

3rd October, 2023

Learning Recovery – Report

Ward(s): ALL

Portfolios: Education and Skills – Councillor Mark Statham

1.0 Aim

1.1 The Department for Education (DfE) and Walsall Local Authority (LA) implemented a range of programs and initiatives to support learning recovery in schools and educational settings. These initiatives have been developed in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and aim to address the learning loss and well-being concerns that students have faced. This report provides an overview of the key DfE and LA programs designed to aid learning recovery in schools and educational settings.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 For the committee to note the range of support available to schools from Walsall LA and the Department for Education..

3.0 Report detail – Know

3.1 The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education worldwide, leading to extended periods of school closures and remote learning. As a result, students faced learning gaps and emotional challenges that needed to be addressed. In response to these issues, the DfE and Local Authority launched several programs to support learning recovery. These programs encompass a wide range of initiatives and strategies aimed at helping students catch up academically and promoting their well-being.

The pandemic affected pupils' learning as the country came out of lockdown in many different ways. Some pupils were not as ready for the next stage as they would usually be. Children in Reception joined with a wider range of starting points. Despite much work from schools, some had not caught up to where they need to be as they move into key stage 1. Similarly, some Year 6 pupils were not ready for secondary school. Many Year 11 and Year 13 pupils have also missed out on work experience opportunities.

3.2 For some pupils with SEND, the pandemic has had a disproportionate effect. Schools with strong systems in place before COVID-19 were continuing to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Effective support happened when schools had a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs and what extra help was required to meet the curriculum expectations. The pandemic delayed some pupils receiving support from external or specialist services.

3.3 The pandemic has exacerbated other existing challenges for schools. These include persistent pupil absence and access to specialist services. Many leaders and staff have worked tirelessly and creatively since the end of lockdown to settle pupils back into school routines and help them catch up academically. For some pupils, this has

been successful. However, some pupils are still behind both academically and in terms of wider development, which will affect them in future. This will be a challenge for these pupils as they take their next step.

4 What is available to support schools and settings

4.1 Catch-up Funding

The DfE provided financial assistance to local authorities for their maintained schools and for pupils that local authorities place in independent special settings, in the form of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) catch-up premium for the financial year beginning 1 April 2020. This funding was withdrawn at the end of 2021. Following this Universal catch-up premium funding has been made available and direct for all state-funded mainstream and special schools, and alternative provision. It covers:

- primary, middle, secondary and all-through local authority-maintained schools, academies and free schools
- local authority maintained special schools
- special academies and free schools
- non-maintained special schools
- pupil referral units
- alternative provision (AP) academies and free schools
- local authority-maintained and academy hospital schools
- local authorities for special educational needs and disability (SEND) pupils they place in independent special settings.

Schools in Walsall use this funding for specific activities to support their pupils' education recovery in line with the curriculum expectations.

School allocations are calculated on a per pupil basis.

While schools use their funding in a way that suits their cohort and circumstances, they are expected to use this funding for specific activities which will help pupils catch up on missed learning. Schools should particularly focus on disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils as we know they have been most affected. The majority of schools in Walsall spend their allocation of funding via the National Tutoring Programme.

4.2 The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) provides schools access to high quality subsidies tutoring through three separate routes - tuition partners, academic mentors, and school-led tutoring. These tutors – who have all been subject to robust high-quality training and safeguarding checks – can provide additional capacity to schools to support disadvantaged pupils who have been impacted by disruption to their education.

The NTP is open to all children and young people who need the most support catching up, including pupils with SEND. It was developed to provide additional, targeted support to children and young people having lost time in education during the pandemic, with schools provided the flexibility to identify the pupils who will benefit the most.

The tuition sessions are designed to be flexible and can happen in-school, either online or face-to-face, or during the school holidays. These arrangements depend on individual circumstances such as suitability for schools and parents, and tutor availability.

