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CES Newsletter: Issue 23

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[Date]

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This newsletter should be of interest to all teachers, Because of the crisis it will be issued on a weekly basis from now on. This will hopefully mean I can pass on whatever useful information I find and, to be honest, because I am time rich, if income poorer. It will of course be shorter than the usual fortnightly edition.

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**SNIPPETS**

**SCHOOLS**

**SUSPEND OFTED INSPECTIONS AND RECRUIT RETIRED TEACHERS TO HELP PUPILS CATCH UP**

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) has warned that poorer children could fall “seriously” behind as a result of school closures and disruption to the economy, wiping out over a “decade’s progress” in closing the education gap. They have published a series of recommendations for the government, calling for a “catch up plan” to provide critical support to pupils whose learning may have stalled during lockdown.

One of the suggestions is that Ofsted inspections, which are [currently suspended until at least the end of summer](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/coronavirus-routine-inspections-not-likely-before-summer-says-spielman/), should be paused until the end of the Autumn term, with the potential for that to be extended. It also calls for a one-year national ‘Teacher Volunteer Scheme’, targeted at retired and inactive teachers who may want to help schools support the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, [plans first tabled by education select committee chair Robert Halfon](https://inews.co.uk/news/education/coronavirus-uk-retired-teachers-university-graduates-volunteer-army-tutor-disadvantaged-children-lockdown-2550886). EPI suggested setting up a website where teachers can register their interest and skills, so schools needing help can contact them, similar to the NHS volunteer scheme.

Before closures, the EPI said poorer pupils were already on average1.5 years of learning behind other pupils by the time they take their GCSEs. Therefore, it has also recommending the government spend £500m to double pupil premium rates for at least one year for pupils currently in reception, year 6 and year 10 who are facing transition or national examinations, as well as looked after children. It said that schools should be able to use the extra funding as they see fit, such as on supply teachers or tuition from external providers. Natalie Perera, executive director at EPI, said the pupil premium increase could give teachers the resources they need “to implement proven interventions which can raise the attainment of disadvantaged children.”

Gavin Williamson has said he is looking “very closely” at how to ensure children can catch up and said the DfE is exploring how they can make use of the “enormous goodwill that is held by the British public to help support children to be able to make sure that they don’t miss out as a result of this crisis”. A DfE spokesperson said the government has committed over £100m to support children to learn at home, and said pupil premium funding, which is being paid during closures, is at “the highest ever rate per pupil”. They added, “We are considering, with a range of partner organisations, what more is required to support all pupils who have been affected by school closures.”

**THIS IS WHAT HEADS WANT BEFORE REOPENING**

The ASCL [has published](https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/News/Newsletters/Re-opening-schools-and-colleges-summary-of-ASCL-members-views-April-20.pdf) a summary of members’ responses to questions posed by the DfE about reopening schools.

The DfE document reveals the government is considering plans that would restrict the number of pupils, either through a rota system or by having certain year groups go back earlier than others. Here are the main findings.

**1. Make it clear WHY pupils are returning**

Asked whether they would support an announcement about a return for more pupils followed by a three-week lead-in for them to prepare, most leaders said this would be ‘appropriate. However, they also said it was “imperative that the government articulates clearly the aim of gradually re-opening schools. Is this largely for reasons based on education, on safeguarding and wellbeing, or on re-starting the economy? A clear explanation of the reasons behind any decisions taken is essential to building confidence and agreement among school and college staff, pupils, parents and the wider public.” Many leaders “also made the point that such clarity of purpose is also required when determining which pupils should be prioritised”.

**2. Give heads directions, not guidance, on safety**

Leaders said they wanted “strong, evidence-based direction” and not guidance on issues relating to safety. This follows criticism that the government has left too much of the coronavirus response up to heads, resulting in inconsistencies between approaches. Members needed directions on issues like the expectations on them to maintain social distancing, how staff and pupils can protect themselves, which staff will be expected in school and what PPE, testing and contract tracing will be provided. They also said they wanted guidance on what new regulations would apply during the re-opening period, and what risk assessments and training would be needed.

**3. Concerns about school transport**

Many leaders raised concerns about transport to and from schools and colleges. They want to know whether school buses and taxi services will operate, how social distancing might be achieved by groups travelling by bus or walking, and how staggered starts might work.

**4. Guidance needed on social distancing**

Leaders said they needed “support and guidance” in terms of changes needed to sites and buildings. For example, things like classroom layouts, cleaning supplies, catering arrangements, visitors and third-party contractors. The ASCL said, “They would appreciate support and guidance with this planning, and clarity on any statutory actions.”

**5. Call for clarity on staffing ratios**

Leaders warned that up to a quarter of their staff could be in a vulnerable category and ensuring sufficient staff and guaranteeing the safety of those on-site was a “major concern”. “Clarity is required on whether staff: pupil ratios will be relaxed during this period” (a particular concern in early years and AP settings).” There are also “significant concerns” over the challenge of teaching more children in school while providing remote teaching to other pupils at home. Almost all respondents said that following a normal timetable would be “almost impossible”.

