allow more time for reestablishing friendships, talking about their experiences and doing outdoor exercise. Some have suggested a 'recovery curriculum' (see Scutt, 2020). Students with particular needs might require a phased return to school.

Need for a broad and balanced curriculum

With many pupils having fallen behind in key subjects such as English and maths, there is a concern that non-core subjects may be overlooked when schools reopen to more pupils. However, subjects such as art, music and PE are recognised by school staff as important coping mechanisms and important for pupil wellbeing.

Transitions

Many staff expressed concerns for students who are missing out on transitions, for example Year 6 pupils and their preparations for moving onto secondary school. As announcements about partial school closures took place with little notice, teachers felt that they did not have adequate time to prepare students, to say goodbyes and ease transitions which left both pupils and staff emotional and anxious. Secondary pupils had many questions about their exams and university applications which teachers were not able to answer for them before schools had to close. For younger children, staff worry about their transition back into school and separation anxiety after being at home with families for so long.

Working with families to provide a reassuring message about school

Participants discussed the need to work with parents and families to reassure them that schools are not a place to be scared of. The wider media is thought to have created further anxiety about schools reopening which has had an impact on children and parents. In order for schools to be effective, they need to feel like a safe environment. Teachers expressed the importance of a home-school partnership and for parents to understand their part in supporting learning.

Groups of students who may be particularly affected by the crisis

Respondents noted that some groups of students are likely to be more affected by the partial school closures than others. For example, eighty per cent of teachers agree or strongly agree that their most vulnerable students have been particularly affected by the crisis.

Students in special schools

Staff working in special schools expressed their concern that even for those pupils attending school during the current crisis, restrictions have made it impossible to provide many of the most enriching aspects of their curriculum, including off-site work, sports, cooking and life skills such as shopping which are vital for pupils with additional needs. School staff fear that these pupils will have taken huge steps backwards in their independence and social skills – in many cases these skills took months or even years to build, as did trust and relationships with staff. They suggest that the process of rebuilding these skills and relationships will be long and difficult and is likely to have an impact on curriculum coverage. These teachers further raise that children with SEND may also need a phased return to school, giving them time to adapt. Schools are concerned that they will be penalised for poor attendance if they choose this strategy to support their students. They are particularly concerned for students with ASD, who may be distressed by the changes to their usual routines and highlight that a return to school with different procedures and working with different adults may be very distressing for these children.

Helping students to re-engage

Some respondents expressed concerns for students who are school refusers and those who may take months to re-engage. They explained that students with emotional difficulties may feel abandoned by school staff, and that rebuilding trust in these adults will take a long time. They suggest that many vulnerable children will need a focus on reestablishing learning behaviours and building habits and routines for learning. Teachers are also concerned that some children's routines will have been very disrupted at home by, for example, going to bed very late and waking up in the afternoon. Structure will need to be reintroduced.

Providing access to learning for students without internet access

Teachers expressed that they would need more training and time to adjust remote teaching to ensure that it is more supportive and inclusive. They voiced concerns about those students who do not have internet access, or those who have been using data from their mobile phone contracts, which could run out or lead to high bills. In many families, parents have needed the laptop or computer for their own work, leaving students unable to access online learning, and in some cases, entire families are sharing one phone for internet access. In other cases, children may have internet access but do not have the skills to navigate online learning independently. Therefore, teachers reported that the 'digital divide' has been an issue for both disadvantaged students and those with SEND, as well as children without parental support available. Some schools had not received any laptops or dongles for disadvantaged pupils, others reported that they had received less than half of what was needed.

Students who have not returned to school

School staff are concerned that some of their most vulnerable students are the ones whose parents have decided not to send them back to school, despite their being eligible. They recognise the importance of respecting parents' choices and their right to decide what is safest for their child, whilst also communicating the importance of continuing education. Teachers also discussed the possibility of providing coaching support for parents to help them with home learning. However, it was thought that not all families would engage with this. For families who do not value their child's education and do not see school as a positive factor in their child's life, this crisis seems to have further entrenched these views.

Students with mental health issues

Teachers noted their concern for pupils with existing mental health issues before the crisis. They are concerned that increased screen time during lockdown may have added to these issues. Teachers feel that they need mental health training to cope with upcoming challenges.

Students living in poverty

Schools reported problems with families unable to access supermarket vouchers, or the vouchers not working. Others have found that universal credit is taking a long time to 'kick in', and as a result, schools have been sourcing and delivering food to vulnerable families. Some have not responded well to this, as they do not want to feel judged. Teachers also discussed families who were not eligible for free school meals before this crisis, but who have now lost their jobs and are suddenly eligible.

The 'hidden' vulnerabilities

Participants expressed that vulnerabilities come in many forms; students may be considered socially, mentally or academically vulnerable. Sometimes the students they feel very concerned about do not meet the requirements for being on an official 'vulnerable' list. Therefore there is a concern that those on the cusp of 'vulnerability' could be the most at risk, as they have not been identified and supported. Teachers discussed students who they have not heard from at all; they have no idea what they have experienced during these weeks and therefore do not know what to expect if and when they return to school.

Support for students who have fallen particularly far behind

The most popular idea to support students who have fallen particularly far behind during school closures (see **Figure 7**) was offering small group tuition when schools reopen (44 per cent of teachers voted for this option). The second most popular strategy was offering small group tuition face-to-face whilst schools remain closed to the general school population (31 per cent). Fewer than three per cent of teachers felt that summer schools were the best way to support vulnerable students.

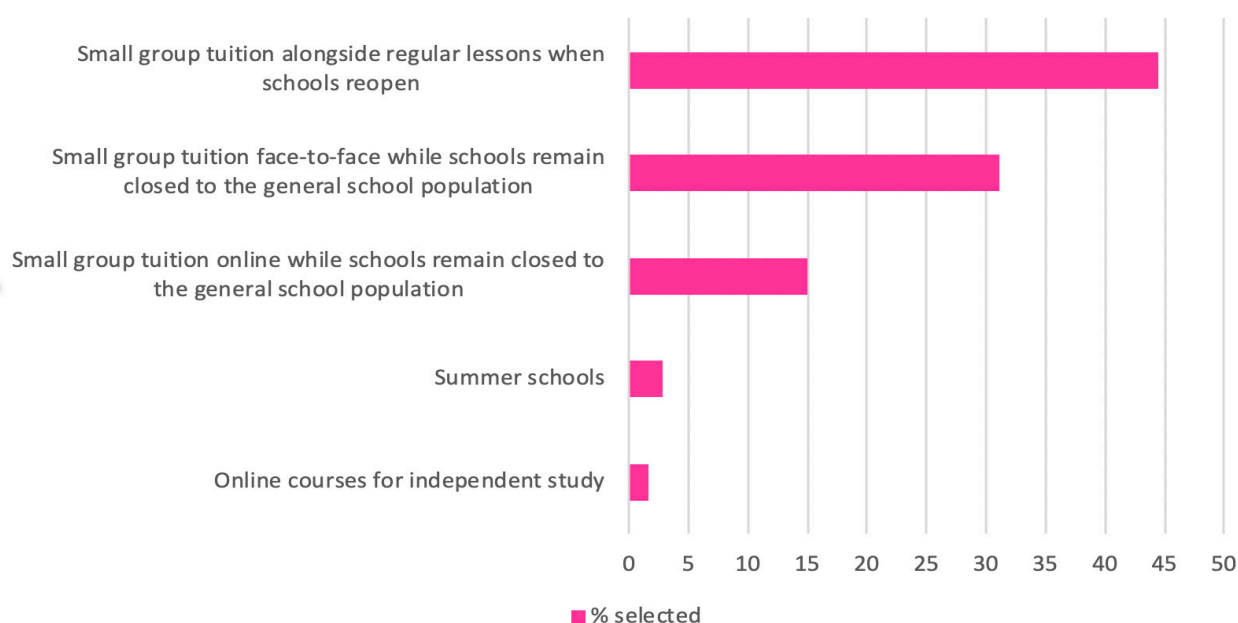


Figure 7: Support for students who have fallen particularly far behind

Other ideas included smaller classes on a long-term basis, so that teachers can work more closely with students who require additional support; additional funding to support students where it is most needed; one-to-one tuition for struggling students; the repetition of the current academic year; multi-faceted approaches including psychologists and social services to address root causes for the issues they are facing; additional classes in mornings and evenings; additional staffing; an amended curriculum to account for the loss of learning during this crisis, or additional subject teachers within lessons so that struggling students are not singled out. The need for personalised approaches was also highlighted, as students may have fallen behind for a range of reasons.

'In a lot of cases, the pupils with Asperger's are doing well as they do not have to cope with the social interaction that they find difficult in school. The pupils with dyslexia are well supported by our SEN leader and various strategies have been put in place to help to support them, such as verbal and written instructions being given, pupils having one-to-one chats with the subject teacher before starting the tasks and teachers being available during class work to ask. We are working in 'Teams' which makes this possible. Others are vulnerable because of anxiety or particular home circumstances. Our pastoral team keeps in touch by phone and email and the heads of year pastoral team meets regularly to share information. When schools reopen we will have all of our one-to-one TA staff back and they will work alongside SEN pupils in regular lessons as well as those pupils who require one-to-one extra sessions just like they did before schools closed. I do not think that there is one solution to supporting the vulnerable group, and schools need to work sensitively and take each individual pupil's situations and needs into account before deciding which is the best course of action to take.'

Some respondents also suggested that older students have to take responsibility for their own disengagement if sufficient learning opportunities were made available to them during lockdown, and that parental engagement needs to increase. For students with SEND, the need to be in school with staff members they are familiar with and they have the habit of working with was emphasised repeatedly. Working in bubbles with teachers they are not familiar with might be less feasible for this group of students.

