

CHILDREN'S RECOVERY PLAN

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<https://labour.org.uk/bright-future-taskforce-2/>

Executive Summary

In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic forced the education system to transform overnight; schools had to close their doors to the vast majority of children and provide remote learning to millions of pupils. School leaders, teachers, parents and children rose to the challenge; from parents transforming their working day to home school their children to education staff hand delivering workbooks and meal packages. There is no doubt that at a time of great challenge, the education system demonstrated its role as a vital public service, and children demonstrated their resilience.

That this enormous effort took place despite the Conservative government, not because of it, should be a source of shame. Over the course of the pandemic, the Conservatives have treated the nation's children as an afterthought, consistently failing to safeguard their wellbeing and learning. They caused chaos for A-level, GCSE and BTEC pupils last summer,¹ and then failed to put a plan in place for this year's exams until only weeks before they were due to go ahead. They had to be dragged kicking and screaming to provide free school meals in the holidays, and when they were eventually delivered, government guidance suggested a pitiful amount of food be included.² Over a million children were left without adequate access to an electronic device for months, unable to partake in remote learning.³

Not only have the Conservatives failed the nation's children over the course of the pandemic, the last year has exposed the failures of a decade of Conservative governments which have held back young people's life chances. Class sizes are soaring with one in seven secondary pupils now in classes of over 30,⁴ whilst schools have face per pupil funding cuts of 9%, the biggest in 40 years.⁵ Spending on 16 – 19 education has been cut by a fifth,⁶ hitting learner numbers. A thousand childcare providers have been forced to close,⁷ reducing opportunities for our youngest children. Latest statistics show that 700,000 children have been pushed into poverty since 2010,⁸ and in the last year half

¹ BBC News. Exams chaos: Never again, say parents, pupils, teachers. (2020).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-53864351>

² The Guardian. Fresh U-turn over free school meals as Labour criticises guidance on parcels. (2021).

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/13/fresh-u-turn-over-free-school-meals-as-labour-criticises-guidance-on-parcels>

³ The National Audit Office. Support for children's education during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. (2020). https://www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-childrens-education-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=Orlo&utm_content=Support+for+education

⁴ Department for Education. Schools, pupils and their characteristics. (2020). <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

⁵ Institute of Fiscal Studies. 2020 annual report on education spending in England. (2020).

<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/15150>

⁶ House of Commons Library. 16-19 education funding in England since 2010. (2020).

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn07019/>

⁷ Smith G, Sylva K, Smith T, Sammons P, Omonigho A. STOP START: Survival, decline or closure? Children's centres in England, 2018. <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/StopStart-FINAL.pdf>

⁸ Department for Work and Pensions. Children in low income families: local area statistics: FYE 2015 to FYE 2020. (2021). <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2020/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-fye-2015-to-fye-2020>

a million children are estimated to have become eligible for free school meals.⁹ The Conservatives should be ashamed of this record.

In contrast, Labour's vision is to make Britain the best place to grow-up, by prioritising children's wellbeing, education and life chances. Over the last twelve months, Labour has consistently called for more support for children, young people, parents and all those who work in our education system. From calling for the provision of free school meals in the summer holidays and the provision of breakfast clubs for every child, through to getting Covid mitigations in place in schools and a circuit breaker lockdown in October to minimise disruption to schooling and a 'Plan B' for this year's exams in November 2020.

As we look to the nation's recovery, Labour is clear that an ambitious plan for children must be at its heart. Yet, the Conservatives' current 'catch-up' plan shows no ambition for our children's futures. Their failing tutoring programme is reaching just 1% of children,¹⁰ they are ignoring parents' concerns with no offer to support children's wellbeing and have nothing to offer for the education workforce, which has gone the extra mile to support pupils this year.¹¹ It speaks volumes that Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak were willing to spend more on the ill-fated Eat Out to Help Out scheme than they are doing on our children's recovery.¹² Such a failure to act will cost our children and our country, with estimates putting the cost to the economy at as much as £420 billion.¹³

