

Impact review
for schools 2022



Welcome and thank you

2022 has been another hugely busy year as schools and teachers continue to support children and young people to recover from the damaging effects of the pandemic, alongside the pressures of ongoing workforce challenges. NFER remains committed to supporting the sector in tackling these issues through developing robust research into classroom life and the wider education system to support positive change.

We also recognise the importance of using our insights to directly increase the value that we offer you, the schools and staff who are so vital to our research activities. As well as continuing to develop and innovate our range of education resources, we are placing increased emphasis on sharing easily accessible insights and practical implications from our research that will support you in your classroom and leadership practice.

None of our work would be possible without the fantastic support received from our community of schools and teachers. We owe it to you – and the children and young people you support – to continue increasing our efforts to ensure our insights help improve education outcomes for all.

Carole Willis
Chief Executive

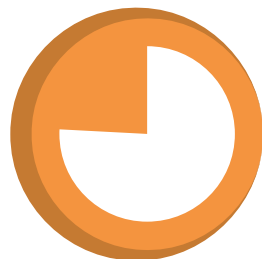


2022 in numbers



16,984

Number of publicly funded schools in England who took part in NFER research and assessment trials



76%

Percentage of publicly funded schools in England who took part in NFER research and assessment trials



1,417,209

Number of pupils who took part in NFER research, assessment trials and products



114,000

Number of downloads of NFER reports, resources and classroom materials



726,252

Number of assessment papers and resources sent out to schools



44

Number of research publications published on the NFER website



1,371

Number of teachers and senior leaders who shared their views in our March 2022 Teacher Voice survey

At NFER, we create and share research evidence and insights that can be used to improve outcomes for future generations everywhere, and to support positive change across education systems.

Engaging with schools and teachers, in order that we can amplify your voices through our research, is at the heart of what we do. Your support enables us to create insights and recommendations that will inform policymakers and key decision makers, as well as strengthening classroom practice. Our work covers topics across the education system, ranging from teacher recruitment and retention through to approaches to day-to-day classroom activities.

What might start as a teacher survey, a classroom trial or review of assessment data has the potential to lead to improved outcomes for children and young people both now and in the future. This is why the importance of your engagement cannot be underestimated.

Our independent status is vital to us and we are fully committed to a transparent and honest approach to the sharing of robust evidence and insights. As a not-for-profit organisation, we invest any surplus funds back into our programme of research and development to address key questions in education – delivering new knowledge to help build better futures.

We also recognise the importance of sharing our knowledge and expertise to support you in school life and classroom practice. This is why we have developed a new series of **NFER Classroom Research Bites**, to share practical learning with teachers and school leaders. The first of this series, a guide and staffroom poster based on our evaluation of the first two years of the National Tutoring Programme, was published in early 2023. We look forward to sharing more of these with you throughout the coming year and beyond. Sign up to our newsletter to be amongst the first to receive them www.nfer.ac.uk/ndfs

This impact report aims to highlight some of the ways that your support has enabled us to evidence key issues in education over the last year. You are why NFER exists and we can't do any of this without you.

Thank you.



What is NFER Classroom?

NFER Classroom is our dedicated community for teachers and school leaders, created so we can ensure you gain true value from your engagements with us. Under the Classroom banner, you'll find our trusted education resources and guidance, developed by our in-house experts in collaboration with teachers. Through NFER Classroom, we also provide easily accessible insights and practical learning from our NFER research, to support you in your practice and thank you for your vital contribution to our wider work.

English

- Writing skills
- Detailed description using key skills
- Spelling in all writing
- Super Sentence key skills
- Handwriting style



Understanding Covid-19 impact and recovery

Whilst spring 2022 saw the end of restrictions in the UK, the pressures brought about by Covid-19 continued to be felt by pupils, teachers, leaders and parents throughout the year. Over the course of 2022, we started to build a longer-term picture of the pandemic's impact on children's learning and wider development as well as building the understanding of what interventions are best supporting the recovery process.

O Understanding the longer-term impacts of Covid on attainment

We continued to monitor a sample of younger pupils to understand the long-term impact of Covid-19 disruption on their attainment and social skills as they move through primary school. 2022 saw 6,029 pupils in 81 schools participating in the second year of our study into the impact of partial school closures on later attainment and social skills. **The Impact of Covid-19-related School Closures in Key Stage 1 on Attainment and Social Skills of Pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 in Academic Year 2021/2022** research highlighted that pupils who were in Year 2 during 2021/22 were three months behind in reading compared to where they would have been expected to be prior to the pandemic.

However, the findings also showed that many children had caught up. Year 2 children had, on average, caught up to the level of attainment in maths of pupils before the pandemic. Year 3 children had, on average, caught up to the level of attainment in both reading and maths of pupils before the pandemic.

The disadvantage gap that widened in 2021 in this cohort of children has not widened further, but neither has it narrowed. Our evidence suggests that catch-up support should focus on very low attaining pupils and closing the disadvantage gap. We highlighted that it is essential that schools are both adequately funded and supported to ensure that the required long-term support can be delivered.



○ Covid's impact on pupil wellbeing and mental health

This year, our **Children and Young People's Wellbeing and Mental Health During the Covid-19 Pandemic** study reviewed a cross-section of published research exploring children and young people's wellbeing and mental health, and how certain groups of children and young people may have been affected differently as a result of the pandemic. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the study found that both the data and the story it tells are very complex. It is difficult to reliably establish long-term impacts of the pandemic on young people's wellbeing and mental health. The study tentatively concluded that secondary-aged girls and primary-aged boys appear to have been most vulnerable to declines in mental health during the pandemic and that primary-aged children appear to show greater fluctuations in their mental health and wellbeing.

