

Barnet Children's Partnership Board Report

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| Title: | Barnet schools' response to 'Lost Learning' and support for recovery and 'catch-up' |
| Meeting Date: | 23 rd February 2021 |
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| Service / Dept: | Barnet Education and Learning Service |
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1. Summary

The report provides information on the government's investment in school 'catch-up' and on its plans to announce a national catch-up programme for schools. It describes the actions taken by Barnet schools and the Barnet Education and Learning Service to mitigate lost learning and support catch-up and recovery from learning 'lost' as a result of school closures.

2. Updates since last BCPB

The attached report provides an update on action by Barnet schools and services since the last meeting of the Board in response to 'Lost Learning' and support for recovery and 'catch-up'.

3. Impact

- **Equalities and Diversity**
N/A
- **Corporate Parenting**
N/A

4. Consultation and Engagement

The council's response to the pandemic and to 'lost learning' is set out in the council's education strategies, which were discussed at this Board in November and subsequently by the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee. There is regular discussion with headteachers and governors about the response to the pandemic, including 'recovery and catch-up' at meetings between officers from BELS and headteachers and chairs and vice-chairs of governing bodies.

There will be discussion of the government's 'catch-up programme' at the next Network meetings with headteachers in March.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Children's Partnership Board is asked to note and comment on the report.

6. Background papers

Key education strategies were considered and approved by the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee at its meeting on 30th November 2020. These have now been published on the council's website and can be seen here:

<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-support-information>

Barnet schools' response to 'Lost Learning' and support for recovery and 'catch-up'

1. Introduction

Since March 2020 pupils across the country have suffered a huge disruption to their learning, particularly during the two lockdown periods when schools were closed to the majority of pupils.

From 4th January 2021 schools were directed by the DfE to close to most pupils for a second time in order to protect the NHS and reduce infection. During January, February and into March, schools are only open for the following categories of children:

- Vulnerable children (children with Education and Health Care Plans, those with a social worker, children who are looked after, children identified by the school as otherwise being vulnerable including those who may not have an appropriate place to do their schoolwork at home)
- Children of critical workers

It should be noted that there have been significant increases in the number of children who are eligible for a place in school compared to the school closures in March to May last year, because of the wider definitions of vulnerable children and critical workers in DfE guidance.

Early Years settings and nursery provision in schools were expected to stay open during the current lockdown. Similarly, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units were expected to remain open to all children and young people whose parents/carers wanted their children to attend.

The announcement by the government, at the beginning of this term, that schools would close again to all but vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers meant that the majority of pupils in our schools would again have to access education remotely. Fortunately, schools were much better placed to deal with this switch to remote learning and already had platforms and systems which, by January, were tried and tested. However, it still placed additional demands on school staff and additional individual responsibility on the pupils and their parents.

The government has indicated that schools will not re-open before Monday 8th March and that it plans to give schools a minimum of two-weeks notice before they are expected to re-open. A government announcement is expected on Monday 22nd February.

2. DfE catch-up funding

In June 2020, as part of its planning for schools to open fully from September, the government announced a one billion pound investment in school 'catch-up'. £650 million was allocated across state primary and secondary schools over the 2020/21 school year to ensure that schools have the support they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time.

School allocations were calculated on a per pupil basis. Mainstream schools have been allocated £80 for each pupil from reception to year 11 inclusive. Special schools and PRUs were allocated £240 for each place. A typical primary school of 200 pupils will receive £16,000 while a typical secondary school of 1,000 pupils will receive £80,000.

Schools are free to decide how the money will be spent, but the government expects some of it to be spent on small group tuition for whoever needs it. This one-off grant to support pupils in state education recognises that all young people have lost time in education as a result of the pandemic, regardless of their income or background. It was designed to help schools to support pupils through remote education and recovery from lost learning arising from school closures.

Separately, a National Tutoring Programme, worth £350 million, was established to increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people over the 2020/21 academic year. This was intended to accelerate their academic progress and prevent the gap between them and their more affluent peers widening. The funding subsidises tuition costs, with schools expected to draw on their pupil premium allocations to buy in tuition at subsidised rates.

The government has announced that it will invest a further £300million into the catch-up programme that it plans to announce later this month.

