THE EEF GUIDE TO SUPPORTING SCHOOL PLANNING: A TIERED APPROACH TO 2020-21

Education
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Foundation

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About the Education Endowment Foundation

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent charity supporting teachers and school leaders to use evidence of what works—and what doesn't—to improve educational outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children and young people.

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FOREWORD

The impact of Covid-19 has meant school leaders and teachers have met an unpredictable array of challenges. The year ahead will be crucial as schools re-establish routines and reconnect with pupils, so that all pupils go on to thrive.

The mental, physical, and economic impacts of Covid-19 will have affected every family and school in different ways, and the strains of lockdown may have created new barriers to learning, or exacerbated existing challenges for children.

Many children—particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, or who are vulnerable in other ways—will have been adversely affected by extended time away from school. Some will have inevitably suffered from the traumatic loss of a loved one or struggled with the loss of familiar routines. In terms of learning, many children may have been unable to access and engage fully with remote learning.

Of course, some children will have had a positive experience, able to make the most of home learning as well as additional family time. However, the evidence suggests they are likely to be disproportionately from better-off backgrounds and that, as a result, existing learning gaps will have widened.

Whatever the projected impact of Covid-19 on pupils' learning and the continuing disruption to the daily work of schools, what matters now is how we respond in the upcoming academic year. An evidence-informed response can help in restoring vital learning routines and ensure both pupils and teachers will have the best chance of success in a school year unlike any other. This guide is intended to support this.

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated what those who work in education knew already: schools are committed organisations providing an essential service which is pivotal to their community.

Professor Becky Francis
Chief Executive

INTRODUCTION
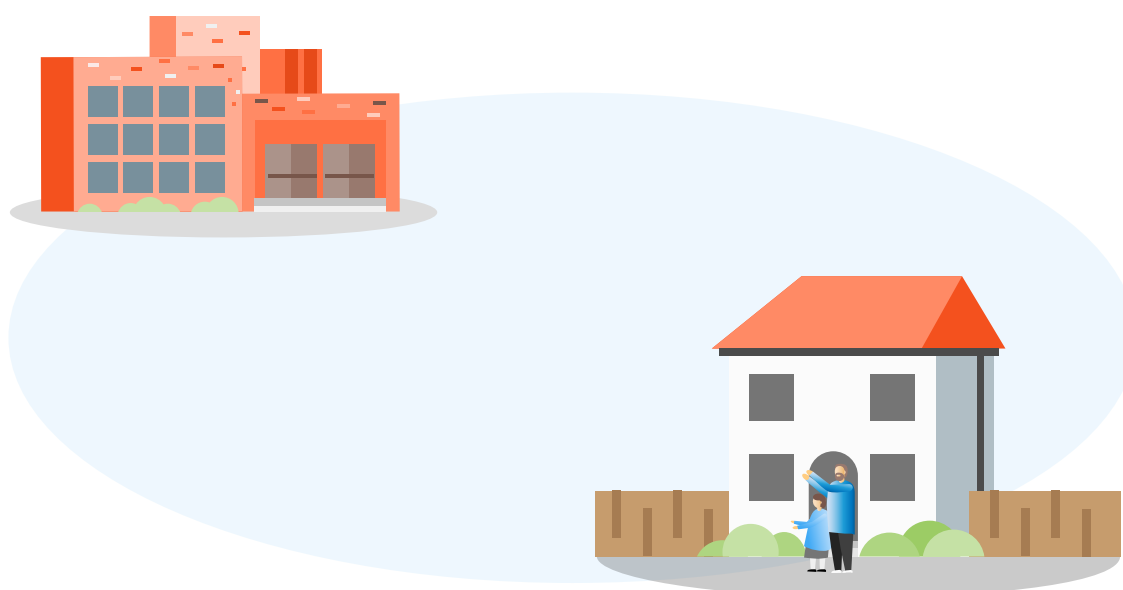
What does this guide cover?

This **EEF Guide to Supporting School Planning** aims to support school leaders with their planning for the academic year 2020-21. It proposes a tiered model that focuses upon high quality teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies to aid school leaders' existing school improvement planning efforts.

We recognise that school leaders and teachers will face significant demands on their time as they manage a full-time return to school for all pupils. The needs of pupils and staff are heightened by the logistical challenges of providing safe school sites and more.

There is no adequate evidence base to steer the many logistical challenges schools face, but there is evidence that reiterates the importance of great teaching to support all pupils, especially the most disadvantaged.

This guide explicitly builds upon the tiered model from the EEF Pupil Premium Guide (2019), with appropriate adaptations. In this instance, we recognise that the impact of partial school closures will likely extend educational disadvantage to more pupils. Therefore, this makes the tiered model more useful as a whole-school planning model. The model is of course flexible, subject to the changes that will occur throughout the school year.

The academic year ahead represents a new implementation challenge for every school leader. This guide shares the best available evidence, referring to existing EEF guidance reports, along with school case studies to aid leaders in navigating these unchartered waters.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is primarily for school leaders across all phases and school types. It addresses issues that span 'academic' and 'pastoral' matters, so the guide should be relevant for a wide array of school leaders, including SENCOs and middle leaders.

Further audiences who may find the guidance relevant include other staff within schools who are responsible for supporting students, such as teachers and teaching assistants.

School governors, MAT Trustees and Members may find relevant evidence to support their work with school leaders, e.g. using the reflection questions to frame school improvement and

forward planning discussions. Additionally, in line with their role in ensuring schools spend funding appropriately and in holding schools to account for educational performance, this and related guidance can help governors and trustees scrutinise schools' approaches to catch-up from September, including their plans for and use of catch-up funding.

In addition, the EEF has published a Guide for Governing Boards, which aims to promote better-informed discussion in governing boards about how your school can improve.

Acting on this guidance

This guide has been developed alongside a range of Covid-19 related resources. These include support resources for schools and resources to share with parents. In June, the EEF also published a support guide for schools with evidence-based approaches to catch up for all students to help them direct their additional funding in the most effective way. This was following the government announcement of a £650m universal catch-up premium for the 2020-21 academic year.

We recommend that school leaders consider how these additional resources can supplement their existing planning efforts.

