Highlights

• Many students missed a large amount of school time during the pandemic, even after schools had re-opened nationally. During the 2020/21 academic year, 18% of year 11 students missed more than 20 days of school, with a further 24% missing between 11 and 20 days. Young people from lower occupational status backgrounds were more likely to miss school, with 21% of those from working class backgrounds missing more than 20 days, compared to 17% from higher managerial/professional backgrounds.

• Many young people feel they have fallen behind due to the pandemic, with 36% saying they have fallen behind their peers. 37% of those at state schools said they had fallen behind their classmates – more than double the figure for independent school students. Young people from ethnic minorities were more likely to be concerned they had fallen behind their classmates due to pandemic disruption.

• Overall, 53% of young people took part in at least one type of ‘catch-up’ activity. The most commonly reported was additional online classes students could watch, re-watch or join from home, with 50% of pupils offered this, and 30% taking it up. Children in the state comprehensive schools with highest intakes of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) were the most likely to have taken part in catch-up activity, at 61%, compared to 48% of those in the least deprived state comprehensive schools.

• The National Tutoring Programme was a flagship part of the government’s catch-up plans, providing one-to-one and small group tuition to pupils. 41% of year 11 pupils in state comprehensive schools reported being offered some type of tutoring, with 27% taking it up. This compares to 9% of parents reporting they paid for their child to have private tuition in the same time period, and 52% of students in independent schools being offered tuition by their school.

Catch-up activities offered and taken up by students in state comprehensive schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Offered and taken up</th>
<th>Offered and not taken up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional online classes</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional in-person classes/support</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra tuition/support in pairs or small groups</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional classes during holidays or weekends</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra one-to-one tuition/support</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Context

The COVID-19 pandemic and the public health restrictions that followed dramatically changed the structure and experiences of education for young people in England. After the second set of partial school closures in January 2021, pupils returned to their classrooms in early March of the same year and, while there have been no further periods of national closures, there has been continuing disruption.

Since schools fully re-opened, school attendance has not yet returned to the pre-pandemic average

This has included individual classes being sent home due to outbreaks, as well as larger individual school closures, for example due to staffing shortages. Looking at existing data on persistent absence rates since schools fully re-opened, school attendance has not yet returned to the pre-pandemic average, in the first term of the 2021/2022 academic year, 25% of primary school pupils and 35% of post-primary pupils had missed at least 10% of in-person sessions, whilst 7% of primary and 12% of post-primary pupils had missed at least 20% of sessions. More specifically for the COSMO cohort, 50% of disadvantaged pupils in Years 10 and 11 had missed at least 10% of in-person sessions, compared to 35% of non-disadvantaged pupils.\(^1\)

Government data on absences has shown an increase in the attendance gap, with the absence rate rising for free school meal (FSM) students from 7.6% pre-pandemic, up to 9.7% in the 2021/22 Autumn term, increasing the gap between this group and other students from 3.3 to 3.7 percentage points. The same data finds that absence rates did not differ substantially to the patterns seen pre-pandemic by ethnic group and gender.\(^2\) Here, we are able to show greater detail than has previously been available on the number of days young people missed from school once they re-opened, including breakdowns for different background characteristics including gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and school type, and the reasons behind their absences.

Disruption was not only due to pupil absences. In the first school term of 2022, 53% of state schoolteachers reported that at least 1 in 20 staff members were absent due to COVID-19, while 20% reported 1 in 10 or more were absent. Staff absence rates were higher in state schools than private schools, with 12% of private school teachers reporting that at least 1 in 10 staff were off.\(^3\) Overall, since schools fully re-opened, school attendance has not returned to the pre-pandemic average. Staff and pupil absences have subsequently affected the quality of learning offered to pupils and led to the use of remote learning, non-teaching staff covering lessons and classes being taught together.\(^4\)

To address the extended disruption, the government has announced several rounds of funding for COVID-related catch-up efforts. For students in the COSMO cohort, this has included a catch-up premium given to schools for all students, the National Tutoring programme (a flagship programme launched by government to provide additional tuition to young people in state schools), funding for summer schools, and an additional recovery premium for disadvantaged students. Together, support offered for catch-up across all school years currently totals around £4.9 billion (running from the 2020/21 to the 2023/24 academic year).\(^5\)

