

Education providers resilient as COVID challenges continue

Ofsted has today published the [third set of briefings](#) in a series looking at the pandemic's continued impact on education providers.

The 3 reports, which follow on from [those published in April](#), find that most education providers are adapting to life with COVID-19 and focusing on the effectiveness of their recovery strategies. But the legacy of the pandemic and repeated lockdowns continues to affect some children and learners' education and development.

Drawing on evidence from more than 100 inspections carried out in the summer term and multiple focus groups with inspectors, the reports set out how early years settings, schools and further education and skills providers are helping children and learners catch up, while dealing with the ongoing challenges of COVID.

Ofsted Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, said:

It's clear that education providers are responding to the ongoing challenges of COVID with creativity and resilience. But the pandemic and lockdowns created some distinct problems, which are taking time to shift. Some young children are still behind in their development; older children are experiencing higher levels of exam anxiety than usual, and difficulties recruiting and retaining staff have been exacerbated across all phases of education.

I'm also concerned that some learners in a small minority of further education and skills providers are still not receiving sufficient classroom teaching or off-the-job training. This is narrowing their opportunities to gain practical skills and limiting their social engagement, which could have serious consequences on their readiness for the workplace.

Early years

Young children's communication and language development continues to be affected. An increased number of children have been referred for additional support, but they are having to wait months, sometimes up to a year, for specialist help such as speech and language therapy.

Many children still lack confidence in social settings. Some have taken longer to settle into nursery or with a childminder than would have been expected pre-pandemic.

During the pandemic, children missed out on going to playgrounds and soft-

play areas. As a result, some have not developed the gross motor skills they need. To help children catch up, many providers have thought about how they can use outside space and encourage more physical activity.

Fewer children are ready for the move up to Reception than would otherwise have been expected pre-COVID. Some are still not where they should be in terms of developing independent self-care skills, such as using the toilet and dressing. And because some providers have focused on getting children ready for Reception, it is possible that younger children have missed out on their own learning and development opportunities.

Providers also told inspectors that the take up of funded places for 2-year-olds remains lower than usual. And they said that financial pressures and staffing constraints mean they were not actively promoting places.

Staff recruitment and retention is a persistent issue for the early years sector. Many providers continue to report difficulties in recruiting high-quality staff due to the relatively low pay the sector offers. In a few cases, providers have had to recruit unqualified staff to meet the legal requirement regarding the number of staff per children, per setting.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions being lifted since February, most providers have maintained some restrictions because they do not want to risk staff illness. Parents continue to drop off and pick up at the doorstep, with some telling inspectors they didn't know they could ask to enter the provider's premises. These restrictions potentially create barriers between parents and staff.

Schools

Schools are continuing to work hard to help pupils catch up. However, some pupils are still not as ready for the next stage of their education as they would usually be, particularly children in Reception who had limited pre-school experience.

Inspectors also saw that the pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Schools with strong systems in place before COVID-19 are continuing to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. But the pandemic has delayed some pupils receiving support from external or specialist services.

School staff noticed higher levels of anxiety around exams than in pre-pandemic times, as pupils prepared to sit external tests for the first time in more than 2 years. While inspectors saw good practice in schools that balanced helping pupils to revise their subject knowledge with preparing them for exams, in some schools the curriculum was being overly narrowed to focus on exam topics, which may affect pupils' readiness for the next stage.

More schools are using tutoring programmes than in the spring and autumn terms, with most opting for the school-led route. Some schools are using the National Tutoring programme to fund their own staff to act as tutors, rather than employing external tutors.

In the summer term, school leaders said that fewer pupils were absent from school because of COVID-19 compared with the spring term. Although some leaders have seen an increase in pupil absence due to families taking rescheduled holidays.

Further education and skills (FES)

Providers have continued to use creative strategies to respond to the challenges of the pandemic and close gaps in learners' practical skills and theoretical knowledge.

