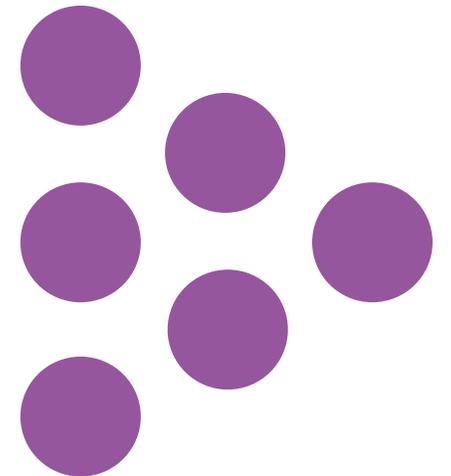# Recovering from Covid-19: Addressing the Needs of Pupils and Schools

Presentation to National School Catch-up Conference

Wednesday 26th January, 2022

Caroline Sharp

Which pupils and schools were most affected by Covid-19?

Pupils

- **Who were less engaged during partial school closures (including low income and SEND)**

- **Youngest age-groups (especially Nursery and Reception)**

- **Transition year groups**

- **Individuals who suffered trauma and isolation.**
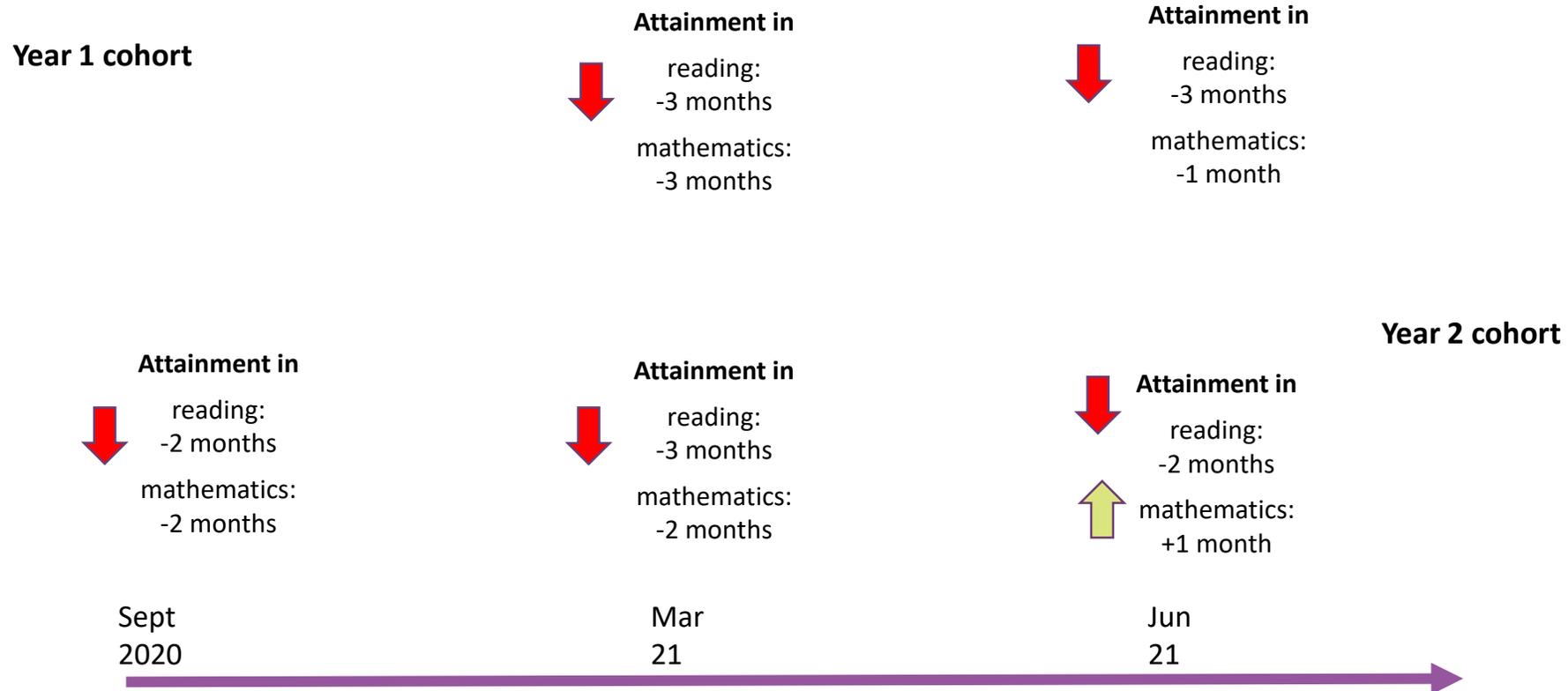
Schools