Direct international comparisons on educational catch-up funding are challenging as there is limited information available, but for a rough comparison, a $122 billion rescue plan for schools was announced in the US, which is the equivalent of about £15.5 billion in England adjusting for population size. In May 2021, the think tank the Education Policy Institute called for a £13.5 billion three-year investment for education recovery.\(^6\) In June 2021, when the latest tranche of funding for catch-up was announced, the government’s Education Recovery Commissioner Sir Kevan Collins resigned, citing insufficient funding allocated for education recovery.

Only limited data have previously been available on young people’s access to and take up of the catch-up support provided by schools, for example, a previous small-scale survey of around 400 young people found that 74% of 2022’s university applicants were offered at least some form of catch-up, with 56% taking it up. The same survey also found considerable concern from young people about their progress, with 62% saying they had fallen behind in their studies due to the pandemic, a figure that was higher for those in state (64%) than in private
(51%) schools. This briefing will look in detail at young people’s access to catch-up provision from schools, including the type of support on offer and how that has differed across different types of school, again providing breakdowns of access for several background characteristics. It will also look at young people’s own perceptions of their educational progress after the acute stage of the pandemic.

How much were young people in school once they re-opened, and what affected their attendance?

Attendance at any point in year 11
While most students returned to schools once they re-opened, this has not been universal, with some children staying home, in some cases potentially for reasons related to the pandemic (for example because they or a family member were shielding, or perhaps due to social anxiety on a return to the classroom).

3.1% of COSMO participants did not attend school in Year 11 and were instead home-schooled. This proportion was higher for female (3.5%) than male students (2.5%). It was also higher in the most deprived schools (measured by % FSM in the school), at 4.8%, compared to 2.2% in the least deprived.

Figure 1: Non-attendance in Year 11 by gender and FSM % in school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>All=3.1%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School deprivation – FSM eligibility (comprehensives only)

- Least deprived quintile: 2.1%
- Q2: 2.2%
- Q3: 2.6%
- Q4: 3.5%
- Most deprived quintile: 4.8%

When asked for the reasons behind any absence of two or more days, 11% cited non–COVID related reasons. Of COVID–19 related reasons, the most common was being in contact with positive cases from outside the household (25%), followed by risk of contact with someone with the virus (21%), with 13% missing school due to someone in their household having COVID–19 symptoms and 10% due to the student themselves testing positive. Just 1% missed school as they had returned from abroad and needed to self-isolate (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: Number of days missed over Year 11

- None: 10%
- 1 – 5 days: 18%
- 6 – 10 days: 31%
- 11 – 20 days: 24%
- More than 20 days: 18%

Number of days missed
For students who did attend school during Year 11, many missed a large number of days over the course of the year, with 18% missing more than 20 days, 24% between 11 and 20 days, and 31% between 6 and 10 days (see Figure 2).

This varied by schools’ and pupils’ characteristics: 20% of those at schools with the most deprived intakes (looking at state comprehensive schools only, by FSM eligibility) missed more than 20 days, which is considerably higher than for schools with the least disadvantaged intakes (at 14%); 21% of those with parents in working class occupations missed the same amount, compared to 17% of those with parents with higher managerial/ professional occupations. No differences were seen on this measure by young people’s ethnicity.

Those at the most deprived state comprehensive schools (by % FSM) were more likely to miss school for the following reasons, when compared to the least deprived:

- Testing positive for COVID–19 or having symptoms (13% compared to 7%).
- Someone else in the household testing positive for COVID–19 or having symptoms (16% compared to 11%).
Looking at differences by parental occupation, those with a parent in a higher managerial/professional occupation were more likely to miss school due to a risk of contact with someone with COVID-19 (24%), compared to those with a parent working in an intermediate occupation (21%) or a routine/manual occupation/those who have never worked (20%), while there were no such differences for actual positive tests. This may reflect a greater ability for professional households to take precautionary measures. Previous research has found key workers (those working in essential services) have been at heightened risk of covid infection, and of severe infection, during the pandemic.

