

Levelling up needs the schools back

During the long lock downs some pupils have been able to benefit from a full timetable of on line lessons and lectures, and to have home work marked over the internet by engaged teachers. I praise all those teachers and schools that adapted and did a good job ensuring their students did not go without education.

Other schools provided childcare and maybe some education for the children of key workers but delivered little for the rest. Some managed work assignments for homeworking. It meant the gap started to get bigger again between those who had the advantage of a full timetable of lessons and those who did not.

Some schools in the private sector did decide they had to deliver a full timetable and challenging home coursework, as the parents expected something for the fees they were paying. The danger is the response to CV 19 has increased the gap between some in the private sector that got a good education during the lockdowns, and some in the state sector who got little by way of teaching. That is not going to help the government with its good aim of levelling up.

The government made clear it would assist in supplying digital devices so pupils in households where on line access was a problem would be helped. As schools prepare for the return in September they need to look at how they can best meet the need for every pupil to have the benefit of good lessons and marked homework for the older pupils.

Teachers rightly tell us they want to teach and believe the daily contact between pupil and teacher is an important part of growing up and gaining skills for life. The way in which each school meets the demands on it and looks after its pupils is mainly a matter for school and local determination. Teachers are valued professionals, and we look forward to seeing their solutions for this autumn as pupils go back to school. It is most important we level up, which does require us to deliver the best possible education to those from difficult backgrounds. We may also be able to use more of the digital technology in developing those crucial relationships.