A range of school case studies accompany this guide, to exemplify the tiered model and to offer useful points of comparison for school leaders. Additionally, there is a blank tiered model template to support school leaders to act on the guidance.

To maximise its impact, this report should be read in conjunction with other EEF guidance, including *Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation*.

Schools may also want to seek support from our Research Schools at researchschool.org.uk—a national network of schools funded by the EEF to support the use of evidence to improve teaching practice.

In addition, the EEF has six regional teams working across the country to help foster and coordinate school improvement partnerships with local authorities, multi-academy trusts, Teaching School Alliances, and informal groups of schools.

Our aim is to ensure all schools—especially those in deprived areas—have access to the resources, training and support they need.

A TIERED APPROACH TO 2020–21 ACADEMIC YEAR PLANNING

Considering a tiered planning model for the academic year ahead can help schools balance approaches to improving teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies. It is recommended in the EEF's Guide to the Pupil Premium as a way to help schools focus on a small number of strategies that are likely to make the biggest difference.

The tiered approach is a helpful heuristic that can supplement school leader decisions regarding the allocation of funding, energy, training and time.

1. Teaching

The best available evidence indicates that great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for their pupils. This was true before the Covid-19 pandemic and it will continue to be vital as schools plan for all pupils to return in the upcoming academic year.

Prioritising high quality instruction in the classroom setting has new-found logistical barriers, but the principles of great teaching remain unchanged. Our recent review of the evidence on 'Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools' found strong evidence that explicit instruction, scaffolding, flexible grouping and cognitive and metacognitive strategies are key components of high-quality teaching and learning for pupils.

Having deep subject knowledge and a flexible understanding of the content being taught is clearly important. Other subject-specific EEF guidance reports will be useful here in identifying apt approaches.

High-quality assessment is essential to great teaching, helping us understand what pupils have (or have not) learned. Targeted diagnostic assessments can support teachers to monitor pupils' progress, particularly as they re-establish classroom routines and recover any learning loss. Schools may also consider how they assess pupils' engagement with school and their well-being. This may prove useful diagnostic information, whilst also support establishing new habits and behavioural routines.

Whole-school planning that focuses on high-quality teaching requires the support factor of sustained professional development. Focused spending on improving teaching in the coming year may include training and support for early career teachers in particular. Areas such as effective remote teaching may need to be revisited in professional development, thereby ensuring effective remote curriculum provision should unplanned school closures occur.

2. Targeted academic support

Evidence consistently shows the positive impact that targeted academic support can have, including for those pupils who are not making good progress across the spectrum of achievement.

Considering how classroom teachers, teaching assistants and external partners can provide targeted academic support, including how to link structured one to one or small group intervention to classroom teaching, is likely to be a key component of effective planning for the new academic year.

Approaches to interventions, such as one to one and small group tuition, require close attention to effective implementation, ensuring sessions are explicitly linked to the content of daily lessons and that effective feedback structures are in place. Such interventions are typically maintained over a sustained period and require careful timetabling and associated training so that delivery is consistent for staff and pupils.

3. Wider strategies

Wider strategies relate to the most significant non-academic barriers to success in school, including attendance, behaviour and social and emotional support. These local needs and challenges will be different for every school community.

Re-establishing the routines of the classroom, and of school, will likely prove beneficial for pupils. Given the loss of routine, along with the potential for adverse experiences during partial school closures, attention on supporting pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs, primarily as part of good teaching, is likely to prove an effective strategy to support learning.

Attendance may prove problematic in the upcoming academic year and have a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged pupils. Some parents and carers may be hesitant to send their children back to school, which will require sensitive, supportive action on the part of the school. Staggered school returns or intermittent absences can prove more disruptive to pupils and prove harder for schools to manage. While there isn't much high quality evidence to support specific strategies, it is clear that planning to support families and the necessity for the ongoing support of, and communication with, parents and carers will prove vital.

Adopting a tiered approach

The tiered approach is a guide, not a prescription. Many strategies will overlap categories, and the balance between categories will vary throughout the school year as priorities change. However, the idea of tiers of support can offer a useful framework for thinking about how to balance different challenges created by whole school returns. Schools can also use a tiered approach to help focus on a small number of strategies that are likely to make the biggest difference.

Figure 1: The tiered model for school planning

1 Teaching

For example

- Professional development programme
- Supporting Early Career teachers
- Assessment
- Effective remote learning

2 Targeted academic support

For example

- Structured interventions
- Small group tuition
- One to one support
- Effective deployment of Teaching Assistants
- Reading interventions

3 Wider strategies

For example

- Sustaining parental engagement
- Social and emotional learning
- Reinforcing behaviour routines
- Breakfast clubs

Schools across the country have provided helpful examples of their tiered approach to planning and implementation for the academic year ahead—see here.

Further reading

THE EEF GUIDE TO THE PUPIL PREMIUM

The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium

A checklist for implementing a tiered approach to planning in 2020-21:

☐ *Are we confident that we have identified a small number of implementation priorities that we think we will be able to change?*

☐ *How many new routines and habits do teachers and other staff need to integrate into their work?*

☐ *Have we appraised our capacity to make those changes, so that they are feasible and likely to be sustained by all staff?*

☐ *Is there a clear and shared understanding of what is being implemented and how, e.g. targeted interventions are communicated clearly to teachers?*

☐ *Are we able to respond to new challenges that may arise during the academic year ahead, e.g. significant falls in attendance?*

1. TEACHING

Great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for their pupils. Ensuring every teacher is supported and prepared for the new academic year is essential to achieving the best outcomes for pupils.

Providing opportunities for professional development on whole class teaching—for example, to support curriculum planning or focused training on effective teaching using technology—is likely to be valuable. This may need to be coordinated to match new priorities, such as developing approaches to remote learning, alongside existing habits and practices, including re-establishing behavioural routines.

Almost all schools will also have made significant adjustments to organisational and logistical aspects of school life due to the conditions related to Covid-19. Ensuring teachers have training and support to adjust to these changes is likely to create the space needed for high quality teaching as all pupils return to school.

Additional information about effective approaches for supporting great teaching is included in the EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit and EEF guidance reports.

High quality teaching for all

Expert teachers develop a broad array of teaching strategies that, combined with subject knowledge and knowledge of their pupils, positively impact upon learning.