A small number of providers have retained or reverted to remote learning. In some industries, and for adults studying for professional qualifications, online learning can have a useful and flexible role to play. However, for younger learners, and those on vocational courses, remote learning narrows opportunities to gain and practice skills. For instance, it is very difficult to teach brick laying or carpentry remotely.

By learning remotely, some learners are also missing out on valuable socialisation and opportunities to develop work-ready behaviours and attitudes. This limited interaction with peers and staff can have a negative impact on learners' experiences and outcomes, and leave them unprepared for their next steps.

Challenges remain for apprentices. While difficulties securing work and training are easing, sectors that were hardest hit by the pandemic continue to be affected, such as health and social care. Some apprentices are not completing meaningful tasks, or are observing rather than gaining practical experience, while the pressures on businesses following the pandemic mean others are not being released for off-the-job training. The disruption to learning has also seen many apprentices remain on their programmes beyond the planned end-point, due to them not being ready for assessment.

The pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges in recruiting and retaining high-quality staff. This is largely due to salaries being incomparable to industry, particularly in sectors like construction and engineering. In some cases, the pandemic has prompted staff to re-consider their careers.

The level of exam anxiety was noted to be higher than pre-pandemic, particularly among learners sitting high-stakes assessments for the first time.

Some providers have compressed English and maths timetabling to increase time for learners to catch up on vocational skills. This does not leave enough time for learners to make good progress in English and maths. And because of business pressures, some employers have decided only to recruit apprentices who already hold the required English and maths qualifications.

The number of adult learners was already decreasing pre-pandemic, but this decline has accelerated. In some cases, courses have closed. Elsewhere though, some providers reported an increased interest in employability courses as adult learners looked to re-train or move jobs.

Many learners with high needs have received extensions to their programmes to help them take part in activities they missed out on at the height of the pandemic. Personal development has been slow to recover and some learners have experienced increased mental health difficulties, or have regressed in their social skills.

Action taken following dry conditions in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex

Following a dry spring, river flows and some groundwater levels are 'below normal' in parts of Essex, East Suffolk and the Broadland rivers area*.

Prolonged dry weather is a natural event. It occurs as a result of low rainfall for an extended period of time. Once prolonged dry weather is declared actions are taken to minimise impacts on the environment and the risk of further deterioration.

Impacts of this weather are already being felt in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex with river flows becoming lower, causing problems for wildlife and river users.

The Environment Agency has been monitoring the situation and reviewing the range of dry weather indicators, including groundwater levels, river flows and soil conditions.

It also has teams ready to respond to reports of low dissolved oxygen levels in watercourses to help protect fish populations.

Abstraction licence holders in the affected areas may receive notice to restrict the amount of water they can take. This may include taking reduced quantities or only abstracting at specific times of the day, depending on local circumstances.

Alison Parnell, a drought manager for Environment Agency in East Anglia, said:

We continue to monitor our key river, groundwater and reservoir sites using telemetry, and are liaising with water companies to understand any emerging concerns.

We are also working with farmers, businesses and other abstractors to manage water availability and ensure that they get the water they need to be resilient while maintaining our protection of the environment.

We are closely monitoring the developing incident and produce

regular reports on the water situation, available on www.gov.uk.

In the lead up to this announcement the Environment Agency has been monitoring weather forecasts, hydrology, and the impacts on the environment.

Field teams have been busy sampling to check for the impacts of dry weather on the ecology.

We have also been meeting with water companies so we can share information and request action to be taken in accordance with their drought plans.

We can all do our part to use water wisely and manage this precious resource. If you are using water in the garden, take some simple steps such as fitting a trigger to your hose or using a bucket to wash the car or water plants. For more water saving tips visit [Waterwise](#).

If people see any environmental impacts due to dry weather, such as fish in distress, please report it to the Environment Agency 24/7 on 0800 80 70 60.