**6. Secondary heads favour staggered return**

Asked for their views on whether schools should allow certain year groups back earlier than others or adopt a rota system, heads were split depending on where they worked. Secondary leaders expressed a “distinct preference” for specific year groups returning first, with year 10 the priority, followed by year 12. Some said they wanted to prioritise the vulnerable, ‘digitally disadvantaged’ pupils and those with SEND, rather than specific year groups. Many respondents “felt that this wasn’t, in fact, an ‘either/or’ question, and that rotas would need to be introduced even if only one or two year groups were invited back to school, to comply with likely social distancing requirements”. Primary leaders were split, with 45% favouring prioritising certain year groups and 55% in favour of a rota system. Leaders said they wanted clear government directions, not guidance, on which groups should be prioritised, and why.

**7. Heads name their demands**

Asked what their pre-requisites were before schools can open further, heads said they needed “unequivocal assurances with scientific evidence that it is safe to reopen, for both children and adults”. They also said the country’s situation must have passed the government’s five tests, and that they needed “strong, reliable, clear safety measures that the government takes responsibility for, including on PPE and testing”. They also want “unequivocal, clear guidance” on procedures that must be followed, workable social distancing rules and, ideally, clarity on examination expectations for years 10 and 12 to inform timetable planning.

**RESULTS OF THE TES SURVEY ON TEACHERS CONCERNS RE CONRONAVIRUS**

A TES survey of school staff across the UK last week had a massive 18,953 responses.

**Coronavirus: Where have teachers been working?**

71% of school staff have been working from home, 19% have mainly being going into their own schools and 3% have been working at a ‘hub’ school. Only 2% were taking time off and 5% were ‘other’. DfE research shows that the [number of teachers going into state schools](https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-lockdown-80-fall-teachers-school)in England had dropped to 59,000, from 283,000 at the start of the lockdown. However, by 24 April this had climbed to [96,000](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/881662/COVID19_attendance_in_education_settings_240420.pdf).

**How many schools have stayed open?**

Despite the high proportion of teachers working at home, 86% of UK schools have kept their doors open for some pupils during the lockdown. The figure rises to 89% when just responses from state school staff are included.

The previous week the DfE had found that just 61% of schools were open.

**If your school is open, roughly what proportion of pupils are coming in?**

Nearly two-thirds of staff said that only 4% or fewer pupils were attending school and four-fifths said no more than 10% of pupils were physically present. DfE figures collected on 24 April found that attendance rose to 1.9% of pupils that week, having previously been below 1%.

**Are pupils in school being taught? If so, how long for?**

Gavin Williamson has said about pupils attending school during lockdown, "[It’s not going to be an educational setting, they’re not going to be teaching the national curriculum."](https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-open-schools-wont-be-educational) In terms of teaching taking place, the TES survey found 9% responded don’t know, 11% said not applicable to their school, 22% said they were not doing any education activities, 8% said 1-2 hours, 21% said 3-5 hours and 29% said over 5hours.

**How much remote teaching is happening?**

Former schools minister Lord Adonis has called on Ofsted to ["highlight poor practice"](https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-adonis-inadequate-online-learning-claim-sparks-fury)where state schools were not providing "a full online learning programme". He was castigated by teachers who pointed out the two days' notice and "chronic lack of funds" they had to contend with. The survey found that 6% were doing no remote teaching, 18% were doing 1-2 hours, 54% 3-5 hours, 15% over 5 hours and 7% were don’t know. When state schools alone are looked at, the more than five hours figure drops to 12%, for independent schools it rises to 39%.

**CHILDREN ARE AS INFECTIOUS AS ADULTS**

A study by the leading German virologist [Christian Drosten](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/26/virologist-christian-drosten-germany-coronavirus-expert-interview) found that even though children tend to have far milder symptoms, those infected have the same levels of circulating virus in their body as adults. Prof Drosten said, “We have to caution against an unlimited reopening of schools and kindergartens in the present situation, with a widely susceptible population and the necessity to keep transmission rates low, children may be as infectious as adults.” The German study, which was [published as a preprint](https://zoonosen.charite.de/fileadmin/user_upload/microsites/m_cc05/virologie-ccm/dateien_upload/Weitere_Dateien/analysis-of-SARS-CoV-2-viral-load-by-patient-age.pdf) that has not yet been peer reviewed, screened nearly 60,000 patients for Covid-19, of whom nearly 4,000 tested positive. When the team compared the viral load across age groups, they found similar levels throughout, ranging from 1-10 to 91-100 years. The study said that fewer children have been picked up in national testing programmes, due to milder symptoms. In addition, during the early phase of the epidemic, adult travellers played a dominant role in seeding infections, which meant, purely for circumstantial reasons, that children were more likely to catch Covid-19 than to spread infections to other household members. It said, “This observation may be misunderstood as an indication of children being less infectious.”