One of the challenges of the recent shift to remote teaching has been the removal of the classroom contexts where so many habits and effective strategies have been developed and honed. The EEF's rapid evidence assessment on remote learning (April 2020) found that it was the components that define effective teaching, such as clear explanations and scaffolding, that should be our focus for planning to re-establish and further improve teaching in the upcoming academic year.

Our recent review of the evidence on *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* found strong evidence that explicit instruction, scaffolding, flexible grouping and cognitive and metacognitive strategies, are key components of high-quality teaching and learning for all pupils. They provide just some of the strategies that will either already be in the repertoire of every teacher or can be relatively easily added to it.
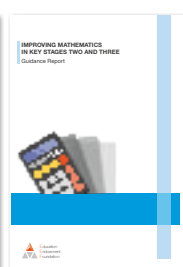
Further reading
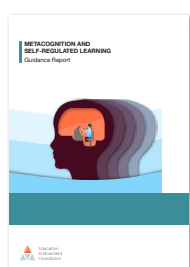
Metacognition and Self-regulation

Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools

This general repertoire of strategies needs to be matched to subject knowledge and with requirements of the curriculum. For further subject specific evidence to support your whole-school planning, you can access our range of guidance reports.

Component of high quality teaching	Example
Explicit teaching Explicit instruction refers to a range of teacher-led approaches focused on teacher demonstration followed by guided practice and independent practice. Several reviews of the research on effective support for pupils in mathematics and reading have provided support for explicit instruction. One popular approach to explicit instruction is Rosenshine's 'Principles of Instruction'.	A teacher might teach a pupil a strategy for summarising a paragraph by breaking up the strategy into small steps. The teacher would initially 'think aloud' while identifying the topic of the paragraph to model this process to the pupil. They would then give the pupil the opportunity to practise this skill, perhaps giving the pupil one paragraph at a time to support them to focus on the information that is essential to the task.
Scaffolding 'Scaffolding' is a metaphor for temporary support that is removed when it is no longer required. Initially, a teacher would provide enough support so that pupils can successfully complete tasks that they could not do independently. This requires effective assessment to gain a precise understanding of the pupil's current capabilities. Support could be visual, verbal, or written. The teacher will gradually remove the support (the scaffold) as the pupil becomes able to complete the task independently.	At St Mary's Church of England Primary School in Barnet, teachers have used task checklists as a visual scaffold to support pupils to independently complete a task.
Cognitive and metacognitive strategies Cognition is the mental process involved in knowing, understanding, and learning. Cognitive strategies are skills like memorisation techniques or subject-specific strategies like methods to solve problems in maths. Cognitive strategies are fundamental to learning and are the 'bread and butter' of effective teaching. Metacognition refers to the ways in which pupils monitor and purposefully direct their thinking and learning. Metacognitive strategies are strategies we use to monitor or control our cognition, such as checking whether our approach to solving a mathematics problem worked or considering which cognitive strategy is the best fit for a task.	Graphic organisers represent a cognitive strategy that has been extensively researched with pupils with SEND. Graphic organisers are used to organise knowledge, concepts, and ideas. Examples include Venn diagrams—for example, the Venn diagram illustrating the overlap between the two concepts 'SEN' and 'disability' in English law—T-charts of pros and cons, mind-maps, cognitive maps, semantic maps, and chronologies or event chains. They can be effective tools for supporting learning.
Flexible Grouping Flexible grouping describes when pupils are allocated to smaller groups based on the individual needs that they currently share with other pupils. Such groups can be formed for an explicit purpose and disbanded when that purpose is met. It may be that a small group of pupils share the need for more explicit instruction to independently carry out a skill, remember a fact, or understand a concept. Allocating pupils to temporary groups can also allow teachers to set up opportunities for collaborative learning; research has indicated, for example, that collaborative learning can be effective in helping pupils read history texts.	A primary teacher undertaking a history lesson may be exploring the chronology though a local history text, using images on cards. The teacher subsequently regroups pupils, to work with those who weren't able to draw upon any background knowledge to identify the images and form an adequate chronology. This small group can then seamlessly be supported to quickly initiate the subsequent writing task assignment.

Attention on effective diagnostic assessment

Planning effective assessment is integral to supporting great teaching. Schools will have to deploy their own assessment approaches to sensitively diagnose the actual impact that Covid-19 school closures may have had on their pupils.

"Assessment (to help identify gaps and ascertain what learning has been remembered/forgotten) was identified as the top priority by headteachers, both primary (32%) and secondary (43%), to support disadvantaged students when schools reopen for all pupils"

TeacherTapp, May 2020

Schools will be considering important questions that relate to 'how' and 'when' they assess pupils on their return.

Questions may include:

• What learning has been lost or misunderstood?

• What new knowledge and experiences have been gained?

• Should we re-teach that material to the whole group, or move on?

• What is the right balance between standardised assessments and classroom-based diagnostic assessments?

Schools which are aiming to forecast general student performance will likely consider standardised tests. These 'high level' assessments can give us broad insights into individuals and groups who may need support based on national norms. However, such assessments typically won't offer diagnostic information about pupils' learning loss, what they need to learn or do next.

Assessment can sometimes be considered onerous. However, understanding the part assessment plays within all interactions in the classroom, can support teachers to recognise the importance of each small piece of information which contributes to a bigger picture of the child. For example, increasing the use of open-ended questioning, when sharing a text with children, can provide numerous opportunities to assess vocabulary, background knowledge and reading comprehension.

It will be important to differentiate between learning that has been forgotten due to extended absence from the classroom and material that hasn't been learnt properly. Effective diagnostic assessments are therefore rooted in classroom practice. Such assessment may include the use of verbal questions, short answer quizzes and multiple-choice questions etc. These low-stakes approaches have the benefit of more precisely diagnosing gaps in learning and informing teaching than broader, time-intensive mock exams.

Schools may also wish to consider assessing social and emotional outcomes that relate to how well pupils learn. Equally, pastoral teams could conduct semi-structured interviews with pupils across the academic year, monitoring and responding to any changes across the school year (particularly for more vulnerable pupils).