Teachers' workload and wellbeing

Our survey shows that wellbeing has decreased and workload has increased for many teachers since schools closed for the majority of students (see **Figure 8**). Over 60 per cent of teachers say that their wellbeing has been negatively affected by the lockdown and half say that their workload has increased. Over 60 per cent of teachers report that they are finding it more difficult to balance the demands from work and home life now than before the start of the lockdown. However, almost 25 per cent find it easier now to balance work and family commitments. The data does not provide any insights as to why this might be the case but the lack of a commute and partners being home to support with childcare might be part of a potential explanation for this finding.

This is further supported by answers to the open questions where teachers emphasise the need for politicians, parents, the general public and the media to recognise that schools were never closed and that many teachers are balancing distance learning, key worker provision, additional administrative tasks and homeschooling their own children or caring for vulnerable family members, leading to an unsustainable increase in workload.

'Recognition that teaching workload has increased. Colleagues are setting work online, teaching live lessons via Teams and also in school all at the same time. Workload has increased hugely. Learners and staff are largely left to develop their own strategies for dealing with what is essentially an ongoing trauma situation and this is enormously worrying.'

The need for external agencies to conduct regular home visits to ensure children's safety and for some local authorities to increase their support were mentioned as approaches to decreasing workload. Continuing face-to-face alongside online provision was generally regarded as unmanageable without additional staffing.

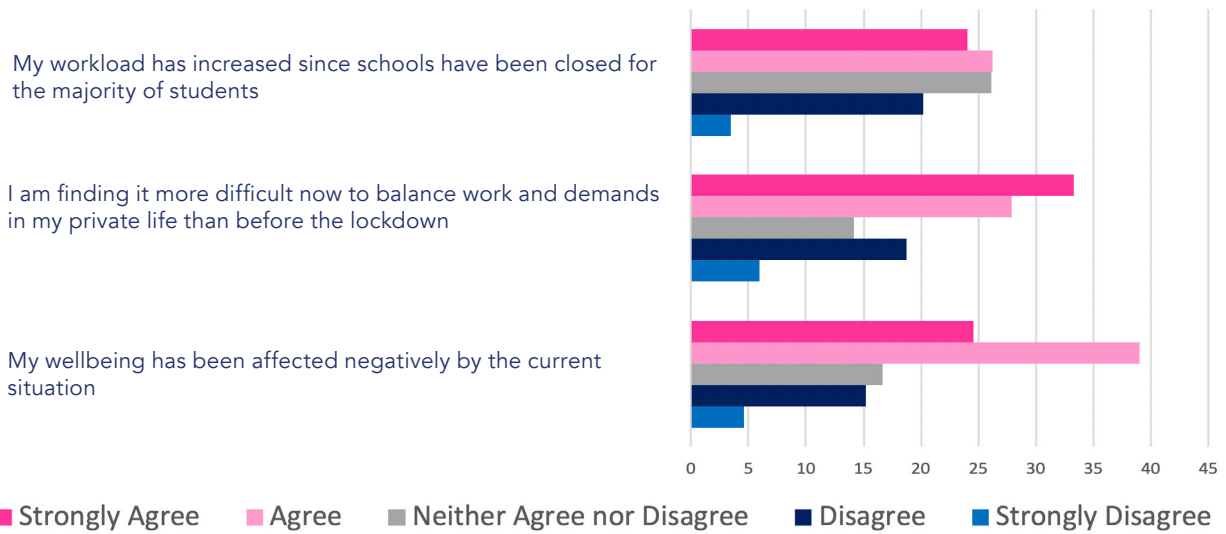


Figure 8: Teacher workload and wellbeing

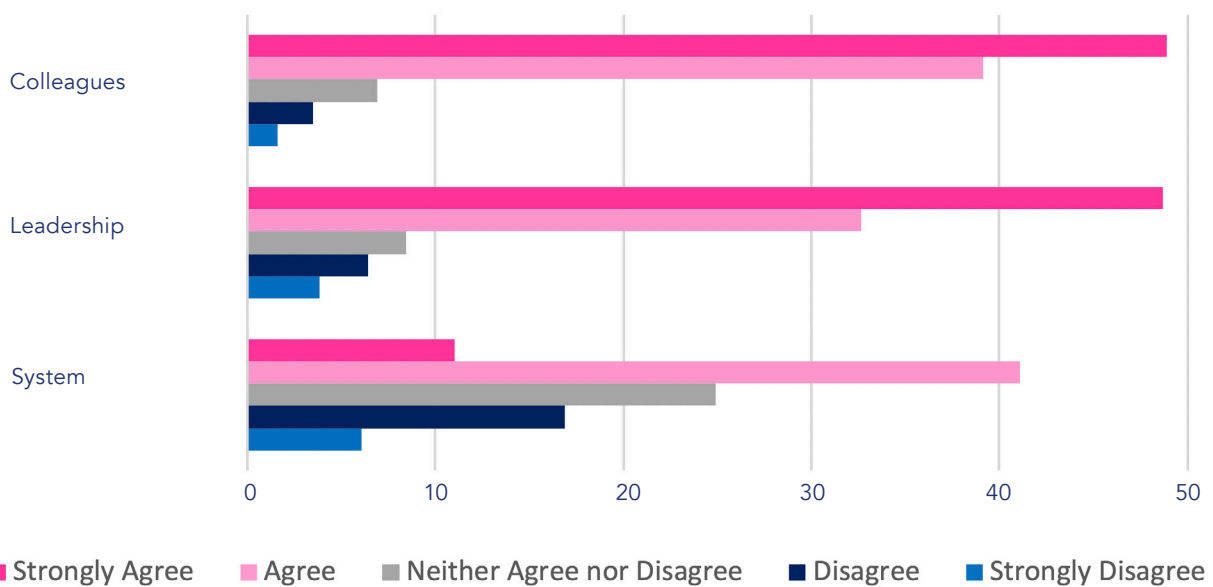


Figure 9: Where do teachers receive support during COVID-19?

In addition to the issue of supporting families beyond student learning discussed above, the following issues were raised as detrimental to the wellbeing of teachers during focus groups.

The role of colleagues, leadership teams and the system more widely

Results show that teachers are generally working effectively to support one another during this crisis (see Figure 9). Almost 90 per cent of teachers agree or strongly agree that they feel supported by their colleagues during this time and over 80 per cent feel supported by their leadership team.

However, providing and receiving peer support is not necessarily straightforward in current times and some notice the lack of a 'staff room culture' for moral support. They note that natural support systems have been removed and in the current context there are no systems in place to easily check in with colleagues. Whilst safety for children has been paramount, staff feel there has not been time to consider teacher wellbeing. Some feel that teaching remotely can feel isolating, whilst teaching in school involves keeping away from colleagues for social distancing reasons. Some school leaders have taken steps to ensure that staff feel connected, particularly those who are shielding and cannot come into school. There are concerns that these staff could feel isolated, guilty for not being able to come into work and could lack a sense of purpose. Therefore, in some cases, school leaders are making regular phone calls to check in with staff members. Some schools find solace in connecting with colleagues at other schools and sharing experiences. Others note that despite adapting to new challenges at work and feeling under increased stress, none of the usual avenues to reduce stress are currently available: for example, visiting friends and family, exercising, going out with friends. This exacerbates the problem, with stress mounting, yet fewer opportunities for outlet.

While most teachers appear to be supporting each other effectively throughout this crisis despite the lack of face-to-face support, some have reported issues of unevenly spread workload among colleagues, less vulnerable staff members dismissing the fears and anxieties of more medically vulnerable colleagues, and a lack of communication between and across teams, which has had a negative impact on their wellbeing.

A lack of communication and empathy, and unrealistic expectations were raised as the main reasons why some teachers feel unsupported by the leadership teams in their schools.

'I do feel that in my school middle leaders have pretty much been left to run their teams and deal with team issues and communication and questions. There has been almost a complete absence of SLT giving advice or communicating with the general teaching staff except for posting notices on a dedicated website and emails. It would be nice if they ran regular online staff meetings, so that consistent messages were given and that they better understood staff issues.'

However, as the below quote illustrates, members of senior leadership teams might receive little to no support from their managers, governors and the system more widely, making it difficult for them to provide the necessary and desired support and guidance to their colleagues. When asked what would support them during this time, one teacher responded:

'For the Principal to listen to me when I say I am struggling. I am on SLT and am currently working 10-13 hours a day with a 2 year old and 3 year old at home.'

Improved communication, more regular check-ins and a better understanding of the increased workload resulting from distance learning and the crisis more generally were suggested as ways to improve support at all levels.

Even though some respondents praised the support that they have received from their local authorities, the DfE, unions and the Chartered College of Teaching, overall the support from the wider education system could be improved. Nearly one quarter of respondents indicated that they did not feel sufficiently supported by the education system during the COVID-19 outbreak. The lack of clear and consistent government guidance was raised as the main reason for this perception.

Negative press

Some respondents described the detrimental effects of negative media coverage and scapegoating by some politicians to their morale and motivation. Participants reported experiencing a 'wave of negativity' towards teachers at a time when they most needed support. Teachers have been left feeling demoralised and upset by newspapers implying that teachers are lazy and uncooperative regarding school

openings. Comments from the general public about teachers currently 'enjoying a long holiday' were perceived by school staff as unwarranted, as many reported that they are facing increased workload and additional stress and anxiety, as well as working throughout school holidays and evenings. Participants worry that the tone of government and media communications about teachers, which leave them feeling unvalued, could have a negative impact on teacher recruitment and retention.

'Our profession will always face criticism and no matter what we do, too many will believe we don't do enough despite the majority of teachers going above and beyond both their contracted duties and contracted hours.'