NTP and recovery funding was also allocated to the Virtual School to help children and young people in care catch up on any missed learning. In 2022/21 academic year 121 children and young people received additional tuition funded through NTP and in 2022/23 academic year the funding provided extra tuition/mentoring to 139 children and young people. Interim academic outcomes shows an improvement in the number of children at the end of KS2 achieving the expected outcomes in reading, writing and maths from 28% in 2019 to 40% in 2023.

The Virtual School also received recovery funding to also support children in care whose education has been impacted by Covid-19. In 2021/22 the funding was used to

- Provide additional learning resources and equipment
- Access projects and activities to raise self-esteem and confidence
- Access educational psychologists, therapists and mentors
- Provide short term alternative provision placements

In 2022/23 the recovery funding is being used to employ an attendance mentor to work with children and young people who have poor school attendance

4.3 Kooth – Mental Health Support

Walsall Council also worked in partnership with [Kooth](#) an organisation that supports children and families with mental health. We recognised that children's recovery from the pandemic wasn't going to be limited to a child's academic journey, but also their mental health as they returned to school or in some cases started school for the first time after being in lock down.

Kooth is a free, safe, anonymous online emotional wellbeing community that is accessible 24/7, 365 days of the year and provides access to chat sessions with BACP-accredited counsellors and qualified emotional wellbeing practitioners.

The Kooth platform is accessible from any device that connects to wifi, allowing young people to seek support at a time and location that is suitable for them. The local authority promoted Kooth to our schools and invited colleagues from Kooth to come along and present at our virtual heads meeting that were held weekly during lockdown and termly moving forward. Kooth is still being used and promoted today in schools across Walsall where mental health support is needed.

4.4 LA School Improvement Support

The local authority commissions its school improvement support and monitoring from an external agency. This activity is funded from the DfE's local authority monitoring and brokering grant (LAMB) and is 'normally' deployed on those LA maintained schools where the LA has a concern around standards and outcomes.

However, when lockdown was lifted, the local authority ensured that all LA maintained schools received at least one school improvement 'Challenge and Support' visit to check in on our schools and to support our school leaders who were

now picking up the Covid recovery baton in their schools. This support was well received and very much appreciated by our school colleagues.

4.5 Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs)

Recognizing the importance of students' mental health, the DfE has invested in the creation of Mental Health Support Teams. These teams work in schools to provide early intervention for mild to moderate mental health issues, reducing the impact of these challenges on learning. The goal is to ensure that students have access to mental health support within their educational settings.

Good mental health and wellbeing supports improved learning, behaviour, and attendance. This academic year schools and settings are benefitting from DfE-funded [senior mental health lead training](#).

The training develops the schools mental health lead's [knowledge and practical skills](#) on their journey to introduce an effective whole school/college approach to mental health/wellbeing.

Training will help them:

- identify need, and monitor impact, of mental health/wellbeing support
- develop approaches aligned with SENCO's work
- develop universal and targeted support offer
- engage students/pupils and develop positive relationships with parents/carers

4.6 Summer School Program

The DfE introduced a Summer School Program to help students catch up on missed learning during the summer break. Schools are encouraged to offer a mix of academic and enrichment activities to make the summer school experience engaging and beneficial. This initiative aims to mitigate the effects of interrupted learning and offer a positive learning environment during the vacation period

4.7 Oak National Academy

The Oak National Academy is an online platform that provides free resources and lessons aligned with the national curriculum. It offers a wide range of materials for students of all ages and abilities, including video lessons, quizzes, and worksheets. The platform serves as a valuable resource for both in-class and remote learning, aiding schools in delivering effective catch-up lessons.

4.8 Attendance Support

Improving attendance remains a key priority for this year.

Working with a research agency, the Department for Education has published a [toolkit to support effective communication with families about school attendance](#).

The toolkit includes:

- top tips for communicating with parents and carers about attendance.
- research that supports the suggested messages parents and carers engage with most and adaptable templates for communicating with parents and carers.