Questions to consider for school-based assessment in the next academic year:

• *What assessment tasks will give us the best diagnostic information about the prerequisite knowledge, skills and competencies we want our students to develop through the school curriculum?*

• *Are we clear about the kinds of choices we want information from our assessments to support? Are these choices that we actually can and do act on?*

• *How will we best sequence assessments throughout the academic year?*

Long Stratton High School: A whole-school approach to regular low-stakes diagnostic assessment

Assessment has been a sustained focus in our work to support high quality teaching.

To explore ways of addressing pupils' learning needs "live" within the classroom, we launched a year-long whole-school CPD programme centred around practical approaches to assessment design. Staff collaborated within and between departments to produce more reliable assessments that offered meaningful, actionable information about specific topics and concepts.

As part of this work, we implemented a whole-school assessment approach to target common misconceptions and respond to them more effectively. We found well-designed multiple-choice questions particularly effective for explicitly targeting common misconceptions. Quick and easy to mark, they increased the time available for responsive teaching within lessons, whilst next step tasks could be identified and set immediately for individual pupils.

By adapting existing formative questions with targeted, diagnostic multiple-choice we reduced the administrative burden on teachers, whilst more efficiently uncovering issues that needed addressing. Embedding frequent, low-stakes multiple-choice questions across all departments allowed us to support retrieval and review of key knowledge and concepts, which helped pupils to consolidate their learning.

The benefits to our pupils are evident, but particularly for our disadvantaged learners, who are able to build on these solid foundations, receive continuous feedback and support, and consequently feel more confident to access the full curriculum. Our model means that we are well placed to diagnose lost learning, or misunderstandings, that have occurred during partial school closures and over the summer holiday.

Further reading

EEF Blog: [Assessing learning in the new academic year (Part 1 of 2) – three key questions for school leaders to consider](#)

EEF Blog: ['Back to School': Meaningful and Manageable Assessment](#)

Supporting remote learning

Schools are working towards a full-time return for all pupils in September; however, there is still a great deal of uncertainty as to whether the academic year will be interrupted by Covid-19 outbreaks. School leaders will therefore have to plan for a range of eventualities that will likely involve high-quality remote learning.

Focusing on high-quality remote learning will always be valuable for pupils. Planning for a well implemented remote learning strategy can be effectively combined with revisiting homework policies and related approaches to fostering independent learning.

79% of students require a computer (or tablet or laptop) for at least half of the work provided by schools, while only 6% do not need a computer for any schoolwork
[17,450 age 16+ survey respondents].

Benzeval, Borkowska et al (2020) Understanding Society COVID-19 Survey April Briefing Note: Home schooling, Understanding Society Working Paper No 12/2020, ISER, University of Essex.

In April 2020, the EEF conducted a rapid evidence assessment that examined the existing research (from 60 systematic reviews and meta-analyses) for approaches that schools could use, or are already using, to support the learning of pupils while schools are closed due to Covid-19.

The findings offer practical insights for both remote learning and homework planning in the year ahead. The guidance suggests that when implementing strategies to support pupils' remote learning, or supporting parents to do so, the key things to consider include:

1. Teaching quality is more important than how lessons are delivered

Ensuring the elements of effective teaching are present—for example, clear explanations, scaffolding and feedback—is more important than how or when they are provided. For example, teachers may recycle recorded lessons and materials, considering how they can be integrated into effective classroom practice or used in future homework tasks. Indeed, recorded lesson content could prove very effective to manage an unplanned pupil or staff absence.

2. Ensuring access to technology is key, particularly for disadvantaged pupils

Almost all remote learning uses digital technology, typically requiring access to both computers and the internet. Given school closures, many schools will now have established routines and plans attending remote learning that can be embedded for the academic year ahead. A lack of appropriate technology and home supports may still prove a challenge for many disadvantaged pupils in the year ahead.

In addition to providing access to technology, ensuring that teachers and pupils are provided with sustained support and guidance to use specific platforms is essential, particularly if new forms of technology are being implemented. Ongoing changes to technology platforms may also mean that sustained teacher professional development is a necessity.

3. Peer interactions can provide motivation and improve learning outcomes

Multiple reviews highlight the importance of peer interaction during remote learning, as a way to motivate pupils and improve outcomes. Approaches to peer interaction, such as peer marking and feedback, or sharing models of good work, can be effectively integrated into sustained school routines in the year ahead.

4. Supporting pupils to work independently can improve learning outcomes

Multiple reviews identify the value of strategies that help pupils work independently with success. Research indicates that explicit modelling of independent learning strategies and guided practice is necessary. For example, prompting pupils to reflect on their work or to consider the strategies they will use if they get stuck have been highlighted as valuable. During the new academic year, integrating these strategies clearly into homework and other study approaches is likely to prove effective.

5. Different approaches to remote learning suit different tasks and types of content

Approaches to remote learning vary widely and have different strengths and weaknesses. Teachers should be supported to consider which approaches are best suited to the content they are teaching and the age of their pupils.

As schools return full-time they may seek to evaluate the effectiveness of such remote strategies. Strategies such as using technology to support retrieval practice and self-quizzing can help pupils retain key ideas and knowledge. Schools may seek to embed such practices through their approach to homework etc.

Questions to consider for sustaining high quality remote learning in the next academic year:

- *How will remote learning provision be provided for pupils who are absent from school, in both planned or relatively unplanned circumstances?*

- *What aspects of remote learning provision will be integrated in school policies attending homework, feedback, teaching and learning?*

- *How well do school practices align with the best available evidence on remote learning?*

Layton Primary School, Blackpool: Using technology to support learning

In school, we have 1:1 devices for every child in years 1 to 6—an approach we have implemented carefully with a focus on high-quality teaching and learning. Our pupils are in the habit of receiving spoken feedback from their teacher to their device in school, and this was adapted to allow feedback on work to continue during lockdown.

Through carefully chosen software, teachers have been able to send work out regularly to their class—including videos with clear explanations which build on prior learning. Pupils download any attachments, complete their work, and then send back to their teacher—along with pinned voice comments or questions they might have.

A discussion feature, built in within the app, enables pupils to reflect on their work along with their teacher and peers. Strategies are suggested that might be used if they are stuck. This type of self-regulation is used within school with pupils accessing checklists and resources to support their learning and make them think more deeply.