Teachers expressed that they perceive the government to view schools as childcare rather than places of education and that the government is 'disconnected from the realities of the classroom'. Teachers commented that the negative representation of teachers by the press had caused stress, hurt and anxiety as well as perpetuating an inaccurate image of the profession which undermines the important work that teachers do, and in some cases has been taken on by parents and wider society.

'It's been sad to see that sections of society and the media think teachers are work shy and haven't been working hard during this pandemic. I think this is because many think that the face-to-face element of teaching is all there is to the job, whilst I would say that accounts for around a third of it. The schools education sector needs a better public image, with more information disseminated about the whole of the teacher role.'

As a result of this negative regard for the profession, a number of responses mentioned an intention to resign from teaching or consider early retirement. Others expressed concern over the impact this damaging rhetoric would have on recruitment and retention of other staff as well as the perception and morale of the profession as a whole. An expression of hurt, concern and anger at the way teachers have been treated by wider society was the most common response to this question overall and demonstrates a widespread, deep concern over the discourse surrounding teachers and education.

'I question more and more if I want to be a teacher anymore.'

'From the continual attacks on the profession from the government, in the mainstream media and on social media, at a time when we are all doing our very best to continue our students' education remotely with two days' notice, it has made me decide to leave the profession next year. I've absolutely had enough.'

Challenges with technology

While issues with students not having access to technology have been well documented, participants noted that staff are also having problems with the 'steep and fast learning curve' needed to adapt to using new technology and developing new ICT skills. Teachers have had issues with poor internet access and a lack of training in teaching remotely. Staff feel that the approach so far has been 'firefighting' and reacting to issues as they arise, rather than being able to be proactive and provide carefully planned learning. Not feeling confident with distance learning and the use of technology is also having a negative impact on teachers' wellbeing.

Increased needs of children in special schools

Those working in special schools specifically expressed how the emotional needs of students have widened significantly; some are keen to come back to school whilst others had still not left their bedrooms at the time of the focus group (nine weeks into lockdown). Parents are looking to school staff to support and advise them in how to manage their children's decreased mobility. Staff from special schools expressed that when in school, and even online, many students with additional needs will only work with preferred staff, which puts immense strain on certain individuals who want to be available for their students but must also balance their own home lives and work commitments.

Working in schools throughout the crisis

Staff report that working in school in the current circumstances is both mentally and physically exhausting. Staff are on 'high-alert' and adapting to new ways of working. Some are frightened of being near children in school. Children's responses to this new experience of school can be unexpected and challenging. Some teachers reported that staff have experienced anxiety and panic attacks from coming into school; this has been exacerbated by reports that it is not safe for schools to be open to pupils. Working in school 'bubbles' with the same children all day is particularly challenging for specialist staff. People who have only taught their specialist subject for several years are now expected to teach across the whole curriculum. Meanwhile, some teachers report finding it harder than usual to access multi-agency support - for example, child psychologists, speech and language therapists and police support for domestic violence cases. This puts increased strain on school staff to tackle these issues.

Being a source of advice and information, during uncertain times

School staff feel that their families and communities frequently look to them for answers, yet sometimes the questions they are asked feel unanswerable. Lengthy guidance documents from various sources have been complex to navigate, and school staff did not have adequate time to familiarise themselves with their content before having to face questions, queries and complaints from parents.

Anxiety about future plans and priorities

School staff report concerns about students reintegrating back into school and largely want to prioritise rebuilding relationships with students and supporting their wellbeing when they return. However, teachers are anxious about which areas of the curriculum to cover and how they will help students to catch up. It has also been unclear as to whether additional funding will be available to support schools in facing the challenges created by the pandemic. Furthermore, uncertainty about 2021 examinations and accountability procedures such as Ofsted, make it difficult to plan and prioritise for the 2020/21 academic year and this is creating anxiety and stress for school leaders.

Teachers therefore call for more positivity and recognition of the additional pressures the profession has been under since the lockdown started and the need for additional resources and funding.

02

Teachers' views on school reopening plans

Schools reopening to more students

A few respondents did not agree with the need for partial school closures and were keen for schools to reopen to all students straight away, however most teachers felt that more time and planning needs to take place before schools can safely reopen to more students.

The majority of teachers disagree with the order in which groups of students have returned to school (see **Figure 10**). Over 54 per cent of teachers felt that upper secondary school students should have been the first ones to return to school. Twice as many teachers voted for this age phase than for any other option. The second most popular age group to prioritise was primary school (23 per cent). Only 10 per cent of teachers felt that children in the Early Years should be the first to go back.

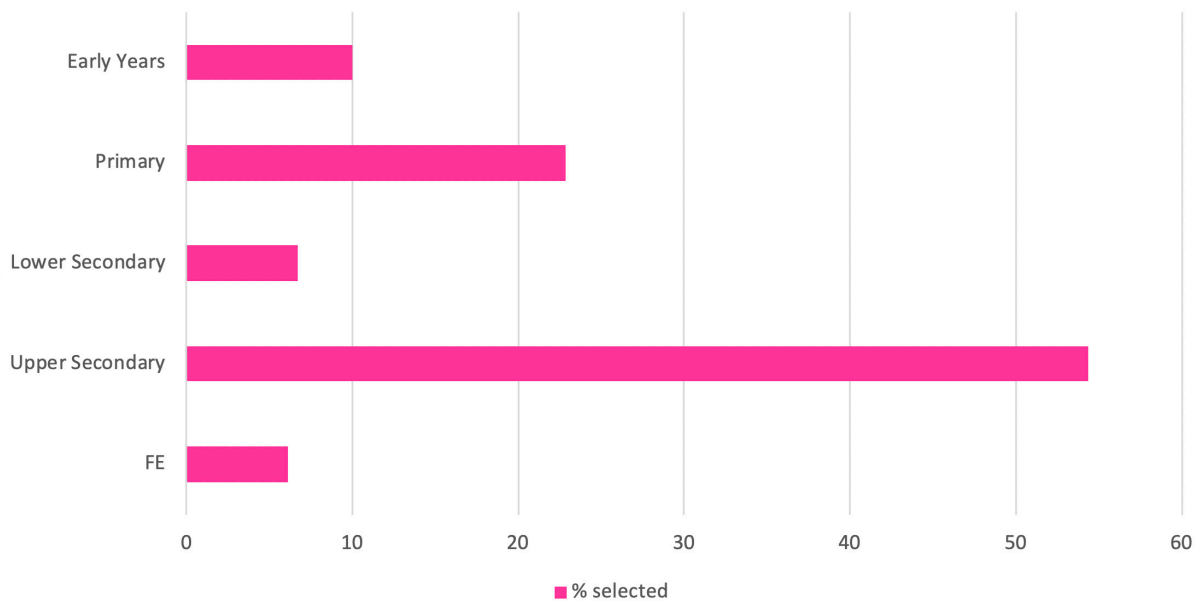


Figure 10: Which phase should be prioritised in a phased return?

Given that the vast majority of responding teachers agree that their most vulnerable students have been most affected by this crisis, it is not surprising that they think that they should be the first ones to return to school if the return of all students in a school/year group is not feasible (see **Figure 11**).

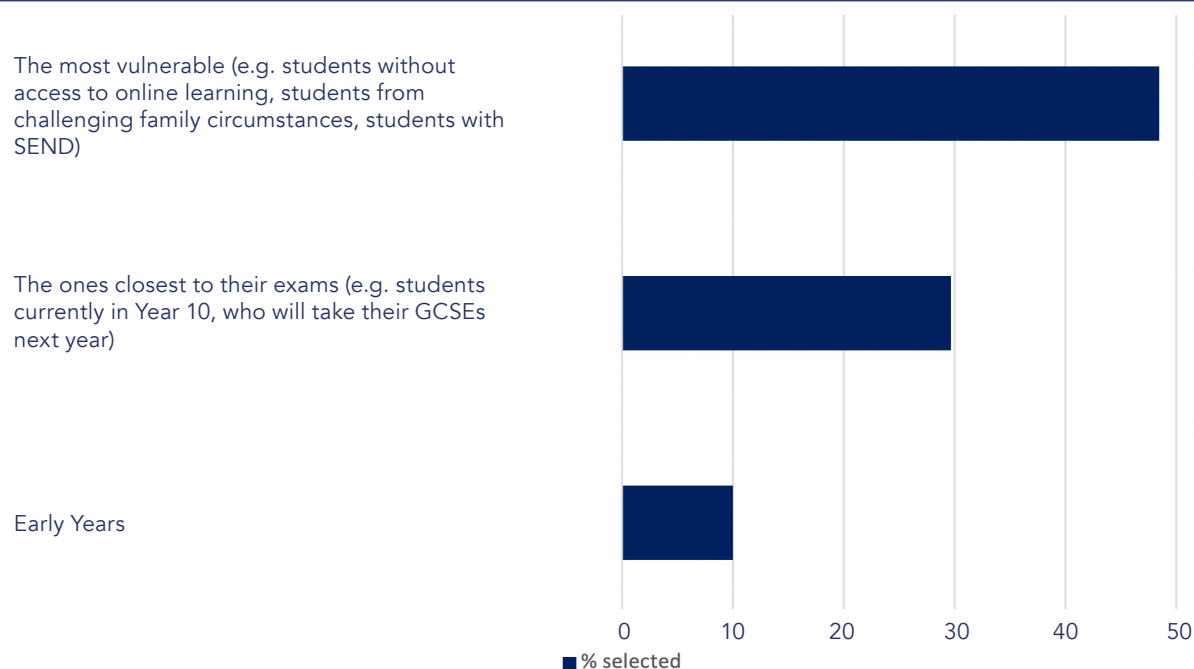


Figure 11: Who should be prioritised when returning to school?