However, there is concern about the huge amount of schooling being missed by children and the damage caused by not being in school. Unicef warned that the low number of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils attending UK schools was “deeply concerning”. DfE figures show just 1:10 pupils classed as vulnerable, those in care, with a social worker or with certified special needs or disability, are going to school in England, despite being encouraged to do so. Sacha Deshmukh, executive director of Unicef UK, said, “Low school attendance of vulnerable children is deeply concerning. School provides more than an education, for many it is their only safe space. We know that in the UK, continued closures are likely to widen inequality gaps, with the poorest and most vulnerable children expected to suffer ‘learning loss’ and have lower education attainment. This will have far-reaching implications on their futures.”

As countries across Europe move to ease lockdown restrictions, there is much discussion about the role of schools in boosting transmission. However, studies looking at the actual rates of transmission have been complicated by the fact many schools are currently shut or open only to small numbers of children. Some contact tracing studies suggest infection rates are similar in children to adults, while other studies have found [little evidence of transmission](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/26/children-unlikely-to-transmit-coronavirus-says-study-cited-in-pms-push-to-reopen-schools) in children. Prof Russell Viner, president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, said, “This lack of clarity on transmission produces uncertainty for planning to reopen schools. Both keeping schools closed and reopening them carry degrees of risk in terms of population harms. Further data on susceptibility and transmission from population-based studies is urgently needed.”

Prof Martin Hibberd, of London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said: “This new research is consistent with the concept that children can be infected and perhaps also transmit the virus, just as easily as other age groups, without suffering as many symptoms. With testing currently focussing mostly on those with COVID-19 symptoms, it may be difficult to quickly identify the full role of children in transmission.”

**NOT POSSIBLE TO SOCIAL DISTANCE IN SCHOOLS**

A TES survey of over 17,000 teachers found that 74% said it would be impossible to practice social distancing in schools. Just 0.3% thought social distancing in schools would be ‘easy’ and only 4% said it would be “possible in certain circumstances”, 21% said it would be ‘difficult’. Mary Bousted, joint head of the NEU, said: “Any idea that workplaces have to social distance, yet schools don’t, is not a runner. I don’t think we have even begun to consider as a society how profoundly this is going to change education.”

The TES survey also asked staff what measures staff think would be practical when their schools reopen, to help prevent the spread of Covid-19.

* 70% backed increased cleaning of classroom surfaces, including desks and handles
* 69% backed bringing just a small number of’ ‘priority year group’ back to school for a period of time, with everyone else staying at home.
* 68% backed dividing the week so that only some year groups attend each day.
* 62% backed wanted to ensure that pupils frequently wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.
* 48% backed staggering pupils' movements around the school to reduce large groups gathering.
* 46% backed discouraging parents from gathering at the school gate.
* 17% thought it would be practical to reduce pupils' use of public transport to school.

Staff from primary, secondary and special schools responded. On social distancing, there was little variation by type of school, although a slightly smaller proportion of secondary staff, 72%, thought it was ‘impossible’.

Geoff Barton, ASCL head, said: “Social distancing would be pretty much impossible to manage in schools strictly and consistently all of the time because of the constraints on spaces, and the reality that there is a mix of age groups and behaviours. This is particularly the case with very young children, or those with complex needs, who are less able to understand or observe social distancing.” Dr Bousted added: “We’re going to have to reconceive education in terms of considerably reduced pupil populations in schools, and with things like different opening and finishing times for different sets of pupils. We’re also going to have to consider pupils coming in on a rota basis, and the fact that there will be fewer staff because some will be in vulnerable groups or living with people in vulnerable groups and self-isolating.”

The DfE says it has published [‘extensive’ guidance that outlines current advice on social distancing in schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings) and says it is looking at how "phased reopening will work". A spokesperson said: “We are also working in close consultation with the sector as we consider how to reopen schools, nurseries and colleges when the time is right, and will ensure everyone has sufficient notice to plan and prepare.”

**11+ EXAMS TO GO AHEAD**

Most grammar schools have said on their website that they intend to run 11+ exams in early September. This has led to huge outcry from critics who say that discrimination against working class children is inherent in the selection system, which will only be made worse by the crisis. Surveys from Teacher Tapp, Public First and the [Sutton Trust](https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-and-social-mobility-impact-brief/) show that middle class children receive far more online lessons than low-income homes, while some heads say that up to 40% of their pupils do not have a home computer. Many have no internet or phone either.