3. DfE catch-up programme

At the beginning of February the government appointed Sir Kevan Collins as “education recovery commissioner” in order to “oversee a comprehensive programme of catch-up aimed at young people who have lost out on learning due to the pandemic”. Collins was previously chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, one of the organisations running the government’s flagship National Tutoring Programme.

The government is considering a number of options to make up for this ‘lost learning’, including shorter summer holidays, summer schools and extended school days, with initial catch-up plans due to be announced in late February. These options could involve:

- Summer Schools
- Weekly tutoring sessions
- Repeating the school year
- Extending school days or shortened holidays
- Increased well-being support

The government is expected to make announcements about this programme in the week beginning 22nd February.

There will be a discussion of the Barnet response to the programme at the Network meetings for headteachers in March. The school improvement team is collecting information through school-effectiveness meetings with maintained schools and other discussions with all schools and will have a clearer picture of how schools are using and planning to use their catch-up funding at the end of this term.

4. Recovery and catch-up action in Barnet schools

In the meantime Barnet schools have been working tirelessly, supported by Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) and various other services e.g. Family Services, Barnet Public Health, SHaW and Barnet Integrated Clinical Service (BICS), in order to minimise the disruption and to ensure the pupils are safe and are learning, albeit, in the main, remotely.

The following paragraphs set out the main priorities agreed, and the main activities taken, by schools in partnership with BELS and other services:

4.1 Key Priorities in order to minimise lost learning and support the well-being of pupils

- To meet the high demand for places whilst balancing the requirements of each school's risk assessment and the safety of the community.
- To ensure the most vulnerable pupils attend school for face to face support, recognising that these pupils are best placed in school rather than at home.
- To carry out welfare checks with pupils at home to check on their safety and well-being.
- Ensuring a high-quality remote learning offer for all pupils.
- The introduction of Lateral Flow Device Testing for students and staff in secondary schools in order to minimise transmission and identify students and staff who test positive at an early stage so they can self-isolate and protect others.
- The introduction of Lateral Flow Device Testing for staff in primary schools.

4.2 Evidence of Success

- Attendance of pupils in school in line with national averages (primary approximately 20% and secondary 4%).
- Attendance of vulnerable children is in line with national statistics (35% to 45%).
- LAC pupils are monitored for attendance both on-site and participation in remote learning.
- Audit and monitoring of remote learning have indicated the majority (approx. 92%) of Barnet schools are offering a good quality remote learning offer.
- The small minority (approx. 8%) of schools that need to improve their offer have plans for support in place and regular contact with the Learning Network Inspector (LNI) team.
- High attendance by staff at the Barnet Partnership for School Improvement (BPSI) remote learning training offer.
- All schools have demonstrated use of enhanced technology compared to the first lockdown with both pupils and staff more confident in the use of digital learning platforms.
- Regular meetings with leaders have demonstrated their continuing resilience and flexibility in responding to the shifting demands.
- High attendance at headteacher network meetings, Deputy and Assistant HT meetings, SENCo Conferences, Designated Safeguarding Leads briefings and other partnership meetings.
- High attendance at PVI training sessions run by the Early Years Standards Team.
- High attendance at the Director's Briefing with Chairs and Vice Chars (over 75 attended) and at Governor Training.
- 2200 laptops funded by the DfE have been distributed to Barnet schools to date and more are being delivered this month.
- A 'Covid Personal Education Plan' (PEP) for Looked After Children (LAC) has been created to reflect the current situation.

- Virtual School caseworkers have been commended by schools for support given to schools and pupils in danger of permanent exclusion.
- Communication with foster carers and designated teachers has supported LAC pupils attending school or receiving remote learning

5. Continuing Challenges

The following challenges remain for schools:

- Continuing challenges of coronavirus cases, testing, track and trace, keeping schools safe for those children who need a place and managing demand.
- PVI settings not having access to lateral flow tests in the setting and needing to travel to community sights for testing.
- Wider re-opening – a lot of unknowns about what is planned and when.
- Cancellation of exams and formal assessment.
- Planning to move from remote to blended learning.
- Continuing to balance remote learning for some pupils with remote training and CPD for staff.
- Assessing and evaluating pupil achievement through remote learning.
- Response to our laptop survey showed that, in the 52 schools that responded to the survey, approximately 2000 laptops and 800 improved wi-fi connections were still required in pupils' homes in order to successfully access the remote learning offer
- Staff and pupil well-being and mental health.
- Stress amongst some school leaders, staff and parents.
- Staffing re-structures, recruitment and retention.
- Funding: loss of external income, e.g. from lettings.
- Current Covid situation is making it more challenging for Post-16s to engage, resulting in an increase in NEET.