4.9 BUILDING RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS (BRICS)

BRICS aims to provide a service that supports schools in understanding, using and developing practical and creative strategies to enable pupils with a range of barriers to learning to become more successful in school, thereby reducing suspensions and exclusions in Walsall and improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people.

BRICS is a service which proposes joint working between schools and the local authority to support the education of vulnerable children with a wide range of barriers to learning: to improve engagement, wellbeing and learning behaviours in order that they can be resilient and successful learners.

BRICS aims to work in partnership with children, school staff, parents/carers and other professionals to encourage positive learning communities which meet each child's needs. This will be achieved through a flexible, collaborative, empathetic and child-centred approach rooted in responsive, innovative and inclusive solutions.

BRICS is a de-delegated service available to all maintained schools, and accessible as a traded service for academies, special schools, maintained nursery schools and PRUs.

The service provides targeted support, intervention and training through a tiered approach, in order to facilitate purposeful change and sustainability throughout school.

BRICS will encourage schools to use the service to develop in-house expertise and embed a consistent whole school ethos that enables effective support at all levels. Full details of services proposed can be found in this document.

BRICS will provide a ladder of intervention and support starting with the firm foundations which are offered through the Training and Development Offer.

All schools, and academies who engage with BRICS, will have access to the training and development offer as tier one support to develop their practice of inclusive whole school approaches including;

- Principles of Nurture
 - Using the PACE approach -
 - Low Arousal Approach
 - Restorative Practice Training
 - Walsall Council Restorative Practice, Relationships and Behaviour Guidance Document – Education Psychologist workshops designed to support schools to develop their school policies
 - AET training
 - Support working towards AET Inclusion Award
 - Demand Avoidance Training
 - Using the Boxall profile
 - Whole setting access to Creative Education
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Inclusion and Wellbeing Pyramid

BRICS

INCLUSION & WELLBEING PYRAMID

TIER THREE

(Specialist/Targeted Intervention—could be at risk of exclusion Referral to panel. TAC)

Three Pathways

Nurture Support
Graduated approach

Therapeutic Services
Therapeutic services/
counselling support

Specialist Inclusion Support Team
Individualised
interventions/Support from
external agencies e.g. EP,
CAMHS, CGL, OT

TIER TWO (Universal Identification & Evaluation of additional needs &/or barriers) Inclusion Support Officers

At point of escalation or First suspension

- High quality assessment for learning—focused observations/ assessments
- Screening of barriers to learning— SEMH barriers/Risks & Protective factors
- Pupil Progress Meetings—Resiliency Planning
- Person Centred planning—Pupil /Parent Voice
- Early intervention (issue/initiative/impact)

TIER ONE (Inclusive Whole School Approaches)

Relational Approach

- *Relationships first
- *PACE approach
- *Key adults
- *Family Groups
- *Family support team

Inclusive Quality First Teaching

- *High Expectations/Consistent routines
- *Reasonable adjustments e.g:
 - *Differentiation
 - *Visuals, scaffolds & resources

Inclusive Curriculum

- *Inclusive Curriculum
- *Equal Opportunities
- *Targeted SEMH Curriculum
- *Personalisation

Trauma/ attachment responsive

- *Inclusive & Safe Environment
- *Differentiated discipline
- *State dependent interventions
- *Low Arousal approach

Restorative responses:

- *Use of Language
- *Steps to success
- *Conversations
- *Class Circles
- *Natural/Logical Consequences

Although this is a new service, we are confident that it offers a service that schools need in order to support and develop inclusive practice, reduce exclusions and improve outcomes.

We will be able to provide support from practitioners with a range of experience, knowledge and skills to initially assess children and young people and to signpost evidence-based intervention. These officers and specialists are drawn from our schools and Local Authority services. This ensures the service schools receive will be of the highest quality.