However, little has previously been known on the impact this increased risk may have had on key workers’ children and their attendance at school throughout the pandemic. We find that young people with a key worker parent were slightly more likely to miss two or more days at school due to having a close household COVID-19 contact who either tested positive or had symptoms, at 14%, compared to 11% of those who do not have a key worker parent.

There were also differences in this measure by school type attended, with 31% of those at a state grammar school missing two or more days due to contact with a positive case from outside the household, compared to 26% of those at a state comprehensive, and only 13% of those at independent schools. Grammar school pupils were also more likely to miss school as a precaution or as there was a risk of contact with someone who had COVID-19 (28%), compared to those at both comprehensive (21%) and independent schools (16%). This suggests higher rates of infection in grammar schools compared to other school types, perhaps due to regional differences in infection rates and the uneven geographical distribution of grammar schools.

Throughout the 2020/21 academic year (when this group of young people were in Year 11) pupils were required to miss school due to “bubble” closures, when their form, year group or class had to stay at home due to a COVID-19 case. Young people were asked which of these closure types had resulted in them missing at least 2 days of school. The most common was a year group having to stay home (41%), followed by a form or class (35%). A smaller proportion, 12%, said their whole school had closed. 20% of students said that they had not been affected by any of these types of closures (Figure 4).

A range of catch-up measures were announced by the government during the pandemic. These included the National Tutoring Programme, the government’s flagship policy to give children access to tuition to help them to catch-up with lost learning, following extensive research evidence that children can benefit from high quality tutoring.

Overall, 53% of young people took part in at least one type of catch-up activity. This figure was 54% for young people in state comprehensive schools, 51% for those in independent schools, and a lower proportion of 43% for those in state grammar schools. Those in the most deprived comprehensive schools were the most likely to have taken part in some sort of catch-up activity, at 61%, compared to 48% of those in the least deprived.
The most common catch-up activity reported by young people in comprehensive schools was additional online classes you could watch, re-watch or join from home on top of a student’s usual timetable, with 49% of those surveyed offered this, and 30% taking it up. The next most common was additional in-person classes, offered to 45% of students and taken up by 27%, followed by extra tuition in pairs or small groups, offered to 35% of students and taken up by 22%.

Even with the existence of the National Tutoring Programme, young people at independent schools were more likely to be offered tutoring.

The least common of the activities listed was extra one-to-one tuition, offered to 26% of students and taken up by 14%, which was also the lowest take-up-to-offer ratio of any of the activities listed (see Figure 5). Overall, 41% of students were offered either one-to-one or small group tuition or both, with 27% taking at least one of these options up. By ethnicity, Black students were the most likely to receive some form of tutoring, at 39%, compared to 23–26% for all other ethnic groups.

Even with the existence of the National Tutoring Programme, young people at independent schools were more likely to report taking part in catch-up activities than those in the least deprived, at 61% compared to 48%. Looking at tutoring run by state comprehensive schools, those from the most deprived schools were the most likely to report being offered tuition (at 48% vs 39% in the least deprived) and taking part (34% for the most deprived vs 23% for the least).

Although patterns were similar when looking at those who took up offers of catch-up activities, boys at state school were more likely to say they had been offered catch-up activities but not taken them up compared to girls. For example, while 15% of girls did not take up the offer of additional online classes during term time, this was higher, at 23%, among boys.

Comparisons with access to private tuition

While we provide some discussion of private tuition here, more detailed information on its use throughout the pandemic is available in the ‘Lockdown Learning’ briefing.

Pre-pandemic, research had shown that disadvantaged young people were much less likely to have access to private tuition than their more affluent peers, with wealthier families better able to shoulder the costs, and no national programme to provide additional tuition via schools. Looking back to the year leading up to the pandemic, 11% of parents reported paying for private tuition during this period. Perhaps surprisingly, this was slightly higher than during the pandemic: 10% reported paying for private tuition at some point during the height of the pandemic itself (looking at the time period between March 2020 and August 2021).