6. Work by BELS to support remote learning and catch-up/recovery

Barnet Education and Learning Service has provided the following support to schools:

- Monitoring the quality of remote training in schools through:
 - Audit of quality and subsequent RAG rating.
 - Remote school effectiveness visits (including professional discussions with all school leaders, looking at quality of delivery, monitoring quality of children's work and feedback given by teachers, exploring the quality of learning by focusing on specific a subject and the sequence of learning).
 - Reviews of school websites.
- Issuing regular guidance and updates to ensure school leaders and PVIs are aware of latest government and Ofsted guidance, expectations and requirements.
- Providing support for schools and settings that have had an Ofsted call. Findings distributed to all schools and settings.
- Updating schools and settings on Ofsted expectations and changing policy.
- Leading a remote learning project which has focused on:
 - Wider training for all schools, laying out expectations and best practice.

- Using schools with strong practice to lead action research projects, in order to disseminate best practice to all schools.
- Facilitated 'expert' sessions to train any primary practitioner to use a range of technologies with confidence.
- Taking part in a "Lost Learning" project with five other London local authorities which involved speaking with schools and students, focussing on Year 5 and 6 in primary and Year 11,12 and 13 in secondary and using the materials to support "emergency schooling".
- Liaising with other services and agencies to ensure schools and settings are well supported in implementing government directives (e.g. Barnet Public Health/Family Services).
- Facilitating network and partnership meetings to disseminate information and share best practice.
- Monitoring and actively supporting the wellbeing of senior leaders, through daily contact with individual leaders, headteacher and PVI 'drop in' sessions, liaison with the heads' forum and acting on feedback.
- Supporting governing bodies, including regular updates and briefing sessions.
- Supporting governing bodies with recruitment of senior leaders.
- Supporting governing bodies in ensuring that they are representative of their school communities (governor ethnic monitoring survey).
- Identifying and providing other remote training opportunities to support the development of good practice across Barnet schools and settings.
- Supporting schools to deliver effective safeguarding arrangements and responses.
- Introducing early years projects to raise attainment in reception aged children.
- Preparing schools and settings for the EYFS reforms, being introduced from September 2021.

7. Special Educational Needs

In addition, BELS has provided the following support to mainstream and special schools to promote the achievement of pupils with SEND

- Weekly forum for SENCOs to discuss challenges, share key information and signpost to key resources.
- Specific resources have been developed by the Specialist Inclusion Team to provide support and signposting to helpful resources for families to use, including information about activities and support available during school holidays.
- New content has been developed for the SENCO Zone on the Local Offer, which is being shared with SENCOs at the forum meetings.
- Training for schools and settings has taken place on a range of pandemic related areas: Early Years (a focus on early identification of needs); SENCO Conference, "The Ever-Changing Role of Support Staff", and "SMART EHCPs in a Pandemic". These have been well attended and high valued as evidenced by the evaluations.
- Governor training on key information and signposting to resources.
- Regular forums with all the special schools to discuss and resolve issues in relation to increasing staff confidence and capacity, safely transporting children and young people to school.

- Revisiting the “SENCO Toolkit” and resources, as well as offering a training programme to support schools with managing emerging needs in their settings.
- Development of clear guidance and pathways to support early identification of needs.
- Develop a Transition Toolkit to support key transitions for SEND (Early Years, Secondary Transfer, and Post 16). This will include key templates and proformas such as the Transition and Reintegration Plan, as well as guidance on how to support children and young people through key transitions. There will be opportunities to explore this in the SENCO workshops in the summer term.
- Continuation of Placement Panels and Complex Needs Panel for children and young people who have needs requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan, and those who need access to specialist provision.
- Continuation of specialist support from Educational Psychologists, Autism Advisory Team, BEAM, HI, VI and Physical Disability Advisory Teachers for schools and settings.
- Having a robust system for Risk Assessments for children and young people in independent specialist and out of borough provision. Raising concerns, including safeguarding concerns with MASH on a weekly basis.

BELS

12.2.21