Additional information:

- *The River Wensum and River Bure are not currently in a Prolonged Dry Weather location despite being part of the Broadland River area.
- The last time East Anglia moved to prolonged dry weather status was in 2020 for the Cam and Ely Ouse area.
- The last time East Anglia declared drought was in May 2019. This drought resulted from three years of exceptionally dry weather across the southeast. It was declared as an environmental drought.
- The Environment Agency's regulatory role involves issuing and regulating abstraction licences and drought permits, imposing abstraction restrictions and scrutinising water company drought plans to ensure they are robust and fit for purpose.
- Water companies plan for the expected increase in demand and reduction in effective rainfall over the warmer months and decide themselves on proposing drinking water restrictions. We work closely with the companies to ensure they follow their drought plans.

Our work to protect children caught up in armed conflicts around the world

Thank you President. I join others in thanking our briefers for their illuminating remarks.

I would like to highlight three points in relation to what we have heard today.

Firstly, the United Kingdom welcomes the inclusion of the situations in Ukraine, Ethiopia and Mozambique in the Secretary-General's annual report. Data gathered by UN agencies and NGOs on the ground attests to the serious protection needs of children in these countries.

Establishing Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms will build an even stronger evidence base, so that all parties can identify actions needed to prevent grave violations against children.

In Ukraine, there is already ample evidence that Russia is committing at least four of the six grave violations against children. SRSG Gamba will have our full support in engaging on this agenda. But there is only one solution to ending the suffering of Ukrainian children: an end to Russia's illegal invasion.

Secondly, President, we are deeply concerned that attacks on schools have continued to increase, including targeted attacks on girls' schools. The United Kingdom has long campaigned for the right of every girl to 12 years of quality education, including girls affected by conflict.

We continue to urge all Member States to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, and to address the gendered impact of attacks on education. And I again echo the Secretary-General's call for the Taliban to enable the immediate return of all Afghan girls to the classroom.

Thirdly, President, the increase in cases of sexual violence against children documented in the Secretary-General's report is particularly concerning, given that these figures no doubt represent only the tip of the iceberg.

Tackling sexual violence in conflict and ensuring support for survivors remains a top priority for the United Kingdom, including with respect to children. We will convene an international conference in London in November to that end.

Ahead of that conference, we are committed to strengthening the international legal architecture to improve accountability for sexual violence in conflict, and to rolling out the Murad Code, launched here in April. We welcome all Member States to join us in that effort.

Thank you, President.

Government delivers landmark rises to teachers' salaries

Teachers across the country will benefit from pay increases of between 5% and 8.9% from September, as the government has today (Tuesday 19 July) fully

accepted pay recommendations from the independent School Teachers' Review Body for the next academic year.

The starting salary for teachers outside London will rise by 8.9%, with salaries reaching £28,000 in the 2022/23 academic year. This means that the Government is making good progress towards meeting its manifesto commitment for new teacher pay to rise to £30,000 and from September a new teacher will receive over £2,000 more than this year.

The competitive new starting salary will help attract top quality talent and further raise the status of the teaching profession.

Those in the early stages of their careers will also benefit from significant increases, ranging from 5% to 8% depending on experience.

Pay for experienced teachers who have been in the profession for more than five years will rise by 5% in the next academic year – an increase on the Government's initial proposal of 3%, in recognition of the broader economic context and the STRB's recommendations.

The rise is equivalent to an increase of almost £2,100 on the average salary of £42,400 this year.

Education Secretary James Cleverly said:

Teachers are the fabric of our school system and it is their dedication and skill that ensures young people can leave school with the knowledge and opportunities they need to get on in life.

We are delivering significant pay increases for all teachers despite the present economic challenges, pushing teacher starting salaries up towards the £30,000 milestone and giving experienced teachers the biggest pay rise in a generation. This will attract even more top-quality talent to inspire children and young people and reward teachers for their hard work.

Today's pay award – alongside the suite of high quality, free to access training courses available to teachers – is part of the Government's drive to make sure there is an excellent teacher in every classroom across the country, helping ensure that wherever a child lives they have the quality of education and the opportunities they deserve.

The government is targeting early career teacher pay with the highest percentage uplifts as this is where salaries can most effectively support recruitment and retention. Those in the first five years of their careers will see pay rises of between 5% and 8.9%, supporting teachers on the lowest incomes where the cost of living pressures are felt most.