During the 2020/21 academic year, a time period in which the National Tutoring Programme was in operation, 9% of parents reported paying for private tuition for their child, compared to 27% of young people in state comprehensives receiving it from their school. For state comprehensive school students only, 19% in the least deprived
schools had access to private tuition from their families, compared to 4% in the most deprived.

Many of the children who could stand to benefit from catch-up tuition, especially those from poorer groups, have not been offered it.

The proportion receiving private tuition was also much higher for parents with higher managerial or professional occupations (13%) compared to those with routine or manual ones (4%). However, in terms of school-provided tutoring, 23% of pupils in state comprehensive schools with parents in higher managerial or professional occupations received tutoring, compared to 29% for those with parents doing manual or routine roles. This is a substantial increase in the numbers able to access tutoring from lower class backgrounds. Together, these figures suggest that delivery of tuition through schools leads to it reaching a far larger and more diverse group of children compared to the pattern for those who can afford to pay privately. Nonetheless, as outlined above, more students have been offered catch-up tuition from their school in independent schools, and many of the children who could stand to benefit from catch-up tuition, especially those from poorer groups, have not been offered it.

How do young people perceive their own educational progress?

There has been widespread concern that pupils’ academic progress has suffered due to the pandemic’s disruption. Evidence from COSMO participants finds that young people themselves feel they have fallen behind where they would have been without the pandemic. Over three quarters (78%) agreed that their progress has suffered, with 46% saying they strongly agreed that it had (see Figure 6). Females were slightly more likely to think their progress has suffered, at 83%, when compared to males, at 78%.

Young people at state schools (81%) were more likely to think their progress has suffered compared to those at private schools (72%). 47% of those at a state comprehensive school strongly agreed their progress has suffered, compared to 40% of those at state grammar schools.

Figure 6: Participant views on whether their progress has suffered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
<th>Agree slightly</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree slightly</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=12,279. Analysis is weighted for survey design and young person non-response.

Figure 7: Whether participant thought they had fallen behind their classmates, by gender, school type and proportion of FSM eligible pupils in their school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Agree Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Agree Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Grammar</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Comprehensive</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School deprivation – FSM eligibility (comprehensives only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quintile</th>
<th>Agree Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Least deprived quintile</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most deprived quintile</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=12,101 with 10,927 in state comprehensive school group. Analysis is weighted for survey design and young person non-response.

About a third (36%) of young people felt they had fallen behind in comparison to their peers, with 14% strongly agreeing. For female students, this was slightly higher than for male students (37% and 34% respectively). However, while all
young people were affected by the pandemic, as outlined throughout this and other briefings, those impacts were not felt equally by different groups of young people. Over a third (37%) of those at state comprehensive schools said they had fallen behind their classmates, more than double the figure for independent school students (15%). Of those in state comprehensive schools, young people in the most deprived schools were more likely to report feeling behind their classmates than those in schools with better off intakes: 45% in the most deprived schools, compared to 31% in the least.

Looking at parental occupation, 41% of young people with a parent in a routine or manual occupation said they had fallen behind their classmates, compared to 36% of those with a parent in an intermediate role, and 26% of those with a parent in a higher managerial or professional role (see Figure 8). Similarly, looking at parental education level, 39% of those who do not have a parent with a degree said they had fallen behind, compared to the lower figure of 27% of those at least one of whose parents has a degree.

Students from ethnic minorities were more likely to be concerned they had fallen behind their classmates due to pandemic disruption: 39% of Black students and the same proportion of Asian students worried they had fallen behind, as well as 43% of those with other minority ethnic backgrounds. This compared to only 33% of White students having the same concern (see Figure 9).

45% of students disagreed (including 20% who did so strongly) that they had been able to catch up with learning they lost out on during the pandemic. A lower proportion, 36%, felt they had been able to catch up, a proportion which was however higher for young people who had taken part in catch-up activities, at 41%, compared to 30% for those who had not taken part.

Students at state comprehensive schools were the least likely to think they had been able to catch up, at 34%, compared to 50% of students at grammar schools, and 58% at independent schools. Almost half (46%) of students at comprehensive schools
said they had not been able to catch up (compared to 37% of those at grammar schools and 27% at independent schools), with those at comprehensive schools more likely to strongly disagree they’d been able to catch up (21%) compared to those at grammar (13%) and independent schools (9%). 