Teachers had mixed views on whether students returning to school on a rota basis, such as alternating days or weeks in school and at home, was a realistic plan that could be implemented in the UK. While nearly half of responding teachers thought it could be implemented, almost 25 per cent thought that it could not, and the remainder were unsure.

Social distancing and hygiene measures

Teachers were provided with a list of safety/hygiene measures that different countries had outlined in their school reopening plans and were asked which of these could realistically be implemented in their settings (see **Figure 12**). Most respondents voted for staggered break times, regular hand washing and use of hand sanitiser, regular cleaning of premises, and making sufficient soap and/or hand sanitiser available to students and staff. However, some schools with particularly limited premises pointed out that they already implement staggered break times due to limited space and would not be able to stagger students any further, and teachers noted that additional budget would need to be made available to provide additional soap or hand sanitiser.

Regular cleaning of surfaces, managing student groups at arrival and at the end of the school day, and keeping safety distances between members of staff in the staff room, was considered realistic by roughly half of respondents. It was noted, however, that additional cleaning would depend on the availability of additional cleaning supplies and cleaning staff.

Roughly one-third of responding teachers thought that teachers wearing face masks and students not sharing any equipment could realistically be achieved in their setting but only 20 per cent thought that students could be asked to wear face masks in their schools.

Respecting safety distances was generally considered to be the least realistic measure, particularly with all students back in school on a full timetable. Only a quarter of

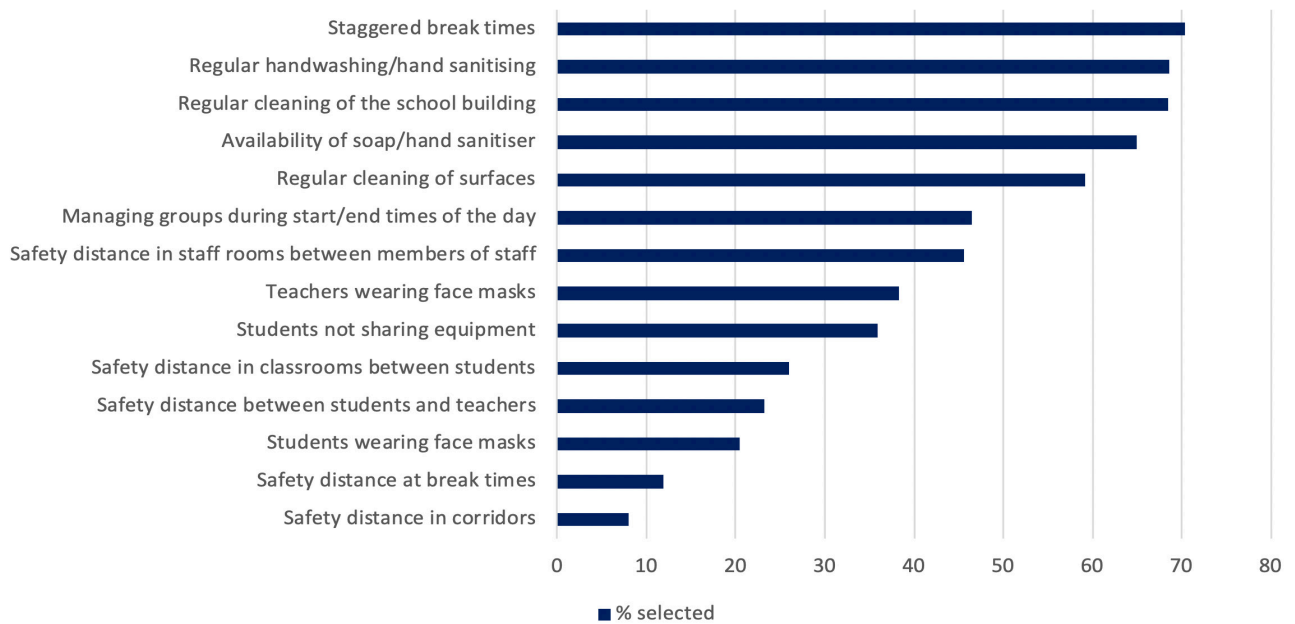


Figure 12: Which safety/hygiene measures can realistically be implemented in schools?

respondents thought that safety distances could realistically be respected between students and between students and staff while in the classroom, and only 12 per cent thought this would be possible during break time. Even fewer (seven per cent) thought that keeping safety distances would be possible in corridors. It was highlighted that it would only be realistic to respect safety distances with fewer students in school.

A question of age/developmental stage

Fewer than one per cent of teachers believe that social distancing measures can realistically be implemented in early years settings and only one per cent think that this could be the case for hygiene measures (see Figure 13).

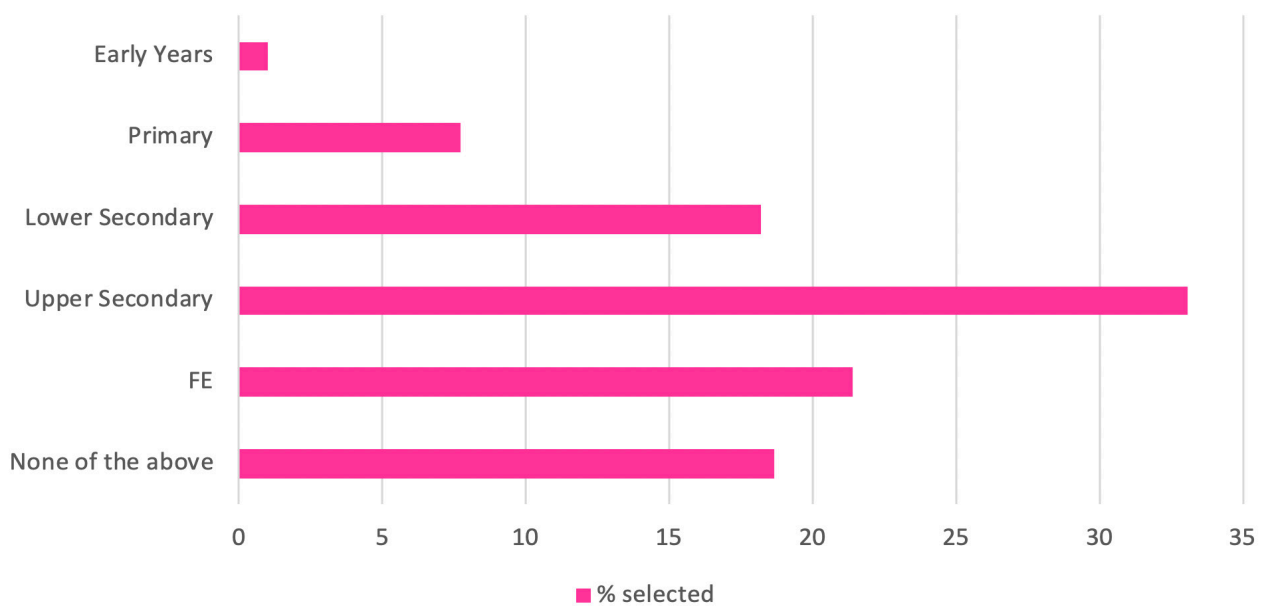


Figure 13: Where can social distancing be implemented?

Fewer than four per cent think that social distancing is realistic in primary schools, and under eight per cent think that strict hygiene measures can be implemented with primary pupils. Teachers felt more confident that these measures could work with older students, however more than two-thirds of teachers still feel that the measures are unrealistic even in secondary and FE settings. It is also clear that children's developmental stage, as much as their age, plays an important role. Teachers from special schools highlighted that many of the students they work with would be unable to understand the need for social distancing, let alone respect it, and the need for assistance in maintaining personal hygiene or in feeding would make it difficult for staff to respect such distances.

The need for clear and consistent government guidance

'We need a solid plan, based on scientific evidence, that allows us to do what is necessary to continue supporting and educating the children. We need to know that the specifics of returning to school have been thought about and that there are solutions for the many problems and issues that lie before us. Currently, this is not in place as many of the issues facing schools don't seem to have a realistically achievable solution with the size of classrooms, number of children needing to go back, short amount of time to prepare, lack of resources, and the feeling of a lack of care from the government for teachers.'

The above quote perfectly captures the main issues that were raised by teachers when asked about the support they needed to tackle the implications of the COVID-19 crisis in their schools. By far the most sought-after support is clear, consistent and honest government guidance that is based on scientific evidence and prioritises student and staff safety. Nearly one-third of respondents explicitly stated that they needed clearer and more consistent government guidance regarding the reopening of schools to more students.

Staff and student safety and time to plan for change

Teachers want to be reassured that schools will only reopen to more students once it is safe to do so, and that their own as well as their families' safety will be taken into consideration in school reopening plans.

'We also need reassurance that we (adults and children) are safe. I am desperate to get back to the children and do my job but not at the cost of my health, my family's health, my students' health, and that of the wider community.'

Teachers feel that evidence on how COVID-19 can spread between students as well as between students and their teachers needs to be considered, and that the risks for teachers and students with underlying health conditions and those sharing homes with vulnerable family members have to be assessed. School leaders and teachers say that they require clear guidance on expectations and requirements regarding school attendance for vulnerable members of staff and students with underlying health conditions and how potential staff shortages will be addressed. They also raise the need for clear plans to be issued for what to do if a staff member or student is diagnosed with COVID-19.

Concise, consistent and timely guidance

'Policy makers need to stop sending lengthy documents with additional guidance out so frequently. You spend time responding to and planning according to one set of guidance then the next day another document is published which makes your previous plans impotent. This causes a great deal of stress and adds a great deal of extra work.'

Teachers and school leaders emphasise that guidance documents should be concise, consistent and convey practical information on expectations for vulnerable/shielding students and teachers as well as clear guidelines on expectations around safety and hygiene measures.