Labour has an ambitious vision for every child, teenager and young adult growing up in the UK. This report builds on the vision Keir Starmer set out at Labour Connected in 2020: to close the education gap so every child's future is determined by their potential, not their postcode.¹⁴

The package of measures set out in this report give schools the resources to provide every child with new opportunities to socialise, learn and develop post-pandemic; working to reverse the gap in learning which has widened during the pandemic ensuring every child has the chance to reach their potential. With extracurricular activities, mental health support in schools and small group teaching available to all pupils who will benefit, Labour will prioritise children's wellbeing and social development as an essential part of supporting learning. Children and young people are excited to be back with their friends in school and feel ambitious and optimistic about their futures. Labour's plan matches this ambition, putting children at the heart of our national recovery.

⁹ The Independent. Labour estimates over half a million children have become eligible for free school meals during the pandemic. (2021). <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/free-school-meals-coronavirus-labour-b1853763.html>

¹⁰ Education Select Committee. Oral evidence: Accountability hearings, HC 262. (2021). <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2142/pdf/>

¹¹ Department for Education. New education recovery package for children and young people. (2021). <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-education-recovery-package-for-children-and-young-people>

¹² House of Commons Library. Eat Out to Help Out Scheme. (2020). <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8978/>

¹³ Education Policy Institute. Analysis paper: preliminary research findings on education recovery. (2021). <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/EPI-Education-Recovery-Preliminary-Analysis-2021.pdf>

¹⁴ Labour Party. Full text of Keir Starmer's speech at Labour Connected. (2020). <https://labour.org.uk/press/full-text-of-keir-starmers-speech-at-labour-connected/>

Labour's Children's Recovery Plan:

- **Breakfast clubs and new activities for every child:** boost time for children to play and socialise after months away from their friends by enabling schools to offer an expanded range of extracurricular activities, from breakfast clubs to sport and drama, book clubs and debating societies;
- **Quality mental health support in every school:** give every child the support they need to transition back to school and manage personal challenges, with access to qualified in-school counselling staff alongside boosting wellbeing through extra activities;
- **Small group tutoring for all who need it, not just 1%:** make small group teaching available to all children who need it not just 1%, by reforming the Government's failing tutoring programme to no child falls behind because of pandemic disruption;
- **Continued development for teachers:** Teachers and school staff have had one of the toughest years of their careers - it is only by supporting them with training to stay on top of the latest knowledge and techniques that we can give every child a brilliant classroom experience;
- **Invest in an Education Recovery Premium:** support every child to reach their potential by investing in children who have faced the greatest disruption during the pandemic from early years to further education, and double the Pupil Premium for children in key transition years, delivering additional support for children who need it most;
- **Ensure no child goes hungry:** ensure no child goes hungry during the pandemic by extending free school meals over the holidays, including the summer holiday.

Impact of the Pandemic

Labour's vision is for Britain to be the best country to grow-up in, where every child, whatever their background or circumstances, is able to fulfil their potential. This means that a world-class education must be the right of every child, with staff who are valued and able to support their learning, in an education system that allows every young person to succeed. Labour's ambition goes beyond the classroom to provide a healthy breakfast to every child and delivering access a broad range of extracurricular activities, including music, arts, sport, drama and more.

The government's failure to support schools and families through the coronavirus pandemic has caused the most significant disruption to children's learning and development in peacetime, with millions of children isolated from their friends, out of the classroom and facing huge challenges in adapting to growing up in a pandemic.

The Children's Commissioner for England has previously said that 850 million days of in-person school were missed by the middle of February this year, averaging half a year away from school.¹⁵ The impact of this on children's social development, wellbeing and education is dramatic with young people missing out of time with friends and the structure the school day provides.