Giving task-focused verbal feedback has had a significant impact on learning, both in class and remotely. Through the teachers providing recorded comments, pupils are able to listen to the feedback, pause it, go back, listen again, think and act on it. Pupils recognising their teacher's voice is important, as the ongoing relationship between teacher and pupil really matters.

Our approach to utilising technology for learning has been rooted in long term implementation planning, including continuous professional development and support for teaching staff. In the academic year ahead, we will continue to monitor and adapt our approach to suit the learning needs of our pupils.

Further reading

Using Digital Technology to Improve Learning

Best evidence on supporting pupils to learn remotely

Focusing on professional development

Improving the quality of teaching—both the planning and implementation—is almost always supported by high-quality professional development.

In our guidance on *Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation*, we break professional development into two distinct activities: up-front training and follow-on support. Training is used to describe initial activities to develop an understanding of the theory and rationale behind the new approach and to introduce skills, knowledge, and strategies. Follow-on support may include approaches like coaching, where skilled coaches or mentors (either internal or external) provide ongoing modelling, feedback, and support to help apply the ideas and skills developed in initial training to practical behaviours.

High quality, evidence-informed training days can be valuable in establishing teaching priorities and strategies, but a common mistake in implementing new programmes and practices is only providing up-front training, with little or no follow-on support. Given teachers are so busy, habit change based on one-off training will invariably prove insufficient.

The practice gained in using online platforms during partial school closures may be an innovative way to supplement a sustained programme of upfront training and follow on support.

A checklist for implementing changes to teaching and/or whole school approaches in 2020-21:

☐ *Is there a logical and well-sequenced plan to support and sustain high quality teaching?*

☐ *Are our school staff sufficiently skilled in approaches such as assessment or remote teaching? If not, does our planning contain the right blend of professional development activities to develop these skills?*

☐ *Will changes to rooming or timetables as a result of social distancing measures have direct or indirect impact on teaching and whole school approaches (e.g. limiting classroom activities and flexible groupings)?*

☐ *Is there legacy training from the previous academic year on teaching and learning that needs to be revisited, sustained, or adapted?*

Further reading

*Putting Evidence to Work:
A School's Guide to Implementation*

2. TARGETED ACADEMIC SUPPORT

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High quality teaching is supported by, and inextricably bound to, targeted academic support. Good assessment will reveal that some pupils have lost learning, misunderstood content, or made gains in their knowledge, during the extended period of Covid-19 partial school closures. This may require targeted one to one or small group tuition to address gaps. We can also anticipate that pupils with SEND will need specific support in the academic year ahead.

High quality one to one and small group tuition

The evidence indicates that small group and one to one interventions can be a powerful tool for supporting pupils. High-quality teaching should reduce the need for extra support, but it is likely that some pupils will require high quality, structured, targeted interventions to make progress. These interventions should be carefully targeted through identification and assessment of need and the intensity should be monitored. Some pupils may make quick gains as they return to school full time, so assessment needs to be monitored—in a manageable fashion—over time.

Where interventions are necessary, schools should use structured interventions ideally with reliable evidence of effectiveness (such as EEF trial evaluations). Some of the common elements include:

- Sessions are often brief (15-45 mins), occur regularly (e.g. 3-5 times per week) and are maintained over a sustained period of time (e.g. 8-20 weeks).

- Staff receive extensive training from experienced trainers or teachers.

- The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans with clear objectives.

- Teaching assistants or academic mentors follow the plan and structure of the interventions.

- Assessments are used to identify appropriate pupils, guides areas for focus and track pupil progress.

- Connections are made between the out-of-class learning in the interventions and classroom teaching.

Interventions should be applied using the principles of effective implementation described in the EEF's guidance report *Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation*.

Targeted Support in the EYFS: Nuffield Early Language Intervention

Oral language skills form a crucial foundation for thinking, learning and social interaction. Children's oral language ability during their early years is one of the strongest predictors of success in literacy and numeracy and later employment and wellbeing. The Reception Nuffield Early Language Intervention Programme (NELI), through several robust EEF trials, has been shown to improve children's oral language and early literacy skills. A recent trial of the programme found that children made on average +3 months of additional progress compared to children in the comparison group.

The NELI programme involves scripted individual and small-group language teaching sessions delivered by a trained teaching assistant or early years educators to children identified as being in need of targeted language support. The NELI programme aims to develop children's vocabulary, listening and narrative skills and in the last 10 weeks also involves work to develop phonological awareness and early letter-sound knowledge as foundations for early literacy skills.

The Department for Education has announced (August 2020) that it is working with the EEF and other delivery partners to make NELI available to many state-funded primary schools, which will be able to receive online training and NELI programme resources at no cost. This will be funded as part of the Government's £350m allocation to tutoring, through the £1bn Covid-19 'catch-up' package announced in June 2020. While all state-funded primary schools are encouraged to express an interest, places are limited and, in the event of over-subscription, schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals will be prioritised.

See here for further information and how to sign up.

Teaching assistants and targeted support

The overriding principle from the evidence is that teaching assistants (TAs) should be deployed in a way that supplements, not replaces, the teacher.

Whilst schools inevitably have to be resourceful at the current time, replacing teachers with TAs could potentially widen gaps, as shown in the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) study (see here: http://maximisingtas.co.uk/research/the-diss-project.php). As such, school leaders need to consider carefully how to maximise the impact of their TAs.

If TAs are required to lead 'bubbles' for logistical reasons, as an emergency short term strategy, it should be minimised wherever possible. Ensure TAs are fully prepared for this role, for example, co-planning with a teacher, and avoid assigning TAs to 'low prior attaining' groups.

Schools have found it helpful to establish a draft agreement for teacher-TA interactions, which set out their respective complementary roles during lessons. For example, TAs may focus on developing pupils' independent learning skills, or (re) establishing important relationships with children and families.

Generally, the use of TAs to deliver high quality interventions, which complement the work of the teacher, is a 'best bet' and could be a powerful way of mitigating any impacts of time away from school and see positive gains for pupils. We suggest schools should adopt one or two well-chosen, and well-implemented, TA-led interventions, judiciously used to complement and extend class-based teaching and learning.