Responding teachers and school leaders found guidance so far to have been inconsistent and unmanageable in volume, with changes not being sufficiently highlighted, creating additional workload. Some also criticised the time and day of the week that guidance documents were previously sent to school leaders (i.e. well after school opening hours on Fridays), which not only meant that they had to work through these documents on weekends but also that they had little possibility or time to involve their colleagues in planning any changes.

The need for sufficient time to plan for change and reopening was raised by 15 per cent of respondents to this survey, particularly school leaders. They highlight the need for guidance to be issued to schools before changes are announced publicly to avoid speculation and the resulting stress and anxiety for school leaders, teachers, parents and students.

'I need there to never again be an announcement about what I will have to do in my setting without the relevant guidance also being published, ideally beforehand. Late evening guidance published days after a headline statement has ruined my ability to plan, to present a safe, knowledgeable face to parents and to sleep.'

They also highlight the need for sufficient time to assess the need for change in their context, train staff, trial a range of different approaches, order necessary new equipment, organise staff rotas, take vulnerable staff members and students into account and clearly communicate any necessary changes to parents and students, to name just a few.

'More time to plan properly for what is in effect a long term change to pedagogy and practice. Time to train our staff. I'd have liked longer to get to grips with online learning (and we were already in a very strong place having used Google Education already). Nine days' notice is just not enough.'

Risk assessments, scientific evidence and realistic, context-specific expectations

Respondents have called for the need to allow for flexibility and context-specific application of guidelines; for example, to take children's development, the nature of their school buildings or the size of their schools into account. However, they are also clear about the necessity for policymakers to take responsibility and relieve pressure from school leaders and require clear, practical guidance on how to create a safe environment for everyone.

Support with risk assessments, such as the creation of a standard risk assessment form, which covers the minimum requirements for a safe school environment and allows for the specificities of each context to be accounted for, was suggested by some as a potential solution. Respondents further called for clear roadmaps that outline the necessary practical steps that need to be taken before schools reopen to more students and once more students are on campus. Some suggested the introduction of safety inspections before schools reopen fully to ensure that schools were compliant.

Teachers also emphasised the need for government guidance to be based on scientific evidence instead of economic priorities, and for this evidence to take the reality of school communities and buildings into account. Or, as one respondent put it: ***'Instead of being guided by the science, they need to be guided by engineers. The science and the practical application of it in schools should not be intervened with by politics. Engineers should apply the science to school settings and only then should the government form policy.'***

Narrow corridors, small classrooms, insufficient ventilation systems, shared equipment, children's ages and developmental stages, and the need for proximity between students and teachers, particularly with younger students, were only some of the issues that were raised by respondents as needing to be taken into account in scientific modelling to ensure that guidance is realistic and practical.

'Our context is a packed, central London school, virtually no outdoor space, narrow corridors. Logistics of distancing are almost impossible. One or two year groups coming back might be the only feasible option but only if/when truly safe for staff, parents and children.'

'I work in a small infant school so the return to school will exclude Year 2 meaning that our school will be full. We need support in understanding how difficult this will be for our small school! Help with staggered mornings or afternoons would help! We are a small community so it is impossible for us to follow government guidance, we need conversation and understanding!'

Teachers in special schools highlight that they need specific and realistic guidance for their contexts and their students as they face particular challenges with some students requiring assistance with their personal hygiene or food intake. They emphasise the need to consider the provision and support students with SEND are currently able to access, the effects this might have on their learning and development and to balance students' needs with potential risks to teachers when they return.

'[...] I teach children who are currently shielding and who need intimate personal care, suctioning, feeding via tube. They don't have their carers at home now and they are the most vulnerable. I'd like these specific children to have their needs planned for.'

Another context that was highlighted by respondents as requiring additional guidance is the boarding school environment, in which students and staff live and work in close proximity to one another, rendering social distancing challenging if not impossible. Middle schools and school libraries were further mentioned as two contexts where little to no guidance is currently available, making it difficult for teachers and school leaders to plan reopening to more students.

Collaboration and trust

In order to develop more realistic guidance that takes the specificity of school contexts into account, respondents to this survey called for a closer collaboration between policymakers and practitioners as well as their representatives. They feel that teachers need to be recognised as the experts that they are and included in discussions.

Furthermore, the issue of trust was raised. Teachers and school leaders want policymakers, parents and other stakeholders in the field to trust them to take the right decision for their contexts, based on their professional experience and expertise.

Concise guidance documents that include a clear, practical and realistic action plan for all contexts would help alleviate the increased stress and anxiety that some teachers and school leaders describe in their responses.

In addition to clearer and more consistent government guidance, teachers also highlight the need for changes to the exam and the accountability system, the need for training and additional funding.

The accountability system

'[...] we need a general understanding that this group of pupils, from [ages] 2.5-19, will be different from others; not worse, not better, just different. We also need a new narrative that academic success is not synonymous with life success. These pupils cannot be judged as individuals based on their academic results alone.'

Respondents emphasise the need for Ofsted inspections and (next year's) exams to be reconsidered or amended to account for the current crisis and the potential learning loss resulting from it. They raise the need to clarify if exams will go ahead in their usual form and if students are expected to 'catch-up'. If that is the expectation, they think it needs to be considered if and how this can realistically be achieved given staff shortages, uneven access to online learning and limited resources. It becomes

clear from answers to this survey that such a goal is only realistic if additional funding, resources and staff are made available and even then, it might be difficult to achieve, particularly for those students who have had little to no access to online learning. Some respondents argued that this crisis should be seen as an opportunity to reconsider the accountability system in the long term.

Additional funding, training and resources

'Financial support and access to physical resources which will enable us to ensure staff and children are safe and can work together effectively.'

Teachers and school leaders stress the need for additional funding and resources to support necessary changes in the short and long term. Their main areas of concern are the need for additional counselling to support students' and teachers' mental health and wellbeing and resources to support home learning. While the majority of responses focus on the need to provide students with laptops and internet access, some also raise issues around teachers' access to working laptops and broadband.

Adequate resources to support students wellbeing

Teachers and school leaders are concerned about the long term impact of the coronavirus crisis on students' mental health. They want to work alongside charities, external agencies and experts such as psychologists to provide the ongoing support their pupils need, and train staff as necessary; for example in mindfulness and supporting traumatised children. They recognise that this requires investment both financially and in terms of time – schools want the government to support them in this. It is recognised that for some students, the return to school will be overwhelming, many will need some 1:1 support or group intervention. Budget cuts in recent years mean that at some schools, support staff who would have provided this type of support were made redundant - teaching staff were protected whereas pastoral support was reduced. Primary schools reported that in their current small groups of key worker's children, they had made sure each child had daily 1:1 time with an adult and plenty of circle time activities focused on emotions, however this level of provision would not be possible when more children return to school as there would not be enough staff.

'We need to know that there is money available to help schools where it is needed e.g. purchase of IT equipment to allow for students to continue to work asynchronously in school. Allowing those who need to, to catch up and those who can carry on can.'

Many teachers communicated that they did not have prior experience in supporting grieving or traumatised children, but in the current context are aware of students in these situations. Teachers are keen to receive training on the wider issues of the pandemic and the potential mental health issues it creates. Some school staff had undertaken online bereavement training which they found helpful and believe should be rolled out more broadly. Other suggest that a scheme should be written by experts, which helps teachers support traumatised children.

Planning ahead

Many schools have already begun to discuss how best to support their students. Over half of respondents said their schools were planning how to help children make transitions to new classes and year groups. Over 44 per cent had been involved in discussion about curriculum changes to account for missed learning. Around 40 per cent are planning specific support for students who were bereaved or traumatised.

However, there is still a lot more planning to be done. Under 40 per cent of teachers reported that their teams or schools are thinking about how to support children who may struggle to reintegrate, specific support for children who have fallen behind, and making changes to the timetable to allow for more socio-emotional learning to take place.

03

Teachers' views on potential long-term implications for education and teaching

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, the scale of school closures is unprecedented and the experience of partial school closures and online learning has likely had an impact on how teachers' perceive education and their profession. In our survey, we wanted to know from teachers how and if the current crisis has influenced their views of education, the profession and how either should change or has already changed as a result of the crisis.

Strength and adaptability of the profession

Many respondents commented that the situation had brought to their attention how flexible and adaptable the teaching profession is and how proud they felt of this achievement. Participants talked about hard work, dedication and strategic school/ local leadership across the sector and how rapidly and willingly teachers had made changes. Respondents felt that teachers' response to the crisis had been swift and effective. They noted how schools had 'risen to exceptional challenges' by being prepared to learn in new ways, being creative and collaborative and making the best of any situation, always putting the needs of children at the heart of what they do.

Vital role of schools in society

Many responses to this question reflected on how the crisis has demonstrated the important role schools play in local communities, and the work that schools do across a range of areas beyond education.

'Schools are at the heart of community life and I joined the teaching profession to be of service to society.'

Schools were described as 'vital services' as well as places of 'safety, structure and opportunity' and common responses talked about schools being more than education providers and providing social and emotional support to children and families as well as meeting wider societal needs, playing multiple roles in the local community.

'It has demonstrated the fundamental role that schools play in wider society; teachers and school leaders perform a major role in supporting the most vulnerable in our communities – more recognition, support and resources are needed.'

Some felt that this responsibility has increased as other services have been defunded, and that schools are increasingly taking on board social care responsibilities.

The importance of relationships and social contact

Respondents talked about how this experience has helped them to realise the importance of the social aspect of learning, and how vital relationships are in the classroom. Interactions between students and between students and teachers, as well as group collaboration were listed as some of the most beneficial learning strategies that they felt were missing from remote teaching. Some felt that these learning and social relationships were particularly important for vulnerable students.