A wide range of evidence has shown that children and young people's wellbeing and mental health has been adversely affected by the pandemic. Analysis by the Health Foundation has found a significant increase in the number of young people reporting negative feelings over a wide range of subjects. Around 45% reported feeling depressed in April 2020, compared to under a third in 2017/18. The proportion of young people reporting that they were losing sleep, struggling to make decisions, or even feeling worthless all rose sharply over this period, showing the profound impact of the pandemic on a generation of young people.¹⁶

Parents have identified their children's wellbeing and social development as a key concern for our recovery. Recent research found that 89% of mums felt lockdown took a big toll on the mental health of children and young people, and 77% of mums are more worried about children missing out on social skills as result of lockdown.¹⁷ Labour understands that securing children's wellbeing is a priority to ensure every child has a happy, fulfilling childhood and goes hand in hand with addressing lost learning.

Equally, the impact of this time away for the classroom on children's learning cannot be overstated, and it is clear that the scale of lost learning will have huge impacts on

¹⁵ The Children's Commissioner. Building Back Better; Anne Longfield's Final Speech as Children's Commissioner. (2021).

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2021/02/17/building-back-better-reaching-englands-left-behind-children/>

¹⁶ The Health Foundation. Generation COVID-19: Building the case to protect young people's future health, (2020). p5. <https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-08/Generation%20COVID-19.pdf>,

¹⁷ Britainthinks. Mums in lockdown. (2021) <https://britainthinks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BT-and-MN-Mums-and-lockdown-webinar-deck-11.03.21-For-publication.pdf>

children across the country. This impact is especially acute for children already growing up with parents struggling to make ends meet or living in overcrowded accommodation, many of whom have not been able to access learning remotely in the same way as their peers. The Institute for Fiscal Studies found that the richest third of children spent hours more time learning every week than their most disadvantaged peers.¹⁸

The central estimate by the Education Policy Institute is that children are now 3-4 months behind where they should be in their learning, but that this could be higher depending on the effectiveness of remote learning.¹⁹ This means that if pupils have particularly struggled to access remote learning – as we know the most disadvantaged pupils have – they could be even further behind in their learning. This was not inevitable. The government failed to support families, delaying for months providing the resources children needed to learn remote and failing to get free school meal vouchers to families quickly in the first lockdown. Without this support in place, it is no surprise that recent research has found the disruption to pupils' learning has widened the attainment gap, a particularly concerning finding given that progress in closing the gap had crawled to a halt even before the pandemic began.²⁰

The time learning that children have lost could have huge consequences for their learning in the years ahead and, further in their future, for their opportunities and incomes in the labour market. Levels of education are a key determinant of income in later life, which means that the level of disruption that children have faced in the last year could remain with them over the course of their working lives, leading to lower wages for individuals, and a less prosperous and less equal economy for us all.

Research by the Education Policy Institute has found that the level of learning that pupils have lost could translate to, in their central scenario, lost earnings of 2.4%. Given the range of potential estimates for lifetime earnings, this could see those who are children today losing between £18,000 and £37,000 over the course of their working lives.²¹ The same analysis shows that the cost to our economy could run in to the tens of billions of pounds or more, with a forecast of lost GDP ranging from £150 billion to £296 billion in the central scenario.

The pandemic has also accelerated the use of technology in education and changed the way we teach. As children return to school, we must consider how to maintain the best elements of this technological revolution in teaching to support children's learning both in school and through homework.

¹⁸ Institute for Fiscal Studies, *Family time use and home learning during the COVID-19 lockdown*, 21 September 2020

<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/15038>

¹⁹ Education Policy Institute, *Education recovery and resilience in England: Phase one report*, 14 May 2021, https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Education-Recovery_EPI.pdf, p10

²⁰ NFER / EEF, *Impact of school closures and subsequent support strategies on attainment and socio-emotional wellbeing in Key Stage 1: Interim Paper 1i*, January 2021, https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19_Resources/Impact_of_school_closures_KS1_interim_findings_paper_-_Jan_2021.pdf, p12

²¹ Education Policy Institute, *Education recovery and resilience in England: Phase one report*, 14 May 2021, https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Education-Recovery_EPI.pdf, p11