Kent, which has the largest concentration of grammars, will be particularly affected. Tracy Thomas, head of Marden primary school in Kent, said, “I fear that the gap this year in terms of 11+ admissions will be greater than ever.” Kathryn Evans, an assistant head and year 6 teacher in Maidstone, Kent, said, “State primary schools are not allowed to prepare children for the test. Even so, around this time, we would be alerting parents to the fact that the test was coming up and would be there to answer any of their questions.” Instead, she and her colleagues are “trying to get in touch with vulnerable families and keep some sort of education going”.

Zoe Catania, founder of Aim, a charity that helps prepare children from low-income homes for the Kent test, said the crisis will have a “massive impact”. She said, “Even the brightest children need familiarisation with parts of the test, particularly verbal and non-verbal reasoning.” Aim normally offer three hours’ free tutoring a week, additional activities, and run a mock exam at a local test site in the spring. This year the mock test is online. All entrants will sit the test, at the same time, in as near to exam conditions as they can. If parents are not able to print what might be up to 40 sheets of paper, Aim will deliver them by hand. A single parent (who did not want to be named) on universal credit, is preparing her year 5 daughter, with the help of Aim. She said she is lucky because she has “a dining room table, a school laptop which I share with my two children, and an elderly relative locally who has a printer”. She said, “I have to hold my phone by my relative’s window so the bluetooth from my phone connects to the printer.” Her relative then hands her the printed pages through the window. Ms Catania said that as well as tech concerns, “Lots of children haven’t got space to sit quietly. Parents are out working, or they can’t help. Then there’s the impact for some children of missing out on tricky bits of the curriculum, like algebra.”

Unlike other exams the 11+ cannot easily be replaced by assessment, and even die-hard elitists would find it hard to justify teachers picking out the ‘clever children’ in their year 6 class. Abandoning the test is not feasible because selective areas are structured around the creation of a rigid divide at 11. Indications are that selective areas are aware of the huge political problems inherent in the current situation. Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire council’s cabinet member for education, said: “We recognise the impact the coronavirus disruption will have on children due to sit the secondary transfer test. The council is liaising with the Buckinghamshire Grammar [Schools](https://www.theguardian.com/education/schools) Group , which owns and manages the test for Buckinghamshire, and with the test supplier, GL Assessment, to find a solution, and we are also in ongoing discussions with the DfE”.

**MET TO REVIEW SCHOOL POLICING ROLE**

The [Metropolitan police](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/metropolitan-police) are to review the role of officers in schools after a legal challenge raised concerns that they could have a disproportionately negative effect on BME pupils. The challenge, brought on behalf of [the family of a 14yr old boy](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/mar/30/met-to-face-judicial-review-over-role-of-school-police-officers) who is black and has autism, was withdrawn after police agreed to carry out further analysis of the Met’s safer schools partnerships (SSP) and the role of safer schools officers (SSO). Under the SSP, schools have police officers attached to them for the safety and security of pupils and staff. In some cases, officers are permanently based at the school to enable early intervention and help forge good relationships between pupils and the police.

Lawyers brought the case on behalf of the boy who was investigated by the CPS after getting into a verbal altercation with a member of staff that was reported to the school officer. Lawyers agreed there were potential benefits in having police in schools and many forces have favoured them as part of efforts to reduce knife crime. Their claim, however, was that the Met failed to comply with the public sector equality duty by failing to monitor, assess and understand the equalities implications of putting officers in schools in [London](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/london).

Dan Rosenberg, who is representing the family, said: “Deploying police officers in schools may have benefits for students and the wider school community, and no one is disputing that, least of all our client. However, there is a risk that the presence of police officers in schools may have disproportionately negative consequences for black and ethnic minority boys and/or children with special education needs and disabilities, causing them to be drawn into the criminal justice system unnecessarily. We’re delighted that the Met has now agreed to monitor and address the equality implications of deploying police officers in schools, which simply cannot be done without the collection and analysis of relevant data.”

The Met confirmed that the claim had been withdrawn by mutual agreement on the basis that the police would carry out a review. They said: “The review will look at the role and impact of the SSP and SSOs and consider any equality implications they may have. The force maintains that SSPs are enormously beneficial to pupils, schools and communities. They continue to be an important part of the Met’s work, and remain active.” Mark Simmons, an assistant commissioner, [told a parliamentary hearing last March](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/27/more-met-officers-to-work-in-schools-knife-inquiry-told) that at the time there were 420 police officers with full-time roles in schools in the capital, and that the aim was to increase the total to just under 600 as part of an effort to combat knife crime.

**HOW NOT TO RUN A MEALS VOUCHER SYSTEM**

Edenred, the inept French owned company given the task of distributing food vouchers to 1.3m pupils valued at £234m, were given the task under emergency power without a competitive tendering process, even though they have fewer than 150 staff. Parents of children who would usually receive free school meals are meant to be able to use vouchers to buy food in shops. However, huge numbers have not received the vouchers with many parents phoning schools in tears after being made to wait two weeks. To make matters even worse, many parents report arriving at the tills only to be left ‘humiliated’ when supermarkets wouldn’t accept their vouchers. Martin Knowles, head of Essa academy, in Bolton, says about 1:5 of his parents in receipt of the vouchers has had problems at the till. He said that the school is considering abandoning the Edenred vouchers and setting up its own scheme, at a cost of £8,500 a week, if the problems continue.