Structured, evidence-based programmes, such as Nuffield Early Language Intervention Programme (NELI) and REACH (a targeted reading support programme designed to improve reading accuracy and comprehension in pupils with reading difficulties in Years 7 and 8) are examples of effective interventions led by TAs, that can improve the literacy of pupils. As for any structured intervention, ensure that learning in interventions is consistent with, and extends, work inside the classroom and that pupils understand the links between the two.

Further reading
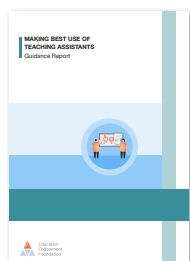
Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants

Academic tutoring

When implementing tutoring it is important that pupils are provided with sessions over a sustained period. Shorter and more frequent sessions may be particularly beneficial for younger children and tutoring has been shown to be particularly effective for subjects like reading and mathematics.

To be most effective, creating a three-way relationship between tutor, teacher and pupils is essential, ensuring that tuition is guided by the school, linked to the curriculum and focused on the areas where pupils would most benefit from additional practice or feedback. Schools should therefore explicitly plan for how to best manage relationships with external tutors and ensure that staff have time to influence how these sessions are used and to receive appropriate feedback from tutors and from participating pupils.

Tuition delivered by qualified teachers is likely to have the highest impact. However, tuition delivered by tutors, TAs, or trained volunteers can also be effective. Where tuition is delivered by teaching assistants or trained volunteers, providing training linked to specific content and approaches is beneficial. Tutors would also need to be supported by the school to be aware and responsive to pupils who have SEND, ensuring appropriate adaptations or additional supports is provided.

Small group tuition is effective; generally, the smaller, the better. However, both small group and one to one tuition can be useful approaches, depending on the context. Small group tuition requires less staff time to deliver to the same number of pupils, and therefore also reduces costs.

Tutoring interventions have been shown to be particularly effective for pupils who are lower attaining in comparison to their cohorts and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. As such, tutoring can be used as a targeted catch-up strategy for particular pupils.

Questions to consider for effective interventions in the next academic year

- *How are pupils being selected to receive additional tutoring? Is reliable data being used to inform those judgements?*

- *Is there a planned timescale for the tuition, with clear entry and exit strategies?*

- *What one to one or small group tuition approaches is your school implementing?*

- *What supports will be in place to ensure the work of the tutors is aligned with classroom practice?*

- *Have you considered how you will support pupils and class teachers to sustain the impact of the tutoring once they finish their cycle of tutoring sessions?*

National Tutoring Programme

National Tutoring Programme

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) aims to support schools in providing a sustained response to the Covid-19 partial closure of schools and to provide a longer-term contribution to closing the attainment gap.

Through NTP Tuition Partners, schools will be able to access subsidised high-quality tuition from an approved list of providers. These organisations—who will all be subject to quality, safeguarding and evaluation standards—will be given support and funding to reach as many disadvantaged pupils as possible. The Education Endowment Foundation will be leading the delivery of this part of the programme and has been provided with funding from the Department for Education to fund activity in 2020-21.

Through NTP Academic Mentors, trained graduates will be employed by schools in the most disadvantaged areas to provide intensive support to their pupils pupils, allowing teachers in these schools to focus on their classrooms. Teach First will be supporting the recruitment, training and placement of the first cohort of Academic Mentors. The salaries of Academic Mentors will be funded by the Government.

Both pillars are funded as part of the Government's £350m allocation to tutoring, through the £1bn Covid-19 catch-up package announced in June 2020.

Visit the NTP website for further information: https://nationaltutoring.org.uk.

Planning for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

EEF guidance on *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* reminds us that, to a great extent, good teaching for children with SEND is good teaching for all. Teachers should consider the repertoire of strategies cited earlier in this guide to use flexibly in response to the needs of all pupils but particularly those who have SEND.

Teachers are aware of individual learning needs and have wider conversations with parents, colleagues and specialist professionals in addition to the child to establish next steps.

Creating a positive and supportive environment that promotes high standards and positive relationships can help ensure pupils can access the best possible teaching. Consistent routines are important for behaviour in school and this proactive approach to behaviour will support all pupils, including those with SEND.

An important principle for teachers in managing behaviour is to get to know and understand each pupil, supporting them in the self-regulation of their behaviour. Self-regulated learners can see larger tasks as a series of smaller more manageable steps. Pupils will need teachers, teaching assistants or tutors to scaffold self-regulation to support them in organising equipment, their time and remembering routines.

A checklist for implementing targeted academic support in 2020-21:

☐ *Are we using relevant and rigorous data to ensure targeted interventions are appropriate?*

☐ *Are our school staff sufficiently skilled in delivering targeted academic interventions? If not, what additional support is required?*

☐ *Will changes to rooming or facilities, as a result of social distancing measures, have a direct or indirect impact on targeted academic interventions (e.g. are there sufficient spaces in school for small scale interventions)?*

☐ *Are any interventions being stopped to ensure both staff and pupils have the capacity to undertake new interventions as part of their daily work?*

Questions to consider when planning to support pupils with SEND:

• *How do staff know their pupils, including those pupils with SEND? How is this communicated widely?*

• *How will your school plan for effective teaching assistant deployment to offer both targeted interventions and supplementary classroom provision?*

• *How are supportive relationships with an adult in school developed for pupils with SEND?*
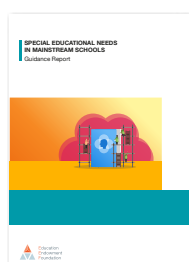
Further reading

Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools

3. WIDER STRATEGIES

Schools will be deploying a range of wider strategies to support their pupils in the upcoming academic year with creativity and commitment. With new challenges attending social distancing measures, for example, school leaders will continue to be flexible and will need to adapt their planning appropriately.

There may be new barriers to success in school, such as reduced attendance, or adaptations to school routines which may affect the behaviour of some pupils. Equally, many pupils will thrive as regular school routines are (re)established and school leaders focus on the social and emotional needs of their pupils.

Supporting pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs

A large and often unrecognised part of teachers' work has always involved providing support for pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs. Understandably, the impact of Covid-19 closures means many schools are revisiting their approach, to secure support in readiness for this new school year.