'Face-to-face relationships are crucial, regular contact and interaction is so important.'

'I don't believe that there is any substitute for the working relationships we build with our students within the classroom. I am not able to provide the same on-the-spot support and encouragement that I can when teaching normally, it is far harder to adapt a remote lesson to address learners' needs.'

Teachers expressed in their responses that this crisis has shown that schools are as important for children's social development, as they are for their educational attainment, and that being part of a school community is beneficial for wellbeing as well as for learning.

'The constant learning dialogue and challenging questions that take place during whole class teaching sessions are essential. Children need each other's ideas to spark ideas in their own learning.'

'The classroom brings a great mix of different attitudes, values, beliefs and views which contributes to the facilitation of learning – being with friends and peers is important for growth.'

The value of time spent at home, and the importance of the home-school relationship

Whilst teachers felt that face-to-face time in school was vital, there was also an acknowledgement that many children have gained a lot from spending extended time at home with their families.

Some felt that particular children were thriving at home, many enjoyed working at their own pace and having more ownership over their learning, others were reported to be more engaged.

'Some students have thrived in lockdown due to increased independence and autonomy and reduced distraction – we need to change the way we work with them on their return to school to give them greater independence in their learning.'

'Some pupils have thrived with greater independence and flexibility; worth remembering in the one-size-fits-all approach that broadly characterises institutional education.'

Others felt that children had learnt important skills at home such as cooking, gardening and arts and crafts. Many commented that having more time to play and be with family was beneficial for development.

'It has shown me how many different and wonderful creative skills our pupils are capable of, that they have only discovered by having the time at home with their family to try them out.'

'Do not underestimate how much children learn from being at home, playing with their families and the experiences home can provide.'

Thus, many comments reflected on the importance of the home-school relationship and a motivation to develop and maintain the links between home and school. The

positive impact that parents can have on their child's education and the importance of their role has been reaffirmed for many teachers who want to ensure parents are actively involved with their child's learning.

Teachers commented that they had made more connections and had better communication with parents as a result of this crisis and that this is something they want to prioritise in future.

'Video communication with teachers is very powerful. We now have a bank of videos to support parents with play at home. It is a brilliant (non threatening) way of communicating and videos back to us are a fantastic way of seeing learning progress at home.'

'Community relationships really improved. I feel ever closer to my families.'

Technology providing new opportunities and solutions

Another common response was an expression of positivity at the opportunities and solutions technology has provided during the crisis. Respondents reflected on the success of different aspects of remote teaching and online communication, and the potential for embedding these into ongoing practice.

'I see so much potential of working online and I think we can do less face-to-face to enable better work-life balances for all, and to also build student independent learning skills which are often lacking!'

Many respondents commented that the availability of online professional development had been excellent and that meetings conducted online had been more efficient than those happening in school, as well as helping to promote a better work/life balance by cutting down on travel time. It was noted that governors meetings and those involving other schools could remain online in future. Parent meetings that had taken place via video conferencing had also been successful.

Providing materials online and video recording teaching was seen as a good opportunity for tackling pre-planned absence such as teachers needing cover whilst on a school trip or schools closed due to snow. Recording lessons was also viewed as a good way of building up a bank of resources to draw on in future years, for students who cannot attend school and for students to look back on for revision. Some teachers had also been sharing recorded lessons with other schools so that they could make use of them, whilst teachers of younger pupils had shared videos with parents, demonstrating and supporting ways to play and communicate with their child at home. It was noted that when specialist teaching staff could not be recruited for face-to-face delivery, online lessons could be utilised.

'We could use banks of online lessons to give pupils who are excluded internally or externally high-quality resources to learn and continue their learning when at home or on the school premises.'

'The developments in home learning are the silver lining. This will I hope improve our practice in the future, improving parental engagement in education, broadening our idea of what "homework" might be, and how and where we can learn.'

'I am becoming a lot more tech-savvy and I think that it will change how we do a number of things, particularly around assessment and provision of a knowledge-rich curriculum where pupils are required to work more independently but with support. We have a high number of pupils who are not regular attendees in college, and I feel like I now have some good lessons that I can use in future years with pupils who struggle to attend.'

Online platforms, for example Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams, were seen as useful tools to use on an ongoing basis for setting and marking work and many teachers want to continue using such technology for homework. Teachers also

expressed an interest in using more flipped learning, online tuition, mentoring and counselling via video conferencing, online interventions and online quizzes on a more permanent basis.

Remote learning, or blended learning was considered a good strategy to use in future in order to provide provision for students absent for medical reasons or with other additional needs such as behavioural or emotional difficulties which may make attending school problematic. It was also seen as a good strategy for encouraging more independent learning and for allowing students to work through material at their own pace. Therefore many teachers' responses to this question expressed that they were keen to continue with online projects and assignments for students.

Workload and flexible working

Some teachers described feeling that teaching remotely had improved work-life balance, and that this is something they were keen to maintain.

Many teachers and school leaders felt that the experience of lockdown had shown that aspects of their job could be carried out effectively from home, and that this should be considered as a future possibility, bringing teaching in line with other industries which promote flexible working.

Teachers felt that offering more flexibility and work-life balance would improve staff wellbeing, the recruitment and retention of school staff as well as cutting costs and creating greater efficiency and productivity.

'Staff have worked successfully from home and I believe this would benefit teacher workload and stress levels moving forward. All colleagues have reported being more productive working from home as opposed to working in cramped noisy staff rooms where distraction is high. Having the flexibility to plan your work around your own needs throughout the week has been most helpful and working off-site for PPA would be a small step towards this style of working.'

The situation has also prompted teachers to reflect on which aspects of their job created unnecessary workload. For many, teaching remotely involved less paperwork and marking and they are now questioning whether returning to these labour intensive practices would have a beneficial impact on student learning.

'We were on a treadmill that could not be sustained long term. We completed lots of paperwork which now seems unnecessary and I hope this can be changed long term.'

Exams and accountability

The present situation has allowed time for many teachers and school leaders to reflect on existing systems and structures in education and the extent to which these are effective. Many responses commented on the need to adapt existing systems.

'We were working at a ridiculous pace, neglecting what really matters. The joy of learning was disappearing in a cloud of targets, efficiency and expectations.'

The most commonly mentioned area in need of reform was the use of exams and formal assessments. Also commonly referred to were accountability measures, including Ofsted. Teachers expressed that high-stakes exams and accountability procedures were not conducive to the development of pedagogy and professionalism, and that teachers and pupils would work just as hard without these systems in place.

'Here is a fantastic opportunity to radically review and rebalance our education system away from high-stakes testing and competitive results tables which we know don't work and are grossly unfair. Let's bin Progress 8 and have Ofsted working together with families of schools to grow trust and capacity in a systems'

approach to education.'

'The obsession with league tables, constant assessment and rote learning has not prepared students for the skills they need in a changing world – resilience, a focus on mental health, and independent thinking and learning skills.'

Some teachers felt that high-stakes, terminal exams were not only a distraction from other, other forms of learning but that they are also ineffective at raising standards and that they may not be the best way to assess student progress. Many reasons were mentioned for this including that they encourage pupils to 'cram' for a final exam rather than being motivated to work hard throughout the entire course, as they would if they had continuous assessments. Research projects and modular assessments and assignments were viewed by many as more accurate methods of assessment which also provide students with opportunities to develop useful skills such as independent learning.

Responses expressed that the use of teacher assessments this year provides an opportunity to think about using this on an ongoing basis. Teachers want to be respected and trusted as professionals able to make assessment decisions about their students' progress and attainment.

'This experience raises significant questions about the future role of examinations – are so many needed given the burden of stress and anxiety it places on all those involved? Has this experience proven that teacher assessment has a rightful place in informing a students' final grade?'

'Trust in teachers to make the best decisions, especially around assessment. We need to trust their judgements more and not be tied to formal assessments which put unnecessary stress on an already stressful profession. Students have proved they can still make incredible progress without the need to jump through a set of hoops in a curriculum which is based around testing.'

Some teachers urged for formal assessments in primary schools to be abandoned so that teachers could refocus more time and energy on developing the whole child.

'I have never believed in the high pressure testing system in Primary settings and I do not believe this has improved standards. We must maintain rigour but not the test system. Primary school children are tested nationally in all year groups except Year 3 and Year 5, this drives a false learning situation which lurches to each test rather than building on prior learning and child-centred growth and successes.'

Some felt that the education system has become too dominated by an exam culture.

'It has strengthened my view that education now is too far defined by assessment and exams and achievement in those and evidencing this and evidencing progress. Education needs to be about learning in a broader sense. There is an opportunity now to move away from high stakes exams and internal assessment and focus more on developing more creative approaches to teaching and learning.'

Fears are that this exam culture has led to a narrowing of the curriculum, a prevalence of 'spoon-feeding' over independent learning, and an increase in workload and stress for teachers, as well as negative effects on pupil wellbeing.

'What I and other colleagues have determined is that, for too long, we have taught towards an exam and that this has led to a spoon fed approach. Lack of creative thinking and independent actions has become evident with every step needing to be broken down to the simplest of tasks. Education is more than grades and we should be looking to grow wisdom as well as knowledge.'

Regarding Ofsted, many respondents felt that the COVID-19 crisis showed it was not necessary to have a 'threat' of being inspected and judged, in order to motivate

teachers and schools to work hard and with rigour. There were suggestions for reform, with Ofsted working in a more supportive capacity and ensuring that directives are in the best interests of children, teachers and their wellbeing. Respondents expressed the 'relief' that was felt in recent weeks, when the pressure of possible Ofsted inspections was removed, and that they appreciated being trusted to make their own decisions about what students need at the current time.