Pay awards this year strike a careful balance between recognising the vital

importance of public sector workers, whilst delivering value for the taxpayer and managing the broader economic context. The 5% pay rise for experienced teachers is intended as a responsible solution to both supporting teachers with the cost of living and the sound management of schools' budgets. By contrast, double digit pay awards for public sector workers would lead to sustained higher levels of inflation. This would have a far bigger impact on people's real incomes in the long run than the proportionate and balanced pay increases recommended by the independent Pay Review Bodies now.

The Government has decided it is appropriate to confirm teachers' salaries for the next academic year only, rather than the two years initially proposed, and return to the usual timeframe for the pay setting process for 2023/24.

Academies, as usual, have the freedom to set their own pay policies.

The pay uplifts come alongside provisional school funding figures released today for the 2023/24 financial year, in which the core schools budget is set to receive a £1.5 billion boost. This extra money builds on this year's increase of £4 billion, which schools are already benefitting from. It means that in the 2023-24 financial year, primary school pupils will attract £5,023 on average and secondary school pupils will attract £6,473 on average.

Taken together with the funding increases seen this year, funding through the schools NFF will be 7.9% higher per pupil in 2023-24, compared to 2021-22.

[Leeds Health and Social Care Hub launches to improve outcomes across the region](#)

- The Leeds Health and Social Care Hub plans to create new opportunities for health and social care professionals in and around the city and provide a boost for the local economy
- It builds on Leeds's strong reputation for tackling health and economic inequality through innovative schemes such as West Yorkshire Innovation and Improvement Hub, YHealth For Growth, and Lincoln Green employment and skills project

A new Leeds and Social Care Hub will launch today [Tuesday 19 July] bringing together the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and various local partners to improve health outcomes across the region.

The hub will bring together a community of experts to improve healthcare in the region for patients. Members of the public, private, and third sector organisations, including NHS, local government, universities and other health organisations will work to address challenges including tackling health disparities and improving employment opportunities in the sector. This will ensure DHSC's principal offices in Leeds are embedded in the region's growing health industry and continue the work to make Leeds a national and international hub for the healthcare industry.

The aim is to position Leeds as the natural choice for professionals looking to pursue a career in health and social care spanning local government and public and private organisations, as well as for start-ups seeking to establish or expand their base in the city. This will help to retain and develop talent, all while providing a boost to the local economy. It will also promote the health and social care sector as a career of choice for local residents and graduates, so that workforces reflect the communities they serve.

Health Minister Maria Caulfield said:

"The Leeds Health and Social Care Hub provides a welcome platform for us to forge closer and stronger working relationships with our partners in Leeds and the north of England.

"It will allow us to entice more talented health and care workers, as well as organisations, to the region, boosting both the local workforce and the economy.

"Together, we will work on a comprehensive vision to improve health and social care outcomes and come up with innovative solutions to tackle health disparities across the north of England."

This will build on existing successful collaboration across different organisations and sectors, for example, in 2019 Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust partnered with Leeds City Council and a local charity to deliver information on employment, connecting residents living in Lincoln Green and other disadvantaged communities in Leeds with job opportunities. It resulted in 49 people starting a six-week employability programme and 29 people successfully securing employment at St James's Hospital.

The Hub will act as a focal point for healthcare activity in the region, making Leeds the city of choice for organisations and businesses. For example, the new West Yorkshire Innovation hub has been set up to ensure residents can benefit from new innovations. It recently launched 10 innovation schemes including breast cancer surgery, cancer screening uptake in minority communities, and a special programme to support older people with cancer.

The partners will include Leeds City Council, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, NHS England, West Yorkshire Integrated care System, University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University, Yorkshire and Humber Academic Health Science Network, Leeds Health and Care Academy, Leeds and York Partnerships NHS

Foundation Trust, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust.