Many of this group of young people who have been heavily affected by pandemic disruption are concerned about their readiness for their next steps. When looking at their self-assessed preparation for the education, job or training course that they started in September 2021, 40% of participants disagreed that they were prepared, compared to 39% saying they were prepared for these next steps. 

A gender gap in feelings of preparedness is evident, with 47% of female students saying that they did not feel prepared, compared to 32% of male students. Looking at differences by school type, 40% of students from state comprehensive schools, and the same proportion from state grammar schools, disagreed that they felt prepared for their next steps; with considerably lower (29%) of those at independent schools. Young people at state comprehensive schools were also more likely to say they strongly disagreed (17%) compared to those at grammar schools (13%) and independent schools (9%).

**Figure 11: Whether participant agreed they were ready for next steps, by gender and school type**

![Figure 11](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Grammar</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Comprehensive</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=12,129. Analysis is weighted for survey design and young person non-response.

**Motivation to study**

Half of the young people surveyed here said that they are now less motivated to study and learn as a result of the pandemic, with a quarter saying they feel a lot less motivated. More female students reported feeling less motivated than male students, at 56% compared to 46%. Perhaps surprisingly, the reduction in motivation was the highest for young people in grammar schools, at 57%, higher than at either state comprehensive (51%) or independent (49%) schools.

Parents shared these concerns, with 70% saying that their child’s academic progress had suffered due to the pandemic, and almost a quarter (22%) saying their progress had suffered a lot. Parents of male students were more likely to think their progress had suffered (52% vs 46%) even though, as outlined above, female students themselves were slightly more likely to report they had fallen behind. Parents with a routine or manual occupation (73%) or an intermediate occupation (75%) were more likely to say their child’s progress had suffered than those with higher managerial or professional occupations (67%).

72% of parents with a child at a state comprehensive school said their child’s progress had suffered, compared to 61% and 54% of those with children at grammar schools and independent schools, respectively.

**Figure 12: Whether parent believed their child’s progress at school had suffered due to the pandemic, by school type**

![Figure 12](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Remained the Same</th>
<th>Suffered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Grammar</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Comprehensive</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=8,742. Analysis is weighted for survey design and young person and main parent non-response.

30% of parents said they had contacted their child’s school due to concerns about their child’s progress following COVID-19 disruption, with parents who were concerned their child’s progress had suffered being the most likely to have contacted their school (37% concerned it had suffered did so, compared to 12% who felt there had been no change, and 21% of those who felt their child’s progress had improved).
Parents of male students were more likely to have contacted their school about these concerns (34%) than parents of female students (25%), reflective of the increased concern amongst this group of parents. Similarly, parents of children at comprehensive schools were more likely to have contacted the school about their child’s progress, at 31%, than those at grammar (19%) or independent schools (14%), again reflecting the greater concerns of this group.

Although parents with routine/manual or intermediate occupations were more likely to think their child’s progress had suffered, parents from all occupational groups were similarly likely to speak to their child’s school about their progress. This suggests that an increased amount of concern from parents with routine, manual or intermediate roles has not translated into action with their child’s school at the same rate as for parents with higher managerial or professional roles.

Conclusions and policy implications

- Findings from the first wave of the COSMO study have shown that disruption to young people’s education throughout the pandemic has been substantial, even after schools re-opened. This disruption has also been greater, on average, for young people from more deprived backgrounds. Policymakers should be aware of this continuing disruption when planning catch-up efforts and other mitigation for the young people affected.

- While many young people have received an offer of catch-up support from their school, only just over half have taken part in any catch-up activities and 47% have taken part in none. While it is welcome that students at schools with the most deprived intakes are more likely to have accessed catch-up, 39% of those in the most disadvantaged state comprehensives didn’t take part in any. There is a need for a renewed focus and greater investment in catch-up activities for young people affected by the pandemic, so that all young people are able to benefit from this support.