Edenred (UK Group) Limited, which is managing the voucher scheme, reported revenues of less than £11.8m for the year ending 31 December 2018 and had just 145 employees. On its website, Edenred said: “The new national voucher scheme to support the delivery of free school meals on behalf of the Department for Education has now provided over £58m of supermarket eGift cards to families and schools as of Tuesday 5 May. Improvements made to the free school meal voucher site last weekend mean that parents and schools face short or no-time waiting time when ordering online, despite continued growth in the number of parents and schools using the scheme. The daily volume of eGift cards processed for parents and families in the 24 hours to Monday 5 May was £4.9m, over 40% above the level last week”. A DfE apologist said, “Improvements have been made to Edenred’s technology system and we expect the company to continually improve to meet this unprecedented situation.” If you start from a minimal base it is nigh on impossible not to make improvements, but I guess irony is not a requisite for DfE spokespeople,

I cannot help but wonder if we have a competition between Hapless Hancock and Rabid Raab to see who can inherit the crown of the’ most inept minister’ last worn by Failing Grayling. Can anyone suggest other contenders? The Boris is not in contention as it is well known that he never makes a decision and when he does it is always someone else’s fault when it goes wrong.

**EXPERT TEACHERS LESS LIKELY TO FEEL GUILITY ABOUT PUPIL UNDERPERFORMANCE**

David Weston, chief executive of professional development charity Teacher Development Trust, has said that ‘expert teachers’ are less likely than ‘novices’ to blame themselves for pupil underperformance, or to take credit for classroom success. He said that poor pupil performance may be attributed by experienced teachers to students being ‘lazy’, ‘immature’ or coming from a ‘difficult’ family background. Mr Weston said expert teachers were more likely than their less experienced peers to see pupils' success or failure as ‘fixed’.

Mr Weston said: "When you explore the thinking of expert teachers, then they gradually tend to attribute less of the success going on in the classroom, less of the problems going on in the classroom, to themselves. Novice teachers overwhelm themselves by taking total responsibility for all the learning going on. However, expert teachers are much more likely to say, ‘Actually, probably they didn’t do very well because, you know, they’re inherently lazy, they’re really immature or actually their family’s a difficult one. As teachers develop expertise over time, they begin to make more and more attributions of failure and success to much more fixed elements."

Mr Weston said experts were more likely to adapt teaching activities to different classes and were less likely than novices to "follow a script". They also spent more time anticipating pupils' misconceptions. He said that they were also less likely to feel responsible for poor achievement in pupils they considered to be low-ability, than those they saw as having higher abilities. Mr Weston said, if a low-ability pupil did well “They think, 'Oh, that’s nice, maybe I did really well as a teacher, maybe they put some extra effort in, that’s great. Whereas if they did badly, teachers would be sympathetic but view this as unsurprising”. He said that these ideas become "more fixed" as teachers gained experience, although professional development could change this. He said, "We need to show expert teachers that children can do better, that some of the things they think aren’t changeable can be made changeable, and that’s a hard thing to shift because these are deep-rooted beliefs which also protect that teacher from feelings of failure."

Geoff Barton, head of the ASCL, said the findings did not chime with his experience. He said: "My experience is that you get brand new teachers that startle you with their savviness and ability, and you get very experienced teachers who are very open-minded. It doesn’t totally accord with me, so I wonder if some of it can be explained by the culture of the school." Citing educationalist Michael Fullan's line that "for too many teachers 20 years’ experience is the same year repeated 20 times", he said some school cultures might lead to staff "sticking in their ways" while others would have a culture of innovation. He said that his impression was that "a lot of the best teachers and the most experienced are also the most self-critical", saying that they felt "doubly" the impact of a class underperforming as a result of their expertise.

Mr Weston accepted that teaching expertise depended on context, and that subject teachers would not be able to evaluate expertise in a different curriculum area. He said, "If you’re asking me to teach in the school down the road, which maybe had much higher levels of deprivation and you ask me to teach computing instead of physics and ask me to use a very different style of teaching, I won’t be an expert any more. Even an experienced teacher may be able to spot some of the behavioural issues going on, but they simply won’t be able to understand the flow of the subject." He said if, as a science teacher, he observed someone in English, "I might be able to see some of the interaction, but I won’t understand how you’re anticipating different subject issues. I don’t have the expertise in that I am not seeing the classroom and what’s happening in the way you’re seeing it."