'I think we do need a regulatory system to ensure schools are always providing a good education but this doesn't need to be based on data or a two-day inspection. This is the time for policymakers to bring the system into the current day.'

Potential implications for the curriculum

The curriculum is another area that was commonly cited as needing review and reform. Multiple responses mentioned the need to slow down and strip back the curriculum so that less is covered. This was particularly the case for the primary school curriculum.

Some teachers felt that time would be better spent getting children deeply secure in the basics rather than racing to cover such a huge volume of content, and that more time should be afforded to a broad range of subjects including practical activities and life skills, as well as developing attributes and competencies such as independence, problem solving, resilience and strategies for looking after mental health, which they considered vital for the future. Teachers who felt that they had instilled independent learning skills in their students could see the benefits during lockdown, while some others expressed their realisation of how important it is in future for students to be given time and support to develop time management, planning and independent learning strategies.

'It reiterates that the purpose of school is as much about shaping and guiding the person, encouraging positive character traits and relationships, as it is about the acquisition of knowledge.'

'Education should not be centred around EBACC subjects and should place more emphasis on wellbeing and growing as a person. Skills such as keeping motivation, self-organisation and resilience should be placed at the forefront of the curriculum and taught through all subjects.'

'A narrow test-lead curriculum does not create independent learners. A curriculum centred on life skills and emotional intelligence better prepares students for the demands of a modern economy.'

Many teachers felt that while core knowledge was important, schools should be afforded more flexibility with what they cover beyond that. In some cases, teachers had been inspired by the learning that parents had led at home, coming to the conclusion that the school curriculum is limiting and reduces the time teachers have to get to know their students well.

'School staff are incredibly creative but the curriculum is so packed and so much time is spent doing pointless things that we don't get to explore what could be done in a more flexible way. We have an incredible chance to harness so much cooperation and creative work if we're only given the time to do this.'

'We have been teaching in such a way to stifle individuality, creativity, self-motivation in most children. We've created a compliant school cohort but at the cost of the ability to learn independently; we've directed children so closely, curiosity has been stifled. Interestingly what is working best for many children has been led by parents who are curious and creative; teachers who have adapted and built in flexibility and choice to the work posted online.'

Some teachers' responses argued there is a need for a more holistic and child-centred curriculum which would prepare students more effectively for their lives ahead.

'I feel like the experience of distance learning and having to dramatically rethink curriculum implementation gives us the perfect opportunity to design a curriculum based more on children's development and to include more outdoor learning and physically active lessons throughout school rather than just for our youngest children.'

However, importantly, some respondents felt that this crisis has reinforced their belief in the current system and curriculum priorities

'It has reinforced my belief in the importance of rigorous examinations'.

Wellbeing

Teachers highlighted the importance of staff and student wellbeing and the need to put this at the heart of educational policies and practices.

Some teachers realised the importance of self-care and prioritising their own wellbeing, and felt that in the past they had put their role in school before their own mental health. Others felt that this crisis has helped them see that health and happiness were more important than many of the things they focused on or worried about as part of their role in school.

'It taught me that the things I fear most and cause the toxicity and stress that leave our profession with a retention and recruitment crisis (league tables, tests and Ofsted) were the first and most dispensable things in education for primary children. I will remember this; I am a lot less afraid.'

Teachers expressed that they were keen to focus more on mental health with their students when schools reopen, and that this shouldn't be seen as less important than academic attainment. They would like to see student wellbeing higher on the agenda and recognised as an important part of the educational experience for every child.

'I think we can never forget the impact mental health has on pupils' ability to do well at school. Relationships are the foundation of it all.'

'There has to be a greater balance between monitoring and accountability and children and staff wellbeing. We know what children need to thrive and we should not be made to compromise our principles based on government or OFSTED directives that we know are not in the best interest of the children. Life is precious and we should enjoy every minute of it.'

Others wanted to see policies and structures which more explicitly supported the mental health of teachers.

'There needs to be a better balance between academic progress and supporting the wellbeing of everybody.'

'I believe that teacher and staff health and wellbeing needs to be considered more valuable and taken more seriously by leadership in schools as well as the government.'

Responses indicated that teachers see the arts, play, time with family, pursuing hobbies and interests, outdoor learning and exercise as helpful tools in promoting pupil wellbeing, and that they want to focus on these strategies and rebuilding trust and relationships with and between students as a priority.

Raised awareness of inequality and vulnerable students

Some respondents reflected that this experience has increased their awareness of inequalities in their student population and how much these inequalities affect learning.

Teachers said that they have become more aware of vulnerable students and the specific difficulties that they face. Access to technology, access to outdoor space and levels of support at home were reported to vary widely between students. Some teachers felt that the current education system exacerbates these inequalities and penalises vulnerable students.

'The inequality that exists in education is systematic and has not been addressed appropriately, indeed it has been worsened/widened by the haphazard process of academisation.'

Teachers called for a stronger emphasis on prioritising the most vulnerable pupils, including being proactive in preparing for any future crises by ensuring that funding is in place to enable all students to have access to internet connectivity and suitable devices for home learning. Responses showed an eagerness to learn more about how to support disadvantaged students most effectively and how to make education more equitable, and identified the need for funding in order to action this.

'We have been ignoring the trauma that many children face in everyday life for too long. We need to start addressing this.'

Discussion and conclusion

Teachers' views on distance learning

It is encouraging to see that the majority of participating teachers feel confident in planning and delivering online learning and providing effective feedback from a distance. However, a significant minority may require additional training as suggested by the finding that 20 per cent do not feel adequately supported to provide online education. Training in online teaching was one of the most requested types of training, which corresponds to findings from a recent survey conducted by TES (Roberts, 2020), in which 75 per cent of teachers indicated a need for more training in online teaching. Live online teaching, remote teaching techniques, video creation, voice-overs for presentations, the use of digital platforms, online worksheets, the use of technology for student support and the use of online whiteboards appear to be the areas where teachers have the highest need for training. Given that high-quality CPD can have a positive impact on teachers' effectiveness and is also correlated with greater self-efficacy (OECD, 2019), which in turn affect student achievement and teacher wellbeing, it seems particularly important to provide teachers with adequate training in distance learning, especially as many teachers expressed that they would like to continue using these strategies even after schools fully reopen. Ensuring all staff are confident in remote teaching will also enable schools to be proactive in planning for any future school closures.

Given the importance of positive teacher-student relationships and good teacher-parent communication (Kraft and Dougherty, 2013; Reyes et al., 2012; Rudasill et al., 2006) for students' academic and socio-emotional development, it is further encouraging to see that most teachers in this survey report that they continue to feel connected to their students and find them relatively easy to reach. It is concerning, however, that 20 per cent of teachers are not able to reach their students on a regular basis, as this might negatively affect their students' levels of engagement with school and learning. The important role of external agencies to support teachers was raised repeatedly in this context.

The results also show that regular contact with parents and families is not only a way for teachers to support their students' learning and to assure their safeguarding but can also serve the purpose of assisting their communities. This suggests that some schools have become nodes of support for their communities during this time, a role that is commonly taken on by schools across the world during crises or hardship (Skovdal and Campbell, 2015) but one that also requires adequate resources and training so that teachers and schools are not overwhelmed by the additional responsibilities they are taking on. As Skovdal and Campbell (2015) argue, schools cannot be perceived as 'magic bullets' that can resolve complex social problems on their own. The potential long-term consequences of this new role for parent-school relationships also needs to be considered.

The effect of partial school closures on student learning is clearly a concern for teachers in this survey. Nearly all teachers are worried about at least some of their students and their access to online learning, confirming previous concerns about a digital gap affecting students' learning during this crisis (Cullinane and Montacute, 2020). Another issue that emerged in this study is that some teachers also lack access to adequate digital devices or the internet. Overall, these results support findings from past research and modelling studies which show that unplanned school closures can have a negative impact on students' learning, particularly those from more deprived backgrounds (Connolly, 2013; Aroob Iqbal et al, 2020; Marcotte and Hemelt; 2007; Myers and Thomasson, 2017). A recent rapid evidence review estimates that the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students might widen on average by 36 per cent (EEF, 2020b). As this study used teacher estimates rather than a direct assessment of student performance, it will be important for future research to use direct measures of student learning to determine the exact scale of the impact.

The crisis also seems to have had some positive effects on learning, as teachers report that some of their students have become more proactive in their learning, developed new skills - including increased IT literacy - and engaged in new forms of learning. This highlights the important role the home learning environment can play in children's learning and development, and the need to create stronger links between home and school learning environments (Lehrl et al., 2020). It seems important that schools recognise and celebrate the wide range of learning that students have engaged in during the lockdown period, which could include knowledge and skills that are more closely linked to the curriculum such as literacy and numeracy, or those that are a bit further removed such as cooking, gardening or developing children's home language skills and that parents are encouraged to continue engaging with their child's learning. However, it is equally important to note that this finding shines a light on the unequal experiences that students are having during this period. While some have access to online learning and the support and resources to develop new skills, others do not, and this will need to be considered when schools open to more students.

Teachers in this study generally found those strategies that are widely considered to be effective in face-to-face teaching (e.g. feedback; Hattie and Zierer, 2019) are also effective in the current distance learning context, which supports the finding that the quality of teaching is more important than the mode of delivery (EEF, 2020a). It is also shown that teachers use a range of different teaching methods, from live online teaching to facilitating more independent learning, which suggests that they use their professional judgment to decide which approach best suits the task and their students, a recommendation made by the EEF rapid evidence review on distance learning (EEF, 2020a).