The pandemic has thrown into sharp relief many of the deep inequalities that a decade of Conservative governments has embedded into our society, our economy, and sadly, our education system. But as we emerge from the pandemic in the months and years ahead, there is an opportunity to rebuild our education system on stronger foundations. Throughout the challenges of the last year schools, pupils, families, and communities have come together in the face of unprecedented disruption to keep children safe, secure, and learning. We must build on this spirit in the years to come to ensure that every child is given the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Addressing the impact of the pandemic on this generation of young people is essential, for their life chances, their wellbeing, and for our wider society and economy. It must be at the heart of a national recovery if we are to avoid the creation of a "COVID generation", with fewer opportunities and poorer outcomes than those who came before. In responding to the pandemic, we must match the ambition that children have for their own futures and rise to the challenge of every family and every society: to give our children greater opportunities than we ourselves have had.

Breakfast clubs and extracurricular activities for every child

Schools should offer an expanded range of extracurricular activities and breakfast clubs to provide new opportunities for every child to play, learn and develop post-Covid.

Children are excited to be back with their friends after the isolation of lockdown while parents have told us they are concerned about the pandemic's impact on social development. Labour's plan will reflect this excitement and build a programme of new fun activities around the school day, giving all young people the time to play and socialise with friends that parents want to see.

In March, Labour called for breakfast clubs to be available for all children building extra time with friends and teachers into the school day, while ensuring every child has a healthy meal giving them the energy to learn. These clubs would support children's wellbeing post-pandemic and build extra time to socialise with friends into the school day, while also giving schools time to provide targeted tuition or learning support. Breakfast clubs can boost children's educational attainment with positive impacts on reading and writing.^{22 23}

We propose this principle be expanded to enable schools to offer a range of afterschool extracurricular activities, as well as some targeted learning support. This would cover a

²² The Education Endowment Foundation. Magic Breakfast. (2019).

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/magic-breakfast/>

²³ The Institute for Fiscal Studies. The causal impact of school breakfast clubs on academic attainment: Evaluating the Magic Breakfast intervention (2017). [https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/a/Presentations/2017-08-22%20The%20causal%20impact%20of%20school%20breakfast%20clubs%20on%20academic%20attainment%20\(Claire%20Crawford,Christine%20Farquharson,Ellen%20Greaves\)_1505325244.pdf](https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/a/Presentations/2017-08-22%20The%20causal%20impact%20of%20school%20breakfast%20clubs%20on%20academic%20attainment%20(Claire%20Crawford,Christine%20Farquharson,Ellen%20Greaves)_1505325244.pdf)

full range of enriching activities that would build time for children time to socialise and enjoy new activities, from music and drama to sports and outdoor activities, into their everyday school experience. Schools would be able to build on the afterschool activities that some are already providing to establish a programme of activities which are suitable for their pupils and school sites.

Such targeted programmes can also help accelerate pupil's academic progress, delivering two months of additional progress which rises to around three months for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.²⁴ This would help to overcome the impact of the last year on pupil's learning, without adding extra pressure at a time when we want children to enjoy life without the restrictions of the pandemic.

Schools will be able to decide how best to deliver these activities, and would be able to draw on existing school staff, and local voluntary and community sector organisations and wraparound childcare providers, depending on the range of activities a school intends to provide and local capacity.

While attendance would be optional for pupils, Labour is proposing all schools be required to deliver an expanded activities programme and to engage with pupils and families to encourage children to attend, making a particular effort to reach those who have faced greatest disruption over the past year.

In delivering this school leadership teams will take on additional organisation and responsibilities. While this time will be fully funded through the programme, Labour proposes that a reporting system be established so school leaders can provide feedback on the resources required to establish these programmes.

The opportunities for children to play and socialise with peers through this expanded activities programme would help address parents' concerns about the impact of lockdowns on children's social development and promote children's wellbeing as we emerge from the pandemic.²⁵

Quality mental health support in every school

Give schools the additional resources needed to hire specialist counselling or mental health support.

