

Levelling up needs the schools back

During the long lock downs some pupils have been able to benefit from a full timetable of on line lessons and lectures, and to have home work marked over the internet by engaged teachers. I praise all those teachers and schools that adapted and did a good job ensuring their students did not go without education.

Other schools provided childcare and maybe some education for the children of key workers but delivered little for the rest. Some managed work assignments for homeworking. It meant the gap started to get bigger again between those who had the advantage of a full timetable of lessons and those who did not.

Some schools in the private sector did decide they had to deliver a full timetable and challenging home coursework, as the parents expected something for the fees they were paying. The danger is the response to CV 19 has increased the gap between some in the private sector that got a good education during the lockdowns, and some in the state sector who got little by way of teaching. That is not going to help the government with its good aim of levelling up.

The government made clear it would assist in supplying digital devices so pupils in households where on line access was a problem would be helped. As schools prepare for the return in September they need to look at how they can best meet the need for every pupil to have the benefit of good lessons and marked homework for the older pupils.

Teachers rightly tell us they want to teach and believe the daily contact between pupil and teacher is an important part of growing up and gaining skills for life. The way in which each school meets the demands on it and looks after its pupils is mainly a matter for school and local determination. Teachers are valued professionals, and we look forward to seeing their solutions for this autumn as pupils go back to school. It is most important we level up, which does require us to deliver the best possible education to those from difficult backgrounds. We may also be able to use more of the digital technology in developing those crucial relationships.

Exam results

There may be a row in England, as there has been in Scotland, over this summer's GCSE and A level results.

The first thing to stress is the award of grades to students has nothing to do with Ministers and the government. Normally students take exams set by independent Examining bodies, advised and moderated by teachers, with all the

work marked by teachers. The Exam body then awards grades based on the marks awarded, seeking to moderate standards between years. Ministers rightly do not get a say in any individual's papers or marks, or in the decision each year on where to set the grade boundaries.

This year the decision was taken to abandon exams but to award grades and passes based primarily on teacher assessment of the individual's course work and achievements at school in each subject. The Exam Boards will still moderate the results fed to them by each of the participating schools. There are issues over how this will be done.

If all worked well each school would come to a perfect judgement of each pupil it teaches, and across England this would produce a fair set of outcomes without moderation or adjustment. However, life is not that simple. The Examining Boards want the schools to ensure they have placed all their pupils in the right relative order to each other, reserving to themselves the ultimate right to decide how marks translate to grades awarded by the Examining Board. The Examining Boards are alert to the possibility that teachers will naturally see the best in their own pupils and might collectively mark up producing some grade inflation compared to previous years. They need, however, to be alert to other possibilities as well. For any individual pupil there is the danger of adverse marking if they planned to leave much of their study and revision to close to the exam and did not do so well in the early months of the course, or if their conduct and attitudes did not lead the teacher to see their academic strengths fully.

The toughest cases are for schools or subject teachers who are lifting standards year by year or lifting them for the first time this year who may encounter a general downgrade of their forecast results owing to the Exam Board wishing to moderate grades in relation to past experience at that school. There is also the unspoken danger that a school or subject area on the slide will secure more favourable outcomes than if their pupils had had to undertake the exam. The Independent Regulator is also involved in requiring Exam Boards to moderate standards.

Most people would agree it is better and fairer to let pupils sit exams and to have these marked by teachers at other schools to a prescribed marking scheme. In this CV 19 damaged year all involved will doubtless do the best they can to come to fair judgements, but there is likely to be more unhappiness both by some individuals and by some individual schools and teachers given the occasional rough justice which will be delivered. The good news is a student can appeal and can ask to sit a proper exam to improve their grade.

More money for school transport for Wokingham and West Berkshire

The government has announced a new £40 m fund to help with the costs of school transport from September for English local government. I look forward to Wokingham Borough and West Berkshire getting some benefit from this, which is in addition to extra funding for walking and cycling policies which the government recommends to pupils where appropriate.

Letter to the Health Secretary

I would like to follow up on my questions to you concerning the search for treatments that help CV 19 patients. You rightly replied that a number were in clinical research under your Recovery Trial, as well as with the WHO's Solidarity trial and elsewhere. It was good news that Dexamethasone was shown to have helpful effects for some serious cases.

How are the trials both in the UK and abroad going for

1. Other immune moderators and Interferons?
2. Anti virals including Remdesivir and Hydroxychloroquine?
3. Anti coagulants?
4. Convalescent plasma?
5. Vitamins C and D? 6. Nitric Oxide, zinc and Ozone?

Some of these treatments some doctors say might be best used in the early stages to prevent the disease taking hold, and some may have beneficial effects in serious cases needing oxygen treatment, as with Dexamethasone. Clearly finding more ways of combatting the different features of the serious versions of the pandemic would be of great help in taming it.

Your stated policy of getting the NHS back to work on everything not related to CV 19 is now crucial. New contracts with the private health Sector should be based solely on buying stated procedures, treatments and operations for patients on the NHS waiting list. Buying capacity with no known patient in mind will be wasteful and will not incentivise the NHS to use the private capacity fully, as we saw during lock down.

It is also important that the policy of handling CV 19 cases in isolation hospitals or in clearly sealed off units in District General hospitals is properly enforced and advertised so patients are not put off attending

surgeries, clinics and hospitals to have other serious conditions treated. With best wishes to you in getting the NHS fully back to work after the heroic efforts made by some to tackle the dangerous and difficult CV 19 surge.

[Stopping illegal migration](#)

As there is great support from many writing in for this, why not set out your proposals for the Home Secretary in your postings as she clearly shares this aim.