- **Schools serving disadvantaged areas**

- **Schools with greatest staff and pupil absences.**

Pupils in the most deprived schools were disproportionately affected

NFER
National Foundation for
Educational Research

NFER national survey (May 2020)	Most deprived schools	Least deprived schools
Pupil engagement in remote learning	30%	49%
Parental engagement with remote learning	41%	62%
Limited pupil access to IT resources	39%	19%
ALL areas of the curriculum getting less coverage than usual	34%	22%

Source: Nelson and Sharp (2020)

The pandemic impacted on KS1 attainment in reading and maths

Year 1 cohort

Attainment in
reading:
-3 months

mathematics:
-3 months

Attainment in
reading:
-3 months

mathematics:
-1 month

Year 2 cohort

Attainment in
reading:
-2 months

mathematics:
-2 months

Attainment in
reading:
-3 months

mathematics:
-2 months

Attainment in
reading:
-2 months

mathematics:
+1 month

Sept
2020

Mar
21

Jun
21

Source: Rose et al. (2022).

Public

The disadvantage attainment gap widened in KS1

- There was a substantial gap of seven months between the reading and maths attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers (compared to six months before the pandemic)
- The disadvantage gap closed slightly for Year 1 pupils in reading and maths between the spring and summer terms 2021
- Disadvantaged children performed worse on the social skills measure but there did not appear to be an additional Covid-19 impact on children's social skills.

Scores reduced most at the bottom of the distribution

- The attainment gap was widest for children at the bottom of the attainment distribution

- Vocabulary appeared hardest hit in Year 1, and the ability to read longer, less scaffolded texts in Year 2

- In 2020, children found it more difficult to answer multiplication and division questions, fractions, money, reading an analogue clock and tally charts

- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to find all parts of the maths and reading assessments harder.

Primary all years – some recovery in maths and reading

By the end of the 20/21 school year:

- Evidence of an average reduction in reading attainment of around 0.9 months (though learning improved considerably from -2.2 months in Spring 2021)

- Evidence of an average reduction in maths attainment by around 2.2 months (though again, learning improved from -3.4 months in the Spring).

Source: Renaissance Learning and EPI (2021).

Secondary Schools – a little recovery in Reading

- Analysis for secondary-aged pupils was more limited due to small sample sizes and robust estimates could only be determined in reading.

- By the summer term 2021, secondary-aged pupils had caught up slightly in reading, resulting in an estimate of reduced attainment of around 1.2 months.

The disadvantaged attainment gap widened in primary and secondary

- By the summer term 2021, the additional gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers in reading was around 0.4 months for primary-aged pupils and around 1.6 months for secondary-aged pupils

- The additional disadvantaged gap in maths for primary-aged pupils was around half a month

- There was an association between area-level disadvantage and lower scores.

Other findings

- There was an association between lower scores and poorer attendance during partial school opening.

Barriers to providing a fully rounded education experience

- Omicron-related absence and restrictions

- Spread of attainment and progress (especially primary)

- Impact of Covid-19 on pupils' emotional and mental health (especially secondary)

- Unknown impact on a wide range of subjects (other than reading and maths)

- This will not be a short-term 'fix', especially for those who have been affected most.

Priorities and strategies

- Focus on a firm foundation for children's reading (including parental engagement)

- Focus on supporting recovery for disadvantaged pupils and ensure funding recognises their higher needs

- Ensure pupils with SEND have appropriate support

- Use evidenced-based programmes and support available (e.g. from EEF)

- Consider the most appropriate curriculum revisions (e.g. focus on key skills and concepts; support deep learning across subject areas; consider 'stage not age')

- Digital inclusion: ensure all pupils have access to the digital devices and broadband

- Support children's wellbeing and mental health. Covid-19 has reinforced the relationship between wellbeing, mental health and achievement. Improving young people's mental health will have a large impact on educational attainment.

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