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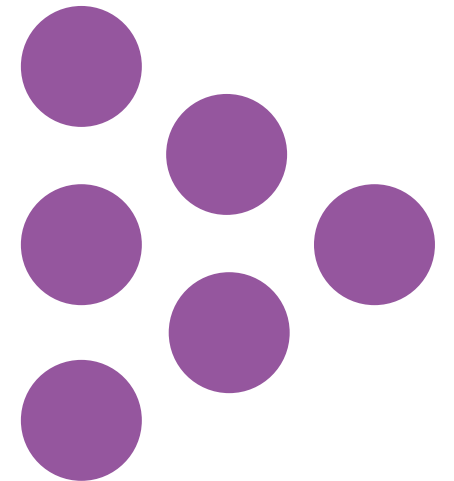
# Recovering from Covid-19: Addressing the Needs of Pupils and Schools

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**Presentation to National School Catch-up Conference**

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2022

**Caroline Sharp**



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

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## 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

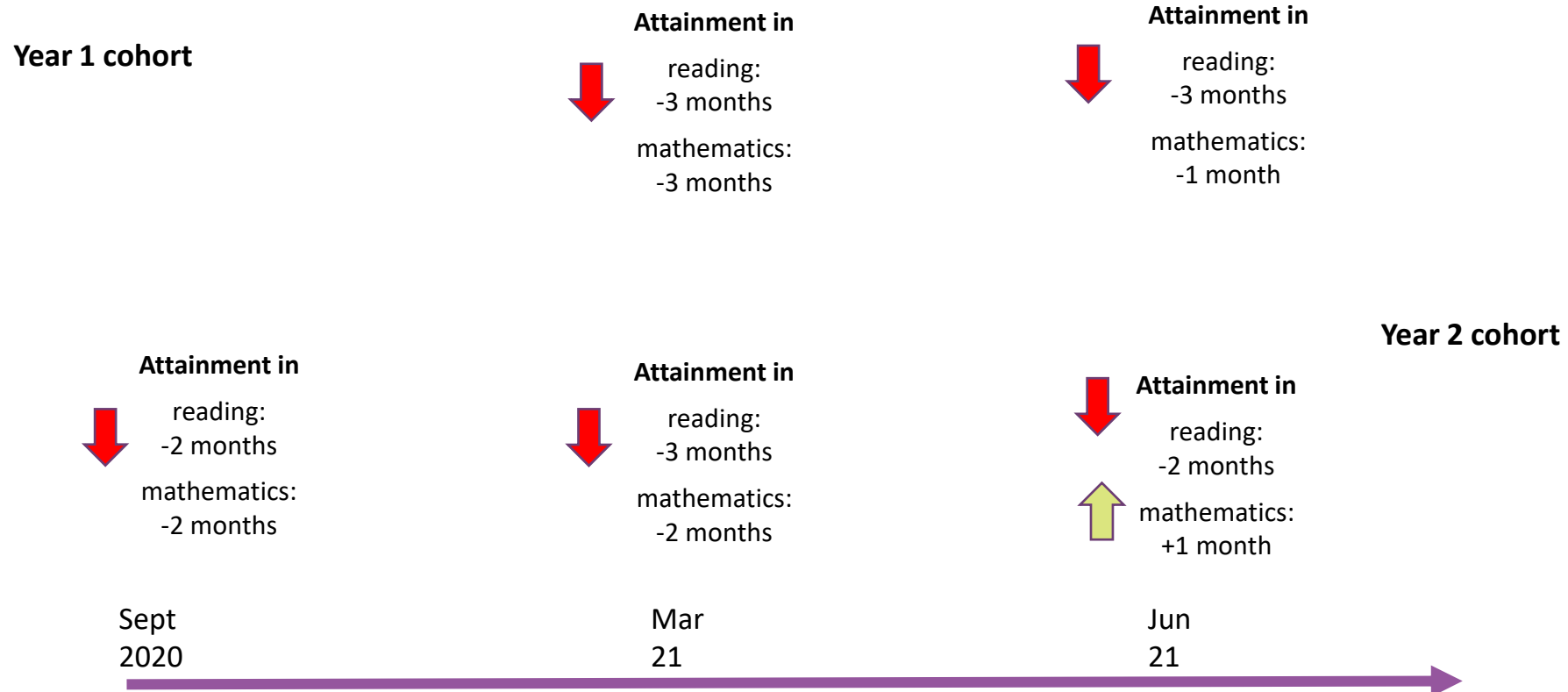
- Schools serving disadvantaged areas
  - Schools with greatest staff and pupil absences.
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# Pupils in the most deprived schools were disproportionately affected

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



Source: Rose et al. (2022).

# The disadvantage attainment gap widened in KS1

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- 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 gap 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

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- 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

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## 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

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- 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

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- 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.
- The Covid-19 'learning loss' was greatest in the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber.

# Barriers to providing a fully rounded education experience

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- 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

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- 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.

# Sources

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