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**HIGHER EDUCATION**

**ENGLISH STUDENTS RECEIVE LESS EDUCATION THAN THEIR PEERS ACROSS THE UK**

English students have fewer scheduled hours and written assignments than their peers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland despite having the highest fees, according to an analysis by HEPI. The report, which analysed nearly 60,000 responses collected between 2015 and 2019, found that English students had on average 13.4 scheduled hours per week, compared with 14, 14.3 and 14.6 for students in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively. They also had fewer hours in class. English students were also the least likely to make the same choices about higher education if they could choose again, the analysis found.

A surprising finding was that students in Scotland did not report higher levels of well-being, despite being the only region that does not have tuition fees. The proportion of students in support of tuition fee-free education was highest in Scotland, with 37% agreeing with the statement, “the government should pay all the costs and students should pay nothing”, compared with 21% in England, 20% in Wales and 19% in Northern Ireland. The survey also showed that Welsh students were more positive about the teaching they received than those in other parts of the UK: 60% said that the majority of their teaching staff motivated them to do their best work, compared with 52% in England, 51% in Scotland and 53% in Northern Ireland.

Nick Hillman, head of HEPI, said that notwithstanding the differences the analysis found, overall, students in the four parts of the UK had largely similar attitudes to higher education. He said that this would be important as the UK moves out of the transition phase of Brexit. He said, on a practical level, decisions about what level of fees each nation charges EU students would affect the other nations. He added, “if you are trying to tell the rest of the world UK higher education is good, it is important to speak with one voice, it’s good to have a UK brand.”

**YOU MUST PAY FULL FEES FOR ONLINE COURSES**

Universities minister Michelle Donelan has refused a request from universities for a £2bn bailout but told them that students will still have to pay full tuition fees even if their courses are taught online in the autumn, saying, “We don't believe students will be entitled to reimbursement if the quality is there." She added, "Universities are still continuing with their overheads and their expenses during this time, and it's no fault of their own." To help with cash flow, £2.6bn of tuition fee income and £100m of research funding will be brought forward and universities will be able to access the Treasury's support for businesses disrupted by coronavirus, worth another £700m. The NUS highlighted the problems many students face to study online, with some struggling with a lack of computer equipment and broadband access and not having enough space in which to work.

Ms Donelan also said that there will be more flexibility in the clearing system, and controls on student numbers, designed to stop some universities adding many more students, while others could be left with too few. The University and College Union (UCU), said the government’s support amounted to little more than IOUs. Their head, Jo Grady, said: “This package does not deliver the protection or stability that students, staff and the communities they serve so desperately need. Instead of kicking the can down the road, the government must underwrite funding lost from a fall in domestic and international student numbers and remove incentives for universities to compete against each other at a time when we need to be pulling together.”

**THE IRON FIST TO STOP GAMING THE ADMISSIONS SYSTEM**

The OfS has warned that universities that change their admissions strategies due to financial pressures as a result of coronavirus could be fined up to £500,000. The[moratorium on](https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-longer-pause-unconditional-offers)institutions offering unconditional offers has ended, however, OfS said that it is consulting on a new regulatory condition that would allow for intervention where universities and colleges act in ways that “undermine students’ interests or threaten the stability of England’s higher education sector during the crisis".

Under the proposals there would be a new regulatory condition that would be in force for up to one year. If a university were found to be in breach of this condition, it could be fined up to, or in some cases beyond, £500,000 per breach. The OfS said their measures will, “prevent universities from taking action that could have serious negative consequences for students or the higher education sector during the current crisis”. This could include:

* Changing student recruitment practices in an effort to increase student intake beyond normal levels, for example by converting [existing conditional offers to unconditional,](https://www.tes.com/news/unconditional-offers-made-colleges-60) lowering academic or language requirements for international applicants, offering incentives for students to accept offers, or engaging in aggressive marketing activity designed to attract students away from other choices,
* Making misleading statements about other universities in an attempt to discourage students from attending them, for example by claiming that other universities are failing to support or provide tuition to their students during the pandemic,
* Making decisions that do not demonstrate high standards of good governance and could undermine public trust and confidence in higher education, for example by using government financial assistance for purposes that do not serve the interests of students or the public.
* Failing to comply with public commitments, for example by publicly agreeing to abide by voluntary requirements (such as a code of practice) and then failing to do so,
* Bypassing UCAS admissions processes where they would normally use them.

Claire Sosienski Smith, vice-president for higher education at the NUS, warned that the OfS "must take great care and provide clear guidance to ensure universities and colleges are not deterred from working together to make changes that support students for fear of regulatory action". She said: “That the OfS felt it had to take this action proves yet again that the marketisation of higher education has failed students and created perverse incentives for institutions. It would benefit students and society far more to promote collaboration and cooperation among universities rather than wasteful competition. Students are ultimately still stuck in a system which threatens their education by leaving it to the whims of the market. Regulation alone will not address student concerns, and students are suffering in the here and now with uncertainty over their qualifications, disrupted placements and financial hardship."