Most teachers reported concern over the wellbeing of at least some of their students, and one-third think that the wellbeing of most or all of their students has been negatively affected. This is of great concern. While large groups of students are clearly coping well with this situation and some might even be thriving, a significant proportion are struggling and may require additional support when returning to school. This might be due to bereavement, domestic abuse, stress or a range of other factors and is in line with WHO's acknowledgement (2020) that children are likely to experience worries and fears due to this crisis. Stress and grief can negatively affect students' behaviour, their impulse control, their ability to plan, problem solve and their monitoring skills (Gibbs et al., 2019; Vogel and Schwabe, 2016).

This will need to be taken into account as schools reopen to more students, and teachers highlight the need for flexibility and time to plan and deliver the right support for their students. The need for a focus on students' mental health and wellbeing was clearly highlighted as a priority by respondents to this survey. As this study used teachers instead of self-report, we cannot know exactly how students feel about this crisis. But research on students has suggested that existing mental health issues have been exacerbated as a result of lockdown (YoungMinds, 2020).

Students with special educational needs are one of the groups teachers in this survey were particularly worried about as some may have been particularly affected by the disruption to their usual routines. For example, research suggests that stressful

or traumatic events can have a particularly strong negative impact on individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and that they are more likely than their neurotypical peers to develop subsequent mental health disorders following such events (Berg, 2016). Furthermore, the exposure to stressful or traumatic events can lead to concentration difficulties, social isolation or increased stereotypic or repetitive behaviours in individuals with ASD (Bishop Fitzpatrick et al., 2015; Mehtar and Mukkades, 2011). Stress exposure has also been found to exacerbate symptoms of ADHD in the long-term (Hartman et al., 2019) and may affect language processing (Sirianni, 2004), which might have a particular impact on children with speech and language disorders. This suggests that some children with special educational needs may require more time and a personalised approach to settling back into school routines. Arrangements for these students, such as expectations for full-time attendance straight away, may need to differ from the standard guidance produced for other pupils. The need for familiar faces, rooms and possibly a staggered return for these students was raised by teachers working in special schools who took part in this survey.

Teacher wellbeing

The wellbeing of some teachers has clearly been affected negatively by this crisis. Workload has increased for about half of responding teachers and while some report that they can juggle family and work commitments better now than before the start of the lockdown, this is not the case for the majority. Additional workload from supporting distance learning, additional pressures resulting from schools expanding their role as 'nodes of support' for their communities, the negative press, a lack of a 'staffroom culture' challenges with technologies and anxieties about the future are mentioned as drivers for this negative impact on wellbeing. The importance of peer and school support is further highlighted. Overall, these findings support previous research which showed that teachers' wellbeing may be particularly affected as a result of responding to crises within the education system (Borntrager et al., 2012; Pfefferbaum et al., 2004a; 2004b; Zhang et al. 2016) and highlights the important role of peer support (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004a; 2004b). Going forward, sufficient time should be made for teachers to talk to each other and support each other through these challenging times and, where needed, professional support needs to be made available.

School reopening plans

The recently published guidance for full school reopenings from September (DfE, 2020) will be welcomed by many teachers and school leaders who highlighted the need for such guidance in this survey. However, as highlighted by teachers in this survey, student and teacher safety is paramount and it will be important to monitor the development of COVID-19 to ensure that schools are indeed safe to return to in September.

Respondents to this survey have made it clear that schools' individual contexts need to be taken into account when planning the reopening of schools to more students, which is also recognised by this newly published guidance. It highlights that leaders of education settings are best placed to implement the systems of control in a way that best suits their settings and the need to work closely with their community. This is a welcome recognition of teachers' and school leaders' expertise while also providing the necessary practical guidance on how to create a safe school environment. It is important that school leaders are supported adequately throughout this process.

The guidance recognises the difficulty of implementing social distancing in a school context, which echoes the concerns of respondents to this survey. The guidance suggests a system of bubbles to address this issue, which has been implemented during partial school closures this summer term. Unfortunately, our survey does not provide any insights on how well this system is currently working in schools and whether it is realistic to implement it once all students are back in schools. It does, however, raise questions about siblings who can be part of different bubbles according to this guidance and how this might affect a school's ability to track and trace the people a child was in contact with, should they be diagnosed with COVID-19. Furthermore, it remains unclear how the safety of students and teachers

will be assured on public transport during rush hour if they are expected to attend school during normal school hours or how staggered start and end times can best be managed.

One of the main concerns teachers have raised around schools reopening to more students is staff and student safety, and even though the guidance states that the teaching profession has not been found to be particularly affected (in terms of infection rate) by COVID-19 in comparison to other professions it needs to be considered that schools have had significantly fewer students and teachers on their premises over the past three months, which might have affected those results. It will be important to carefully monitor over the next two months what emerging retrospective cohort studies of schools before lockdowns (e.g. Fontanet et al. 2020a; Fontanet et al., 2020b) can teach us about the spread of COVID-19 in schools to ensure that schools are indeed safe to reopen to all students in September.

While the majority of staff members are expected to be able to return to schools in September according to this guidance, it will be important that authorities remain in close contact with schools in their area so information about any spikes in infection and what they imply for extremely clinically vulnerable staff and students can be communicated effectively. This will be particularly important in cases where members of staff may have to revert to shielding as cover will need to be organised. Respondents suggested that additional funding will be required to cover the costs for any additional staff cover due to staff absences because of health concerns.

It is also positive that the guidance recognises the particular social and emotional challenges arising for some children with SEND and the need to support these children by allowing for additional flexibility such as phased returns. As the discussion above and responses to the survey and the focus groups show, children with SEND might be particularly affected by the disruption of routines and require closer contact with teachers for personal hygiene or feeding, which will require a different, possibly more gradual approach to reopening. The detailed guidance for residential settings is also welcome as teachers working in those settings have highlighted a lack of guidance thus far.

Respondents to this survey had concerns about a narrowing of the curriculum as a result of this crisis and a sole focus on 'catching-up', so it is positive to see that the expectation is for a broad and balanced curriculum to be taught and for the focus to be on curriculum changes within subjects, rather than some subjects being neglected for the benefit of others. In addition to the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum for a well-rounded education and children's socio-emotional development, previous research has highlighted the additional value that subjects such as philosophy, psychology or the arts can bring in times of crisis as they can help students to process past events (Broberg et al., 2005). This was also emphasised by respondents to this survey and focus group participants.

Teachers in this study repeatedly highlighted the need for additional funding to support students' learning and wellbeing upon a return to school and to create a safe school environment. The 'catch-up funding' seems to cover the learning aspect but it is yet unclear if additional resources will be available to support student and staff wellbeing and their safety. The National Tutoring Programme outlined within the guidance is in line with the type of support respondents to this survey considered to be most effective to help those students who have fallen furthest behind during the lockdown.

The recommendation of focusing on students' mental health and wellbeing as part of this guidance is also very positive and something that was stressed as paramount by participants in this study. As was highlighted in our last report (Müller and Goldenberg, 2020), emphasised by the WHO (2020) and previous research (Gibbs et al., 2019; Vogel and Schwabe, 2016), the current crisis may negatively impact the mental health and wellbeing of some students and it will be important for teachers and schools to feel able to prioritise their students' wellbeing upon a return in September. The inclusion of additional training and guidance is also important as training in supporting students' wellbeing, particularly those students who have experienced

trauma or bereavement, was the single-most requested training in our study.

It is further encouraging to see that the guidance on behaviour expectations includes a focus on students' experiences during lockdown and how this might affect their behaviour. As we have outlined in our first report, past research has shown that experiences of crises, grief or trauma can lead to a range of behavioural responses such as re-experiencing, aggression, regression or avoidance (Pérez-Pereira et al., 2012; Scheeringa et al., 2003; Smilde-van den Doel et al., 2006), which needs to be considered when children display such behaviours in the current context. EEF (2019) guidance on behaviour shows that a key to improving and managing behaviour in schools is to know students and their influences. In these particular circumstances, this recommendation could refer to understanding the experiences children have lived through during lockdown and how they may influence their behaviour when returning to school.

Delaying formal Ofsted inspections seems crucial in light of the fact that many schools and students will need time to settle back into school routines. It is also critical that even the informal visits suggested by Ofsted are indeed the constructive and supportive meetings that they describe so school leaders and teachers are not put under additional pressure. Finally, the consultation process for amendments to GCSE and A Level exams will provide an important opportunity for the sector to share their views and ensure that those amended exams take students' different learning experiences during this crisis into account, which is also what respondents to this survey largely called for.

The future of education and the profession

These unprecedented times have changed what education has looked like in recent months. Teachers have had to adapt quickly to new ways of working alongside their students. This has led many to pause and reflect on the purpose of education, what it means to them and their students, and what it might look like in the future. The responses to our survey reflect a wide range of thoughts and opinions on what can be learnt from this crisis, what has been missed during these months and what has been gained. One thing we can certainly conclude from our survey and focus groups is that teachers continue to advocate passionately for their students and are committed not only to supporting their students throughout this crisis and as they reintegrate back into school life, but also in the years that follow. Teachers expressed the importance of placing wellbeing at the heart of educational policy, cultivating independence and resilience so that students are prepared for future challenges and crises, and ensuring that wider inequalities are challenged. In looking to the future and how we can meet these ambitious aims, we ask:

- What is and should be the purpose of education and schools and what role do they play in our communities?
- How can different stakeholders such as teachers and parents collaborate to support student learning and wellbeing?
- What are the existing inequalities in education and what are the first steps we can take to overcome them?
- What have learnt about the role of digital technologies for student learning and how can this inform future approaches to teaching and learning?
- How can we ensure that children develop deep subject-knowledge?
- How can resilience, independence and wellbeing best be cultivated alongside academic progress and an enriching curriculum?
- What does effective professional learning need to look like to ensure that teachers and school leaders are prepared for the challenges of the 21st century?
- How can we ensure that the lessons we have learnt from this crisis are shared more widely?

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