As most children will change teachers in September, valuable transition information will need to be supplemented with a sustained focus on supporting and monitoring pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs. Once more, meaningful and manageable assessment will be crucial.

The EEF has summarised the best available evidence in our guidance report, _Improving Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools_ (much of the evidence is also applicable to

secondary schools). A common misconception can be that pupils' wellbeing and social emotional learning is separate from their academic, curriculum-based learning.

There are many ways social and emotional learning (SEL) can be meaningfully combined with the academic curriculum. For example, in English, taking the opportunity to talk about a character's emotions, along with developing pupils' vocabulary to describe emotions, can be helpful to develop pupil's self-awareness. This may support pupils to articulate their experiences and feelings with regard to school closures.

Plan carefully for adopting a SEL curriculum

Many schools will be satisfied that their existing PHSCE curriculum offers an excellent starting point to be responsive to pupils' social and emotional needs after lengthy school closures. Schools need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of bespoke SEL approaches and bought-in programmes, considering cost, training requirements and teachers' capacity for implementation.

It is useful to understand the principles of successful SEL programmes. The following four key principles—as exemplified in the SAFE model—have been found to be effective in improving children's outcomes:

1. **Sequenced activities that lead in a coordinated and connected way to skill development.** New behaviours and more complicated skills usually need to be broken down into smaller steps and sequentially mastered.

2. **Active forms of learning that enable young people to practise and master new skills.** This might include role play or behavioural rehearsal.

3. **Focused time in the school day/classroom (or in more 'blended' models) spent developing one or more social and emotional skills.** Sufficient time and attention must be allocated for children to practise applying knowledge and skills.

4. **Explicitly define and target specific skills.** Programmes should identify specific skills that they want children to develop, and teach these purposefully, rather than having a more general approach. See Recommendation 1 of the EEF'S guidance on _Social and Emotional Learning_ for more detail on specific skills.

Questions to consider for supporting social and emotional learning in the next academic year:

- _What approaches to social and emotional learning will best support pupils to reconnect with their peers and to re-establish positive learning behaviours?_

- _What opportunities are there to meaningfully combine SEL and the academic curriculum?_

- _How will we best sequence SEL support throughout the academic year?_

Billesley Primary School: A whole school approach to social, emotional and behavioural needs

Addressing social and emotional learning needs is a whole-school cultural priority at Billesley Primary School, which comprises 48% disadvantaged pupils.

To ensure effective implementation teachers were involved in planning for SEL approaches within their classrooms, guaranteeing their preparedness, as well as enthusiasm. Ongoing CPD and support for staff from skilled SEL leaders ensures staff have support to embed changes in their practice.

Our SEL curriculum is grounded in evidence-informed approaches that have proven to be effective within our context. This occurs in short dedicated sessions, within timetabled PSHE and Philosophy for Children lessons, and, crucially, within everyday practices.

Additionally, a range of strategies, including the use of a feelings chart to support identifying emotions, regular practice of calming tools such as deep breathing, using stories to examine character's feelings through reflective questioning, and using consistent approaches to solving problems and setting goals are central to our approach. To ensure easy implementation, all staff have access to the 'Social Emotional Toolbox' as a digital compendium.

SEL is a focus for our leadership team at Billesley. We ensure a shared language and actively plan daily check-ins with our dedicated pastoral team and a mentoring model. We also have a 'Student Wellness and Awareness Group', as well as delivering emotions coaching.

Our approach is holistic, supported by the physical environment which is aesthetically pleasing and calming to the eye. Carefully designed classrooms include 'safe spaces' and areas to support physical well-being. Visual cues in the classroom, such as feelings vocabulary, self-regulation strategy posters and 'calm down kits', offer handy reminders for pupils and staff.

Our explicit approach means that we are well placed to manage pupils' return to school in the coming academic year.

Communicating with and supporting parents

School leaders and teachers have made tremendous efforts to sustain communications and partnerships with parents and care givers during school closures. Close engagement during this challenging time is clearly crucial to ensure that pupils are supported to learn and thrive, and that parents are able to provide this support without the expectation that they fulfil the role of teacher.

Sustaining communications with parents across an academic year can be challenging. Given the potential of continued challenges related to Covid-19, communications will need to be monitored and supported. For example, are parental responses to messages home remaining high? Are parents' evenings—either in school or remotely—well attended?

A clear purpose for such communication may actually mean that this communication is reduced in volume over the coming school year. More communication—increasing how many times we contact, or detail of the content—is not always effective when supporting busy parents. For example, evidence suggests text messages are an effective communication channels compared to lengthier approaches.

Consider these 5 tips for sustained communications with parents across the next academic year:

1. Develop a clear plan for your communications with families across the academic year.

2. Audit your current communications (especially with less-involved families) to assess what has worked well and what has not during the period of school closures and the planned return.

3. Try to personalise messages as much as possible, being aware of parents' varying literacy levels and the need for any translation.

4. Reinforce simple, encouraging messages around sustainable home learning, routines and study tips. Also, remember to celebrate successes with parents.

5. Avoid, where possible, complex communication about curriculum content, but focus support on self-regulation, such as establishing a quiet place to work, organisation of equipment, and work routines and habits.

In some cases, schools will need to address absences directly, whilst sensitively exploring parents' and pupils' concerns that may be inhibiting school attendance. Helping pupils re-engage with school—feeling safe and ready to learn—will be at the forefront of school leaders' plans.

Support parents with pupils of different ages

Tailor your focus and strategies for helping parents according to different age groups:

For younger children (EYFS to KS2)

- Promote shared activities such as reading together or playing with letters and numbers

- Set short and focused learning projects that parents can more easily manage

- Encourage establishing a positive home learning environment, ensuring that there are resources such as books, puzzles, and toys available

For older children (KS2 to KS5)

- Parental encouragement for, and interest in, older children's learning is more important than direct involvement

- Provide general information to parents on child development or curriculum content to create helpful context, whilst ensuring that the work is linked to specific actions that they can take to support learning

- Set between one and two hours of homework per school day (slightly longer for older pupils). Positive effects of doing homework generally start to diminish when students spend more time than this.

St Mark's C of E Primary School: Supporting parents, supporting learning

Partial school closures have presented a positive opportunity to work closely with families in our school community. It has been a leadership priority for us over the past months and will continue to be so in the academic year ahead.