Children, young people, parents and experts are reporting concerns about the impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing. Young Minds has

²⁴ Education Endowment Foundation. Teaching and learning toolkit: Extending school time. (Online). <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/extending-school-time/>

²⁵ Britainthinks. Mums in lockdown. (2021) https://britainthinks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BT-and-MN_Mums-and-lockdown_webinar-deck_11.03.21_For-publication.pdf

recently found that two thirds of young people believe the pandemic will have a negative long-term impact on their mental health.

To ensure all children and young people can access the mental health support they need as they transition back to school and the stresses of the last year are reduced, Labour is proposing giving schools the additional resources needed to hire specialist counselling or mental health support.

This builds on evidence which shows school-based counselling can improve the wellbeing of pupils, as well as contributing to better academic outcomes.²⁶ This would follow the example of the Labour-led Welsh Government which has legislated to put counselling support for pupils from age 10 -18 on a statutory footing. Labour have long believed that children and young people need greater access to mental health support, and included a commitment to embed this support in schools in the 2019 manifesto.

Unlike the Government's approach, which is requiring current staff to take on additional responsibilities for mental health,²⁷ providing this additional staffing capacity would provide specialist support for pupils whilst ensuring that teaching staff are not required to take on additional pastoral responsibilities beyond their areas of expertise, ensuring staff capacity is used most efficiently.

Under the proposals, every secondary school would have access to a fulltime staff member, while primary schools would have access to specialist staff time, shared between different local primary schools.

Small group tutoring for all children who need it, not just 1%

Extend small group tutoring for all children who need it, embedding this support in the education system.

While many children have continued to learn and develop while at home, children have had an average of 95 days out of school – equivalent to half a year – which has clearly impacted pupil's learning.

There is good evidence that tutoring – both one to one and in small groups – is an effective way of improving outcomes for pupils, including specifically accelerating progress for pupils from low-income backgrounds enabling them to catch-up with better off peers. Tutoring has been estimated to help pupils to catch-up on three months of learning.²⁸

²⁶ British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. School counselling for all. (2015). p4. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/2127/bacp-school-based-counselling-for-all-briefing-dec15.pdf>

²⁷ Tes. Mental health cash 'follows years of DfE underfunding'. (2021). <https://www.tes.com/news/mental-health-cash-follows-years-dfe-underfunding>

²⁸ Education Endowment Foundation. Teaching and Learning Toolkit: Small group tuition. (Online). <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition/>

However, the Government's flagship National Tutoring Programme, announced in June 2020, is failing to reach the pupils who need this academic support. Data shared at an education select committee meeting by Schools Minister, Nick Gibb MP, on 29 April shows that less than 2% of pupils are currently being supported through the tutoring scheme.²⁹ While previous data shows that just one in 8,277 pupils are being supported by an academic mentor under the scheme, with mentor support so far reaching just 23,000 children.³⁰

The National Audit Office has also expressed concern that the scheme is failing to reach pupils on free school meals and those who are likely to have struggled most to learn remotely during the pandemic, with less than half having been enrolled in the scheme in February 2021.³¹

Given the strong evidence base for small group tuition, Labour is recommending that tutoring be extended to reach all children who need it, embedding this support in our education system. This would be delivered by giving schools the funding they need to bring in additional staff to provide tutoring, and investment in the development of teaching assistants to make a vital contribution to the delivery of tutoring.

Tutoring provision should also be extended in post-16 settings, to get additional support to those who need it most. In some cases, the disruption pupils have faced in the last year will make it impossible for some pupils in post-16 settings to complete their education with grades and qualifications that truly reflect their potential. To ensure that no young person loses their future opportunities as a result of the pandemic, the government should provide additional funding to allow more pupils to retake a year of their post-16 studies.

Continued development for teachers

Invest in continuing professional development training for teachers and teaching assistants ensuring every child has the classroom and learning experience they need.