Sir Chris Wormald KCB, Permanent Secretary at Department of Health and Social Care said:

“I believe the Hub offers a unique opportunity to accelerate delivery of our shared ambitions, not to mention significant potential to be replicated across diverse sectors in different parts of the country.”

Dr Sara Munro, Chief Executive Officer, Leeds & York Partnership NHS Trust said:

“The hub brings together a diverse set of partners both locally and nationally that will be able to achieve so much more collectively.”

Tom Riordan, Leeds City Council said:

“In order to develop and deliver successful policy, you need national, regional and local perspectives working together, and this initiative is a great opportunity to do just that.”

Richard Stubbs, Chief Executive Officer, Yorkshire and Humber Academic Health Science Network said:

“The Hub is a significant opportunity to build upon the existing collaboration between health and care across Leeds and West Yorkshire, aligning conversations around health, the economy, employment, and innovation to improve health and life outcomes for the region’s citizens.”

The project will focus on three main areas:

- People and Talent: Making the health sector in the region the employer of choice for many local people from all communities. This will include:
 - Making career paths between organisations clearer and facilitating movement between organisations
 - Expanding and diversifying the talent pool by making our roles attractive to local residents and supporting them to join our organisations
- Developing new apprenticeships, rotation schemes and various outreach initiatives and working closely with local universities to develop higher education offerings
- Health and social care economy: Working together to develop Leeds as a location of choice for health and social care businesses, particularly innovative businesses and those in the digital health and medical technology sectors. This will include:
 - Supporting the Innovation Arc, a project which aims to create a series

of innovation neighbourhoods, as part of the work on developing the new hospital on the Leeds General Infirmary site and a key part of the government's New Hospital Programme

- Supporting inclusive, collaborative partnerships between life sciences, businesses, academics, healthcare providers and policy makers
- Working to attract talent into the emerging health technology and maximising start-up opportunities
- Policy and collaboration: Bringing together the experience and insight of all partners to address health and care policy challenges with a focus on health disparities. This will include:
 - Establishing new ways of working where to jointly test ideas, explore policy solutions, and gather real-time insight.
 - Creating a specific working group to address health challenges and ensuring work is backed up by excellent academic input from local universities

Lincoln Green employment and skills project

Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust is one of the biggest employers in Leeds with six hospitals across the city. An anchor institution – well placed to provide employment opportunities for people living in the area.

Leeds City Council collaborated with Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust, Learning Partnerships and a local charity to deliver information sessions and innovative employability courses, aimed at connecting residents living in Lincoln Green and other disadvantaged communities in Leeds with job opportunities. The project has been a great success:

- 49 people started the 6-week employability programme and 29 people successfully secured employment at St James's Hospital.
- The learning from the Lincoln Green project has been taken and used to help the Narrowing Inequalities through Health and Care Careers programme which expands the model across different partners, and different careers.
- Since the pilot in 2019 there are a number of individuals that have taken advantage of the development opportunities to progress from the initial facilities technician (ward housekeeper / porter) roles to clinical positions.
- Due to the success of the pilot programme, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust has committed to support three programmes a year.

Additional information:

Structure and priorities

- The Hub has established a Steering Group, chaired by the DHSC Permanent Secretary, which will provide strategic direction and oversight. The group include representations from across the health and social care

sector in Leeds and the West Yorkshire region.

- Additionally, it has set up a Working Group with representatives from education, health, public health, local government who will oversee the hub's planned activities.

About the city of Leeds:

- Leeds is an important part of the UK's health and care infrastructure with a thriving voluntary community and social enterprise networks across the region.
- Leeds is the second Headquarters of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), including the newly established Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID).
- The city has a strong national presence with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, NHS Digital and other health bodies.
- Leeds and the wider region have become a key focus of the digital health, medical technology, and health data sectors.
- Leeds has a thriving voluntary community and enterprise sector with 1,180 registered charities.

Get involved:

- If you are a member of staff working for one of the partners, a business or innovator, we want to hear from you and know how we can work together to achieve our vision. Please get in touch
LeedsHealthandCareHub@dhsc.gov.uk