- The government’s flagship catch-up programme, the National Tutoring Programme, has reached a considerable number of young people, albeit a long way from its initially stated ambitions. However, tutoring was one of the less common forms of catch-up young people had taken part in and, despite the NTP, independent schools were still more likely than state comprehensive schools to be offering catch-up tuition to their students. This highlights the ‘arms race’ faced by national efforts to close attainment gaps. There is still considerable scope to expand the programme to reach all the young people in state education likely to benefit from it.

- Many young people are concerned that they have fallen behind due to the pandemic, with concerns about their educational progress and their progression onto their next steps in education, training, or employment. This cohort of young people are likely to need additional support going forward from both educational institutions and employers, with many of this cohort progressing to higher education in autumn 2023.
About The COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities (COSMO) study

The COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities (COSMO) study is a new national cohort study generating high-quality evidence about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected socio-economic inequalities in life chances, both in terms of short- and long-term effects on education, wellbeing, and career outcomes. A representative sample of young people in England who were in Year 11 in the 2021/2022 academic year were invited to take part in the survey, with the aim of following them as they progress through the final stages of education and into the labour market. A sample of more than 13,000 cohort members was recruited in Wave 1.

This work was supported by UK Research and Innovation Economic and Social Research Council as part of their COVID-19 response fund [grant number ES/W001756/1]. COSMO is a collaboration between the UCL Centre for Education Policy & Equalising Opportunities (CEPEO), the Sutton Trust, and the UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS). Our principal fieldwork partner is Kantar Public.

Researchers can access data from Wave 1 of the study through the UK Data Service.

Citing this briefing


Sample and methods

The data for this briefing note come from Wave 1 of the COVID Social Mobility & Opportunities (COSMO) study. COSMO is based on a probability sample drawn from the Department for Education’s National Pupil Database (plus additional recruitment from pupils at private schools), with clustering within schools (for practicality reasons) and over-sampling of certain groups using stratification.

Our analysis in this briefing note is primarily based on descriptive statistics reporting averages, distributions and differences between groups. Analyses use weights to take into account the over-sampling inherent in the study design, as well as initial non-response by young people and, where relevant, their parents. Differences are only highlighted where these are found to be statistically significant at the p<0.05 level. Statistical inference testing reported and/or used in such decisions accounts for the clustering and stratification in the study design.

While our full sample of young people has N=12,828 the parents of participants were not as likely to respond, reducing analyses involving parents to at most N=9,330. As noted above, young person and parental non-response have been modelled separately, with different weights to ensure (insofar as is possible) representativeness of our analysis sample to the intended population. Item-level non-response also results in some further variation to the analysis sample, which is minimised within analyses to ensure consistency. Analyses of some groups, for example those who attended special schools or who identify as non-binary/in another way, have not been able to be reported due to small sample sizes.

Aspects of the analysis use administrative data from the Department for Education (DfE)’s National Pupil Database (NPD), where consent was gained for this linkage (73% of young people), with additional weighting carried out to ensure (insofar as is possible) representativeness of analysis using linked administrative data. This work was produced using statistical data from the DfE processed in the Office for National Statistics’ (ONS) Secure Research Service (SRS). The use of the DfE statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the DfE or ONS in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the statistical data. This work uses research datasets, which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.
References


9. Parental occupation is derived using NS-SEC, divided into three categories. For more information on NS-SEC, please see: https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatisticssocioeconomicclassificationsssoc2010

10. Note: Elsewhere in this briefing, the group ‘routine/manual occupation/those who have never worked’ is shortened for readability to routine/manual occupation. This group is sometimes also referred to as ‘working class’.

Graph based on multiple survey questions, individual question Ns as follows; Additional online classes you could watch, re-watch or join from home, on top of usual timetable N=9,779; Additional in-person classes or support on top of usual timetable N=9,786; Extra tuition or support in pairs or small groups arranged by school N=9,675; Additional classes during school holidays or at weekends – either online or in person N=9,681 Extra one-to-one or individual tuition or support arranged by school N=9,687.


Including Autumn term September to December 2020, during the second school closures in early 2021, and when school’s reopened in March to July 2021


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