Ensuring the education profession is highly qualified, valued and respected is key to improving children's outcomes in education. To deliver this, Labour would train-up teaching assistants to help deliver the tutoring or targeted support that will enable pupils to recover any learning they have missed during the pandemic. Our plan would also give teachers access to continuing professional development (CPD), to build on the

²⁹ Education Select Committee. Oral evidence: Accountability hearings, HC 262. (2021). <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2142/pdf/>

³⁰ Written Parliamentary Question 183135. National Tutoring Programme. (2021). <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-19/183135>

³¹ The National Audit Office. Support for children's education during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic (2021). https://www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-childrens-education-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=Orlo&utm_content=Support+for+education

immense effort of the education system to transform teaching and learning over the last year and ensure every child gets a positive classrooms experience and exciting new learning opportunities to enjoy now they are back in classrooms with their friends.

However, over the last decade, successive Conservative governments have undervalued and underinvested in the teaching profession. The Government's public sector pay freezes have left classroom teachers over £4,000 worse off in real-terms, with headteachers nearly £2,500 worse off.³² Over the course of the last decade, as investment in education and pay for staff has fallen, the Conservatives have overseen a crisis in teacher recruitment and retention. More than one in four teachers are now leaving the classroom in only three years.³³ As workloads have risen during the pandemic, the Government has been warned of an exodus from the teaching profession.

Alongside this, under the Conservatives school budgets were cut by the first time in a generation, making it harder for schools to give staff the investment and support they need to deliver a world-class education to every child. Recent evidence has shown that overall spending on CPD for staff has fallen in real terms, with many schools cutting back at the same time that budget cuts hit.³⁴

Improving the quality of teaching can significantly improve outcomes for pupils. Labour is proposing that all staff are able to access continuing professional development training courses throughout their careers. Providing additional investment, ring-fenced to support teachers to access CPD, will ensure that teachers can access the training they need and schools can cover this staff time.

Evidence shows that investment in CPD can improve outcomes for pupils, as well as improving the retention of teachers.³⁵ Improving pupils' outcomes through investment in CPD will lead to longer term benefits, including improving qualification levels and, subsequently, wages in the future. The Education Policy Institute suggests that the benefit-cost ratio on investment in high-quality CPD is 18.9, suggesting that investing in teacher development now will have benefits for children and the economy long into the future. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Additionally, to support work to embed tutoring within the education system, Labour is proposing that teaching assistants receive additional training to deliver effective small group tuition. This is supported by existing research which suggests that teaching

³² House of Commons Library analysis for Labour. Available upon request.

³³ School workforce in England: November 2019 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>

³⁴ Teacher Development Trust. Further falls in CPD Spending: 5 things to know. (2020). <https://tdtrust.org/2020/11/18/further-falls-in-cpd-spending-5-things-to-know/>

³⁵ Education Policy Institute. *Evidence review: The effects of high-quality and professional development on teachers and students* (2020), <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/effects-high-quality-professional-development/>

assistants' delivering tutoring could deliver between three and five months additional progress for pupils.³⁶

Ensuring every child's learning is supported by world class teaching and educational support would maximise the benefit young people are getting from every lesson supporting recovery of the learning that has been missed over the last year.

Invest in children's recovery with targeted support

Implement an Education Recovery Premium which invests in those who have faced the greatest disruption to ensure no child is held back by the pandemic.

When schools closed in March 2020 the Department for Education had no plan for remote learning,³⁷ and until Christmas 2021 they had only delivered fewer than 600,000 laptops despite estimates that over 1 million children lacked the devices and internet access needed to learn remotely.³⁸ Children missed thousands of hours of teaching time, with pupils on free school meals likely to have missed out on most.

At every stage of the education system the government must ensure schools have the resources needed to improve outcomes, especially for the children who have missed most learning over the last year.

However, between 2009-10 and 2019 – 20, school funding per pupil fell 9% in real terms,³⁹ and the Conservatives have delivered a further cut to pupil premium – funding designed to support pupils on free school meals or who are looked after to achieve at school – by moving the census date from January 2021 back to October 2020.⁴⁰

Recent research has shown that the pupil premium has led to an improvement in the relative performance of pupils who attract this funding compared with their peers, supporting a narrowing of the attainment gap.

