



Confederation
of School Trusts

Educating successfully during COVID-19

Education Continuity Planning





Confederation
of School Trusts

- The Confederation of School Trusts (CST) is the national organisation and sector body for school trusts in England advocating for, connecting and supporting executive and governance leaders.

1. The importance of education continuity planning

Continuity planning in the medium and longer term

- We know the educational impact of COVID-19 will be significant. We are committed to ensuring that as many pupils as possible return to formal schooling in the Autumn in the safest possible way.
- There is an urgency for Government to make decisions about medium- and longer-term provision in England to ensure education continuity planning, even if these decisions need to have heavy caveats about confirmation in the light of the progress of this national crisis. We believe that decisions need to be taken by the end of June 2020 at the very latest to give leaders time to plan and build confidence with stakeholder groups. We think it is likely that leaders will need to prepare for more than one scenario.
- Decisions need to take into account the whole system rather than its constituent parts - provision, accountability and funding.

This presentation sets out our contribution to thinking and planning. We start with a rapid analysis of the educational, social and economic impacts of COVID-19. We offer some principles to inform planning arising out of this analysis and then propose some solutions based on building resilience.

What we are asking Government to confirm

In the interests of education continuity planning, we ask government to confirm:

- The models of educational provision that we should start to plan for in the Autumn term which include some face to face education for all pupils

(Please see section 5 which sets out some possible planning scenarios: a) rotas with blended learning if protective measures are still in place, b) full return when it is safe to do so and c) local lockdown where this becomes necessary);
- That routine inspections will be suspended for the Autumn and Spring terms, although there will be a need for Ofsted to continue to undertake school inspections under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; and
- That national assessments will be refined in sensible ways to become diagnostic (particularly in relation to SATs) and will not be used for public accountability purposes in 2021.

2. The impacts of COVID-19

Educational impact

Despite our best efforts, groups of children will return to school having missed substantial parts of their education. The [Education Endowment Foundation's rapid evidence review](#) suggests that school closures are likely to reverse progress made to narrow the gap in the last decade. Their projections indicate that school closures will widen the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers, likely reversing progress made to narrow the gap since 2011. The median estimate indicates that the gap would widen by 36%.

However, the estimated rate of gap widening varied substantially between studies, meaning that there is a high level of uncertainty around this average. Plausible “good” and “bad” estimates range from the gap widening from 11% to 75%.

Social impact

There is no universal experience of or response to the lockdown, but some families are under considerably more pressure confined in their homes. We know there has been a significant increase in domestic violence. We believe there will be implications of the lock down for mental ill-health. Some children and young people, and staff will be bereaved.

There are families we were already worried about before COVID-19. For some of these, the lock down will have intensified stress on family life. There are also families where we had some concerns – and some others where we had no concerns – who are now under considerable pressure.



Economic impact

The Government has put in place safety nets to protect as many adults as possible from the economic effect of COVID-19. But for some families, the economic consequences are likely to be felt for some time to come.

The strong likelihood is that we will see a rise in child poverty, unemployment, especially youth unemployment with the broader welfare issues that go along with that. This is a challenge for us all.

3. Principles

This analysis leads us to propose some principles that we believe should underpin decisions about education continuity planning:

1. **Equity:** the just provision and distribution of resources to pupils in a way that reflects their needs and requirements, positively impacting those who have increased vulnerabilities, have the most significant gaps in learning and the lowest engagement with remote learning.
2. **Resilience:** the need to find solutions that adapt well in the face of multiple stresses on individuals, families, schools and the sector and can take account of local lock downs.
3. **Flexibility:** leaders must be trusted to exercise discretion and good judgement to suit their context and in the best interests of their pupils, parents and communities based on acceptable minimum levels of provision.

4. Building resilience

Building educational resilience through the ordinary processes of schooling #1

As a general principle, the gaps in learning are a matter of grave concern but are not insurmountable. When a trust sponsors a school, the gaps in curriculum and knowledge are often extensive. These are repaired through a systematic approach to the curriculum allied with precision in pedagogical delivery. Our provision needs to prioritise those pupils who have the most significant gaps in their learning and address those who have increased vulnerabilities (our equity principle).

We believe that the following activities should be considered and funded directly:

- One to one and small group tuition running alongside the curriculum throughout the year;
- Breakfast sessions;
- Planned holiday sessions – February half-term, Easter and May half-term being ideal times because you gain additional motivation from end of key stage students as examinations loom;
- Expanding the [government's programme](#) to support disadvantaged students who do not have the technology at home to complete online learning to cover all students in year 11 and year 13 who do not have such facilities

Building educational resilience through the ordinary processes of schooling #2

Curriculum resilience

Because we are planning for multiple scenarios (rotas, full return when it is safe to do so, and local lockdown), we need to consider how we build curriculum resilience so that schools can move in an agile way between remote teaching and classroom teaching. To safeguard pupils' learning against the likely scenario of further disruption during the period of the pandemic, a refined approach to blended learning approaches will be necessary. Pupils will need to be able to move quickly between complementary programmes of remote and school-based learning, with schools seeking to optimise the benefits of each paradigm. Oak National Academy and other offers may be part of a solution here.