4.10 Information about Trainers and Training Offers in BRICS Program

Low Arousal Approach - <https://www.studio3.org/low-arousal-training>

Restorative Practice - <https://130relationalsystems.co.uk/school-services/>

Creative Education - <https://www.creativeeducation.co.uk/>

Creative Education provide:

- A separate membership for each school
- A designated client relationship manager at Creative Education as your main point of contact and for continued support throughout the membership
- Termly meetings to discuss each schools' goals and training requirements
- Help with course suggestions
- Help to create Teams within each school's membership and the allocation of courses either to individuals or Teams
- We would be open to discuss the creation of new courses/webinars should there be a need across a number of the schools within this membership
- This membership would provide a complete CPD log for each school and any external courses can also be added. A report can then easily be printed/downloaded at a touch a button.

Autism Education Trust - <https://www.northstarfederation.org.uk/niat/autism-education-trust>

The Autism Education Trust (AET) helps children and young people with autism to receive an education, enabling them to reach their potential.

The AET is a not for profit programme led by two national autism charities – the National Autistic Society and Ambitious about Autism. Established and supported by the Department for Education, the AET promotes and supports partnerships throughout the education system to improve educational access, experience and outcomes for children and young people with autism.

Underpinned by current research into good education practice, the AET programme is structured around the three education phases – early years, school and post 16. Their core values are: person-centred, outcomes and process focussed, inclusive and accessible, evidence-based, high quality and

working in partnership. Training can be delivered face-to-face or virtually for professionals working with Autistic children and young people up to the age of 25. The modules include Good Autism Practice, Transition to Employment, Autism and anxiety, Autism and Exclusions and Making sense of autism

5.0 Improving Outcomes 2023

- 5.1 The number of schools in Walsall being judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted has risen significantly over recent years. Provisionally, the overall percentage of schools in Walsall judged to be 'good or better' by Ofsted, is now above the national average at 89.3% compared to the national figure of 88.7%.
- 5.2 Pupil outcomes in our nursery and primary schools has improved this year on last year's outcomes. The gap to national is closing in all measures, with the exception of Y1 Phonics.

Phase	Measure	2023 vs 2022	Vs National – gap
EYFS	%Achieving good level of development	Better	Improving
Y1 Phonics	% at expected level	Better	Widening
KS1	% achieving expected standard – Reading	Better	Improving
	% achieving expected standard –Writing	Better	Improving
	% achieving expected standard – Maths	Better	Improving
KS2	% achieving expected standard – Reading, Writing and Maths	Better	Improving

- 5.3 Secondary schools outcomes at KS4 for the percentage of students achieving 5+ in English and Maths and achieving the Ebacc have improved this year on 2019 outcomes prior to Covid.

Phase	Measure	2023 vs 2019
KS4	% Achieving 5+ In English and Maths	Better
	% Achieving <u>Ebacc</u>	Better

National figures are not yet available for comparisons.

6.0 Conclusion

The programs for learning recovery in schools and educational settings represent a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These initiatives range from academic support to mental health resources, recognizing that learning recovery is not limited to the classroom but extends to the well-being of students. By investing in these programs, the DfE demonstrates its commitment to providing the necessary resources and support to

ensure that all students have the opportunity to thrive in their education. Monitoring and evaluation by schools will be essential to assess the impact of these programs and make adjustments as needed to continue supporting learning recovery effectively.

7.0 Reducing Inequalities

7.1 Where provisional results are available this year such as Early Years (Good Level of Development), the gap for our disadvantaged pupils is narrowing. We will be completing a detailed analysis of our most vulnerable cohorts as the data is available.

8.0 Decide

8.1 The committee may decide to request further information on the education outcomes of children within Walsall.

9.0 Respond

9.1 Any recommendations made by the committee will be responded to by the appropriate service area

10.0 Review

10.1 The actions and outcomes within this report are monitored by Access & Inclusion SMT and by individual schools. Schools have to report use of grants etc directly to the DfE.

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