However, based on FOI responses, Labour estimates that the decision to move the census date will see schools lose out on £133 million this year with 115,000 pupils missing out on support such as speech and language therapy or small group teaching. This follows a period where the pupil premium funding has been cut in real terms.

³⁶ Education Endowment Foundation. Teaching and Learning Toolkit: Teaching assistants. (Online). <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/teaching-assistants/>

³⁷ The National Audit Office. Support for children's education during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. (2021). <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-childrens-education-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

³⁸ Department for Education. Devices and 4G Wireless Routers Data as of 22 December. (2020) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data>

³⁹ Institute of Fiscal Studies. 2020 annual report on education spending in England: schools. (2020). <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/15025>

⁴⁰ Department for Education. Policy Paper: Pupil Premium. (March 2021). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>

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Labour proposes that schools receive a one-off payment to replace this funding ensuring that no school is left worse off by the change to the census date.

There will also be particular challenges in the next academic year for children who are entering a new stage of their education, whether that is Year 1, 7, or 11. Given the significant disruption to their learning and development this year, Labour proposes doubling the pupil premium for children in these transition years on a one-off basis, ensuring they are not held back by the disruption from the pandemic.

In many parts of the education system, disadvantaged pupils see significantly less additional investment than they do in schools, with the Pupil Premium lower, or not even available, in other parts of the system.

The early years are crucial for determining children's life chances, however, early learning among our youngest children has been severely disrupted during the last year. The Education Endowment Foundation has reported that language development has been delayed as the measures taken to control the spread of Covid have deprived children of the social contact and experiences needed to develop vocabulary.⁴¹

However, the early years pupil premium is significantly lower than for children of school age. The Early Years Pupil Premium is worth only £302 per year, significantly less than for pupils at any other age in schools.⁴² This level of lower investment is entirely out of keeping with the reality, which is that a significant proportion of the attainment gap emerges during the early years – with disadvantaged pupils 4.6 months behind their more affluent peers, which has remained largely unchanged since 2013.⁴³

Similarly to those in the early years, disadvantaged young people in further education receive far less targeted investment than their peers in schools. These young people – those who have seen GCSEs, BTECs, and other exams cancelled in two consecutive years – are moving onto a new, vital phase of their education having missed core learning but with less support in place to help them succeed.

To support those children and young people who have faced the greatest disruption in the last year, the government should invest in a new, two year, time limited , Education Recovery Premium, targeted to reach both those children who would typically be in receipt of the Pupil Premium, and those who should receive this support but do not because of their specific circumstances or phase of education.

The Education Recovery Premium should, in both the next two academic years:

⁴¹ Education Endowment Foundation. The impact of Covid-19 on School Starters: Interim briefing 1 Parent and school concerns about children starting school. 2021. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Impact_of_Covid19_on_School_Starters_-_Interim_Briefing_1_-_April_2021_-_Final.pdf

⁴² HM Government. Get extra funding for your early years provider. (Online). <https://www.gov.uk/get-extra-early-years-funding>

⁴³ Education Policy Institute. Education in England: Annual Report 2020. (2020). <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/education-in-england-annual-report-2020/>

- Cover pupils currently in receipt of the Pupil Premium in schools, at a rate of a 10% uplift to current rates of Pupil Premium;
- increase in the Early Years Pupil Premium to £1,345 per pupil, so that funding is available on the same basis as it is in primary schools;
- Create a new Further Education Recovery Premium, available on the same basis as the Pupil Premium is in secondary schools;
- Cover all children with a Child Protection Plan.

Schools would then be accountable for their use of this funding on a similar basis to the Pupil Premium, but with a specific requirement to address the impact of the pandemic on children's education and wellbeing. This would ensure that spending is a core part of the recovery from the pandemic.