We ensure we invest in strong relationships with parents. This includes employing a Community and Wellbeing Leader and an Attendance Officer who maintain strong links between school and home. During partial school closures we have undertaken a differentiated approach to supporting pupils (including phone calls and home visits fortnightly, weekly and every three working days).

Our focus on creating bespoke and targeted learning packs is something we can learn from as we move into the new academic year. We will be ensuring home learning is purposeful, achievable and well monitored by staff. The suite of options for home learning can be deployed flexibly in the year ahead; especially if there are unplanned school closures or pupil absences.

A checklist for implementing support and communication with parents in 2020-21:

- [ ] *Are there barriers for parents that need to be recognised and supported, e.g. limited time due to work commitments, or low literacy levels?*

- [ ] *Are existing approaches to supporting attendance adequate given a new context where many parents may have a heightened sensitivity to the health and wellbeing of their child?*

- [ ] *Are our school staff sufficiently skilled in engaging in sustained parental communications? If not, does our planning contain the right blend of professional development activities?*

- [ ] *Can new or existing technologies sustain a manageable and meaningful plan to communicate with and support parents?*

Successful implementation in challenging times

School leadership is a fast moving, complex but hugely rewarding task. In the academic year ahead, there are clearly new challenges that will require careful planning, such as ensuring classrooms are safe and approaches to social distancing etc. are managed successfully. New challenges will sit alongside familiar demands such as supporting high quality teaching, so making wise and manageable decisions is more important than ever.

Changing existing systems, practices and habits is rarely straight-forward. School leaders may need to consider what they are going to stop doing (and actively plan its 'de-implementation'), as much as what they are going to adopt and develop in the year ahead.

It is helpful to breakdown the process of implementation into stages, along with meaningful questions to consider:

- **Explore:** what problems are we seeking to solve in the academic year 2020-21? Are there adequate solutions, in the form of evidence-informed practices or programmes?

- **Prepare:** do we have a clear, logical and well-specified plan? Do staff fully understand what is being implemented and how? What is the readiness of the school and staff to undertake these changes?

- **Deliver:** how best can staff best deliver upon new approaches? Are there mechanisms in place to improve their use over time? Can we reinforce our approaches with initial training and continuous wrap around support?

- **Sustain:** how do we best maintain new practices, for both staff and pupils, across a full academic year? How we will nurture motivation and ensure that we acknowledge and support good practice?

A helpful way to consider the difficult act of sustaining a complex array of new practices across a school year is to consider what is **expected**, **supported** and **rewarded**.

For much more guidance on effective implementation, see the EEF's guidance report, '*Putting Evidence to Work—A School's Guide to Implementation*'.

What is being expected?	What is being supported?	What is being rewarded?
e.g. teachers undertake regular diagnostic assessments	e.g. teachers are supported with professional development on high-quality diagnostic assessment	e.g. school leaders give meaningful praise to teachers who have supported pupils to make excellent progress and ensure their workload is manageable

FURTHER READING AND SUPPORT

Education Endowment Foundation
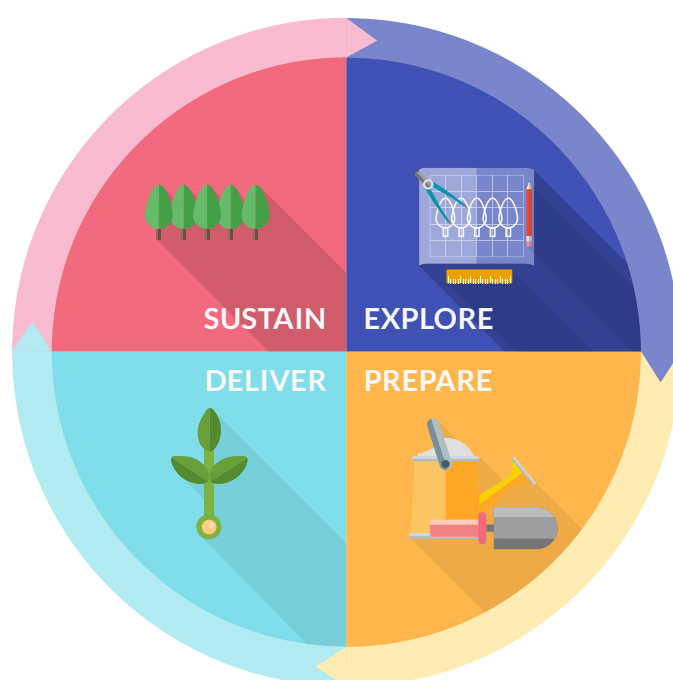
Our resources are freely available online:
educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

For any questions about or feedback on this guide or other EEF resources please contact info@eefoundation.org.uk

Research Schools Network

The Research Schools Network supports schools in using evidence to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. For more information, including about courses and training, see:

https://researchschool.org.uk

Guidance reports

EEF guidance reports provide clear and actionable recommendations for teachers on a range of high-priority issues based on the best available evidence.

https://eef.li/guidance

Covid-19 support resources for schools

Resources designed to be used by schools and parents/carers to support home learning, based on EEF guidance reports.

https://eef.li/school-closures

Sutton Trust—EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit

The Teaching and Learning Toolkit provides an accessible summary of the evidence across 35 different approaches aimed at improving pupil outcomes.

https://eef.li/toolkit

EEF Promising Projects

Those EEF-funded projects which have shown promising results when independently evaluated.
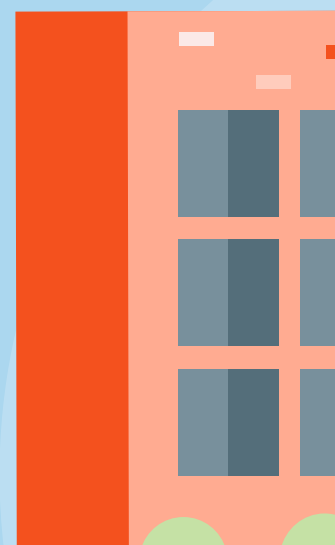
https://eef.li/projects

What Works Clearinghouse list of studies

A list of studies that examine the impact of remote learning approaches, identified by the What Works Clearinghouse.

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/distancelearningstudy

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