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**EMPLOYMENT**

**WORKERS WITHOUT A DEGREE TO BE HIT HARDEST**

Research by the consultancy firm McKinsey has concluded that workers without a degree will be hardest hit by the Covid-19 crisis, raising fears of increasing inequality across [Europe](https://www.theguardian.com/world/europe-news), where up to 59m jobs are at risk. Most at risk include retail staff, cooks, construction workers and office support staff, who are twice as likely to see their jobs under threat because they work in close proximity to others and have significant exposure to the public. Low-insecurity occupations include workers who do not need to work in close proximity to others, such as accountants, architects and journalists, or people providing essential health services, such as healthcare staff, police, food production, education, public transport, or utilities. The report said, “Short-term job risk is highly correlated with level of education, potentially exacerbating existing social inequalities.”

McKinsey also warned that Europe could still face social unrest as a result of rising unemployment, saying, “Societies’ inequalities are exacerbated by higher unemployment rates, as social-welfare systems cannot fully alleviate the negative effects of a loss of employment. Increases in crime rates and social unrest are also potential consequences of an increase in unemployment. Moreover, unemployed people are twice as likely to experience mental illness (and even more so for blue-collar workers), and they receive inpatient treatment more often.” In the UK alone, up to 11m people could end up furloughed or unemployed over the next three months, according to separate research by the Resolution Foundation, which also showed that low-paid workers would be hardest hit.

The foundation said that the[UK’s coronavirus job retention scheme](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/17/uk-government-extends-coronavirus-furlough-scheme-until-end-of-june)has so far shielded the UK from the worst-case economic shock. Their chief economist, Daniel Tomlinson, said the scheme “is what stands between Britain experiencing high unemployment over the coming months and catastrophic Great Depression-era levels of long-term joblessness. It is proving particularly essential in big, low-paying sectors like hospitality and retail, where around half the workforce are no longer working.” Around 46% of workers in the UK hospitality and retail sectors are expected to be furloughed, compared with just 4% of employees in the highest-paid sector, insurance and finance.

The British Chambers of Commerce estimate that two-thirds of firms have furloughed some of their staff. Their head, Adam Marshall, said “The opening of the job retention scheme is an important milestone for businesses, who can now begin to access the cash they need to pay their staff and protect livelihoods.”

The McKinsey research also found that young employees aged 15-24 are twice as likely to face job instability during the outbreak compared with their older counterparts. Sebastian Stern, a senior partner at McKinsey, said the long-term impact on young workers would hinge on how quickly governments start to exit lockdown measures. He said, “If we get out of the lockdown measures as soon as you can justify it, and we invest into the right kind of sectors, I would not say this is a lost generation already, but we need to get the response right.”

**US TO FORCE MEAT PROCESSING PLANTS TO STAY OPEN**

[Donald Trump](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/donaldtrump) has signed an order under the Defence Production Act, (last used in the Korean war), declaring that it is essential for meat production plants to stay open. He also signed an executive order to shield meatpacking companies from legal liability over failing to protect workers from coronavirus. Covid-19 has infected huge numbers of workers at meat-processing plants and forced some of the largest to close. Others have slowed production. Tyson (the largest producer) plants in Texas and Indiana [have closed](https://www.tysonfoods.com/news/news-releases). Other facilities, including a [Smithfield Foods pork plant in South Dakota](https://www.newsweek.com/another-smithfield-meat-processing-plant-shuts-down-over-coronavirus-concerns-1500285), and a [JBS beef plant in Wisconsin](https://www.wbay.com/content/news/JBS-facility-to-temporarily-close-in-Green-Bay-569962531.html), have announced a temporary shutdown. The 15 largest pork-packing plants account for 60% of all pork processed in the country.

The [United Food and Commercial Workers International Union](http://www.ufcw.org/press/), which represents the meatpacking and food processing sector, said at least 10 meatpacking workers and three food processing workers have died, and at least 5,000 meatpacking workers and 1,500 food processing workers have been infected. Stuart Appelbaum, Union President, said, “We only wish that this administration cared as much about the lives of working people as it does about meat, pork and poultry products.” Tyson has backed given large sums to Trump’s campaigns.

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I am sure that this heavy-handed approach is being watched by the Boris and will be used in the UK in the future, especially to make us ‘ready’ for the nirvana of a US trade deal.

**SECTORS MOST AFFECTED BY CORONAVIRUS**

An ONS survey of 6150 businesses at the end of April found that 2/3 of businesses have furloughed some staff and 26.7% of staff were affected, but the numbers furloughed varied hugely by sector.