Pupils in further education have faced particularly significant disruption over the last year, with exams cancelled in two consecutive academic years, with chaos in 2020 that threatens to be repeated again in the months ahead. Despite the huge importance of these years for getting vital knowledge, skills, and qualifications to young people, they have received significantly less support for catch-up from the government.

Some of the young people facing the greatest challenges in our education system have sadly been an afterthought in the government's response to this pandemic, as they too often are for policymakers more generally. Children in alternative provision ("AP") have faced significant disruption over the course of the last year, particularly those who were reaching the end of their GCSEs, Level 2 BTECs, or equivalent, who faced the cancellation of their exams with no guarantee of a place to continue their education in the next year.

The challenges facing these pupils were pronounced even before the pandemic. Only 60% of pupils in AP went to a sustained destination after their GCSEs, compared to 94% of those in mainstream settings.⁴⁴ These young people are not funded to remain in their AP setting beyond the age of 16, but, after the events of the last year, they will need additional support to reach their full potential.

To address this, the government should fund post-16 provision in AP and provide an additional £3,000 per pupil in both of the next two years.

Ensure no child goes hungry

Ensure no child goes hungry by extending free school meals over the holidays for the duration of the pandemic, including the summer holiday.

⁴⁴ Department for Education, *Key stage 4 destination measures: Academic Year 2018/19*, 19 November 2020 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-destination-measures/2018-19>

Labour's Children's Recovery Plan

In line with Labour's previous call on the government, free school meals should be extended over the school holidays for the duration of the pandemic, including the summer holidays. To ensure that children get the support they need, and to avoid the scandal of the unacceptable food parcels initially provided under the government's policy of food vouchers, this support should be offered via direct cash transfers to parents.

Conclusion

Children's recovery must be a national priority in our recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. These measures can be immediately adopted by the government and implemented over the course of this Parliament to address the educational, social, and wellbeing impact of the events of the last year.

But it is clear that our education system was under immense pressure even before the pandemic. Funding in schools had been cut for the first time in a generation, and spending in further education has been falling consistently over the course of the last decade.

The immediate measures that must be taken to address the consequences of the pandemic should be the building blocks of a new settlement in our education system that allows every child to fulfil their potential, ensuring that Britain is the best place in the world to grow up.

Annex – Summary of policy costs

Note that unless specified otherwise, all costs are revenue spending in both of the next two years. All figures are presented to the nearest million. For policies where there is a different cost in each of the next two years (teacher development fund, and both spending lines on alternative provision) the average cost is given.

- Extended schools, extracurricular activities - £4.536 billion;
- Mental health support - £317 million;
- Education Recovery Premium - £622 million, of which
 - School pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium - £240 million;
 - Children with child protection plans - £130 million;⁴⁵
 - Early Years Recovery Premium - £110 million;
 - Further Education Recovery Premium - £142 million;
- One off payment to replace pupil premium funding schools have lost through census change - £133 million;
- Extend the National Tutoring programme, to reach the equivalent of all pupils currently eligible for free school meals - £572 million;
- Extend existing tutoring support in further education - £100 million;
- Teacher development fund - £300 million;
- Training for teaching assistants to deliver tutoring - £72 million;
- Fund pupils in further education to resit a year - £330 million;
- Extend alternative provision to post-16 to support those who have faced the greatest disruption - £90 million;
- Increase spending on alternative provision by £3,000 per pupil - £100 million;
- Double the Pupil Premium for those in transition years - £500 million. Note that unlike other policies in this package, this is a one-off cost for a single year.

The total cost of the package would be £14.7bn across the next two years. In the first year, the cost is £7.7 billion because of the one-off doubling of the Pupil Premium for those in transition years and the one-off payment to replace lost pupil premium funding. When Labour's existing commitment to providing universal school breakfast clubs is added, total spending under the Children's Recovery Plan is over £15bn over two years.

⁴⁵ This is likely to be an overestimate given overlap between those with a child protection plan and those already in receipt of the pupil premium.