We would caution against layering multiple interventions onto schools at this time. Introducing more complexity may mitigate against the most effective interventions, the things that schools do well - strong, purposeful quality first wave teaching; a well-planned curriculum; powerful welfare and pastoral systems.

Building educational resilience through the ordinary processes of schooling #3

Supporting parents and families

Some parents have shown themselves adept at providing an environment at home that supports home learning and family wellbeing, such that their children thrive. However, a campaign of communication and training for families is needed so that more families can adapt successfully to make the most of blended home / school provision over the coming 12 months. Helping families to engage positively in activities of common purpose will be essential to prevent societal fragmentation.

Building educational resilience through the ordinary processes of schooling #4

Summer holiday provision

In relation to summer holiday provision, we believe that schools and leaders should have maximum flexibility about what provision they make over the summer holidays. Signposting schools to charities and organisations that can offer opportunities over the summer, along with the opportunity to develop their own interventions would provide far greater value for money and have a chance at becoming sustainable good practice. We think the concept of summer camps may have substantial merit. In order to plan effectively, it is urgent that any news of funding to support summer holiday provision is announced soon.

Building family resilience in response to social impacts

Schools are already strengthening their welfare and pastoral system to support pupils as we open more widely. We recommend that local authorities and health commissioners should be required to review whether there is sufficient family support in their local area – for example mental health provision, bereavement support and provision for adults and children fleeing domestic violence.

Building economic resilience in response to social impacts

Our young people potentially have an essential role to play in building economic resilience. Destinations become hugely important. We may benefit from a nationally coordinated recruitment day(s) in September with a campaign to get young people into post-16 provision.

Government could consider proposals like those UPP Foundation has recommended for [a Community Leadership Academy](#) for six months full time or part time paid work placement for young people.

A systemic review of the school year with strategic options

The DfE should undertake a system review of the school year and consider strategic options. We appreciate very radical options, for example moving the academic year to coincide with the calendar year thereby creating an additional term of curriculum recovery for all pupils in their current year groups, are unlikely to be agreed but we feel the full range of options be considered.

It will also be important to ensure local lockdown, if and where this happens, does not negatively impact on those pupils taking exams. CST would be delighted to work with your officials on undertaking a systemic review and considering strategic options.

5. Scenarios to ensure education continuity planning

Principles of education continuity planning

Since the coronavirus will be with us in the Autumn and beyond, DfE should ask the SAGE working group to model (rapidly) scenarios for educational provision from September and produce guidance for the sector *before the end of June* to ensure the start of next academic year is well-planned and that schools are prepared. We anticipate that leaders would need a plan for each of these scenarios so that they can switch seamlessly between scenarios. Each scenario should be underpinned by the principles of equity, resilience and flexibility:

1. **Equity:** the just provision and distribution of resources to pupils in a way that reflects their needs and requirements, positively impacting those who have increased vulnerabilities, have the most significant gaps in learning and the lowest engagement with remote learning.
2. **Resilience:** the need to find solutions that adapt well in the face of multiple stresses on individuals, families, schools and the sector and can take account of local lock downs.
3. **Flexibility:** leaders must be trusted to exercise discretion and good judgement to suit their context and in the best interests of their pupils, parents and communities based on acceptable minimum levels of provision.

Education continuity planning scenarios

1. Rotas with blended learning if protective measures are still in place

Schools and trusts decide operational delivery model based on principles set out by Government. Blended learning is put in place, ensuring curriculum continuity between classroom provision and remote education. A national solution to remote education provision is available for those schools that are unable to support both classroom provision and remote education. Protective measures include: unwell staff and students stay home, cleaning hands more often, ensuring good respiratory hygiene, cleaning frequently touched surfaces. Some social distancing in place (but unlikely to be 2m)

2. Full return when it is safe to do so, including protective measures

Protective measures should include: unwell staff and students stay home, cleaning hands more often, ensuring good respiratory hygiene, cleaning frequently touched surfaces. No social distancing.

3. School closure and/or local lockdown where this becomes necessary

Onsite provision put in place for critical worker, vulnerable children and where possible examination groups. Other groups move to remote education.

Constitutional issues, decision-making and governance

- Government will need to review how decision-making is constituted and be crystal clear on the relationship between national, regional and local decision-making.
- The role of Public Health England, the statutory duties of local Directors of Public Health and the corporate public health duties of a local authority during COVID-19 need urgent clarification.
- A hierarchy of decision-making showing which entities make decisions and distinguishing between decisions and advice is required.
- A nationally agreed format for risk assessments that all Directors of Public Health will use, including the range of data and evidence (supplied by the Joint Bio Security Unit) that inform the risk assessment would help to bring consistency and build public confidence.
- Decisions on whether to open or close a school must remain the obligation of those responsible for governance (governing body or trust board), advised by school and trust leaders, because of their legal liabilities as an employer under Health and Safety legislation.

“There is no trust more sacred than the one
the world holds with children.”

Kofi Annan, *The State of the World's Children*, 2000





Confederation
of School Trusts

Thank you

www.cstuk.org.uk

@CSTvoice