* Education 4%
* IT 7%
* Transport & storage 26%
* Admin & support 28%
* Manufacturing 29%
* Construction 41%
* Arts & recreation 68%
* Food & accommodation 89%

**WE ONLY NEED THREE WEEKS’ NOTICE TO REOPEN**

The latest British Chambers of Commerce Coronavirus Business Impact Tracker has found that most firms say that they could be ready to restart business with just three weeks' notice. Businesses that offer services to other businesses are the most-ready, with two-thirds saying they would need less than one week or no notice at all to restart operations. Less than half of firms serving consumers said they were confident of being ready that quickly. BCC director general Dr Adam Marshall said, "Businesses' ability to restart quickly varies by company size and by sector. It will be crucial for the government to maintain and evolve support for businesses, to give as many firms as possible the chance to navigate a phased return to work”.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**SUCCEED IN BUSINESS BY HAVING THE RIGHT (political) SUPPORTERS**

The AI start-up company Faculty, who changed its name from Advanced Skills Initiative, that worked with [Dominic Cummings](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/dominic-cummings) on the Vote Leave campaign, has been awarded at least seven government contracts in the last 18 months. The Cabinet Office minister, Lord Agnew, who is responsible for the government department that promotes the use of digital technology within public services, has a £90,000 shareholding in the company. In addition, Faculty’s chief executive, Marc Warner, has attended meetings of the government’s scientific advisory group on emergencies (Sage).

A government lickspittle said Lord Agnew had no role in awarding any contracts to Faculty and had followed the appropriate procedures by declaring his shareholding in the [House of Lords register of interests](https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/) and under the ministerial code of conduct. Faculty was awarded a contract with the NHS [to create](https://faculty.ai/blog/faculty-appointed-to-help-create-nhs-ai-lab/) a new AI laboratory in March via fast-track procedures, without any other firms being asked to bid.

**HEALTH CARE US STYLE**

Tens of thousands of doctors in the United States are taking large pay cuts and nurses are being told to stay at home without pay. This is because healthcare companies are looking to cut costs as they struggle to generate revenue during the coronavirus crisis. Claudio Fort, CEO of a hospital in Vermont, said they are losing around $8m a month. He said, "We have seen our revenues decline by 60%, just about overnight. I don't think there is a hospital in the nation that isn't basically looking at how to survive and what difficult things they need to do to try to bring their cost structure down and to preserve cash flow as we navigate through this. When this is all over, we do hope to bring everyone back to full employment to help serve the 60,000 people we care for, but we just don't know how many of the things we did just two months ago that we're going to be able to continue to provide for the community."

Dr Jane Jenab, a physician in emergency medicine in Denver, said, It's criminal that that these people are having their hours and their pay slashed at a time when they are risking their lives, when it's the most dangerous time of our careers to be coming in to work every day and when really they should be receiving something like hazard pay." She said, “One of the biggest issues in US medicine today is that it has become a business. They tend to run very lean with these hospitals, with these large corporate medical groups because honestly they are much more concerned about profit than their patients." She added, "One of the primary conversations that we're having at the moment is when this is all over, how do we make real and lasting change for our profession? It's hard not to realise how drastically we need to return the focus of medicine away from business and back to caring for our patients."

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**SNIPPETS**

* The Gambling Commission has said that 0.5% of people aged 16 and above are problem gamblers. Charities working in the area suggest that the professional footballers have the biggest problem, with a rate of over 7%
* Harvard has said that it will [donate the remaining $210,000](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/5/2/harvard-concludes-epstein-review/) of a $9.1m gift from the disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein to groups that support victims of sex trafficking and assault.
* Statistics from the end of April show that alcohol sales have risen by 38% compared to this point last year, cider was up 63%. Home baking ingredient sales have risen by 110%.
* Rolls-Royce is to axe up to 8,000 jobs after aircraft manufacturers were forced to cut production. The aeroplane engine maker employs 52,000 people worldwide, with 23,000 staff in the UK.
* Ryanair is to cut around 3,000 jobs.
* Victoria Beckham reversed her application for the government furlough scheme for her ‘fashion business’ after huge negative publicity. The Beckhams are estimated to be worth in excess of £350m.
* Gavin Williamson has said that independent schools should not refuse to award grades to pupils whose parents do not pay their school fees.
* A survey of 18,000 school staff has found that just 27% of respondents in England believe the Government is doing enough to help during the coronavirus pandemic.
* A vice president at Amazon has quit ‘in dismay at the crackdown against workers who criticised it over coronavirus safety measures. Tim Bray said the firing of protesters was "evidence of a vein of toxicity running through the company culture".
* Headteachers are calling on the Government to clarify whether they should fine parents who refuse to send their children to school once lockdown ends.
* Virgin Atlantic is to cut more than 3,000 jobs in the UK and end its operation at Gatwick airport.
* The NEU has said that 23% of teachers are having to stay at home to protect themselves or members of their household due to pre-existing medical vulnerabilities or pregnancy.
* The local government secretary, Robert Jenrick, has said that teachers in non-residential schools do not require personal protective equipment to carry out their work safely.