We know that school connectedness – how young people feel they are accepted, supported, respected and included in the school community – is a significant factor and positive school connectedness can reduce later mental health problems. In the light of evidence that some young people felt greater connectedness with school during the pandemic, we suggested that schools consider if there are practices introduced during the pandemic that could transfer to more conventional times.

○ Evaluating approaches to aiding learning recovery

Since its launch in autumn 2020, NFER has been the lead evaluator for the government's flagship National Tutoring Programme. Our **Evaluation of Year 1 of the National Tutoring Programme** directly informed the government's approach to the second year of the programme. This included increasing targets for the number of children who are eligible for pupil premium funding gaining access to tutoring.

The National Tutoring Programme Year 2: Implementation and Process Evaluation report, published in 2022, had similar levels of impact on policy and practice, identifying the need to focus on reaching more disadvantaged pupils. On publication, NFER held briefings with the Department for Education's Permanent Secretary and other key education stakeholders, including Ofsted.

The evaluation also formed the basis of our first research-based practical guide for schools, **Implementing Effective Tutoring**, which set out key themes from research alongside practical tips and guidance for school leaders and teachers. During the four weeks after its publication in early January 2023, the guide was viewed 1,200 times. We were grateful for the support of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) with distributing this publication.



WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO:

- Education Endowment Foundation
- Association of School and College Leaders
- National Association of Headteachers
- Department for Education
- Kantar Public
- University of Westminster

Supporting teachers

NFER is considered one of the country's leading experts around teacher recruitment and retention, providing informative, reliable and policy-relevant insights that reach the heart of government and sector decision making.

○ Enabling understanding of teacher workforce

Our ongoing research into the teacher workforce continued to place a spotlight on trends in teacher supply and working conditions. In 2022, our analysis of teacher training applications raised early awareness of the emerging issues being experienced by schools in recruiting and retaining teachers post Covid-19.

This year also saw the launch of a data dashboard that provides easy access to workforce insights. This is aimed at improving the understanding of teacher supply challenges and supporting decision-makers to take action to address shortages where required.

Other research, including our influential series of **Teacher Labour Market Reports**, explored factors that are driving issues in teacher supply, including recruitment, retention and workload. We have provided practical insights for school leaders on how they might mitigate against teacher shortages, as well as engaging with senior civil servants and politicians to discuss the findings. The School Teachers' Review Body recommended a fully-funded and higher teacher pay award than the government put forward in its initial proposals, in line with recommendations from NFER.

○ Highlighting racial equality as a critical issue

Our research into **Racial Equality in the Teacher Workforce** explored the representation and career progression of people from different ethnic backgrounds within the teaching profession in England. The findings highlighted the under-representation of people from ethnic minority backgrounds at senior leadership level, largely driven by disparities in the early career stages, particularly initial teacher training. The research was used by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Race Equality in Education to highlight that racial equality in the teaching profession is a critical issue which must be addressed.

Researchers worked with an advisory group, which included practitioners from ethnic minority backgrounds, academics, teacher training providers, and representative bodies from across the education sector. NFER received a Commendation for Collaboration from the Office for National Statistics in recognition of how our engagement with diverse voices shaped and informed our research in this area.



WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO:

- Nuffield Foundation
- Ambition Institute
- Office of Manpower Economics
- Gatsby Foundation
- Teach First
- The Chartered College of Teaching
- Confederation of School Trusts

Delivering assessment services and resources

NFER is spearheading assessment development, delivery and research because we know the importance it has for children's learning and development.

○ Reaching thousands with our assessment services

We have been commissioned to deliver the **National Reference Test** since 2017 on behalf of Ofqual. In 2022, almost 13,000 Year 11 students from over 330 schools participated. This year's test had added significance due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on national assessments. Professor John Jerrim, from University College London Institute of Education (IOE), said these figures provided *probably the best measure we have on how much learning loss there has been amongst secondary school pupils over the last few years*.

In autumn 2022, we successfully delivered the second year of the statutory **Reception Baseline Assessment** to more than 600,000 pupils. This interactive, practical and accessible assessment has been designed to provide a snapshot of a child's starting point at primary school. As well as providing a basis for monitoring progress, the evidence from the assessment can be used to ensure that schools are recognised for the contribution they make to pupils' progress during their primary school years.

○ Providing trusted assessment resources

NFER Tests and resources continue to be trusted by thousands of schools. Our standardised assessment products for primary schools have provided teachers with an essential tool to monitor pupil progress, as schools continue their efforts to recover from the impact of Covid.

This year, we have undertaken extensive research work into effective e-assessment approaches, involving schools throughout the country to build our e-assessment expertise and capabilities. We would like to extend a huge thank you to all those schools for their very valuable time and input.

We continue to expand on our wide range of free guidance for schools, from webinars hosted by our assessment experts through to blogs outlining practical classroom tips based on our research findings. Our popular Assessment Hub, which provides an online gateway for this guidance, received over 13,500 visits during the course of the year.
www.nfer.ac.uk/assessment-hub



Our wider work

○ Creating innovative trials around classroom choices

Over the past year, we have delivered a number of long-term trials which will improve knowledge around effective teaching and learning approaches.

We continued as lead evaluator for a new type of trial, which aims to increase understanding about the everyday choices teachers make when planning their lessons and supporting their students. This included testing different approaches to starting a lesson and structuring whole-class reading. The trials attracted strong interest and engagement across schools, with findings due to be published in 2023.

○ Measuring pupil disadvantage

2022 saw some important discoveries around measuring the disadvantage attainment gap and the targeting of government funding.

We examined the impact of recent and anticipated changes in free school meal eligibility on state-funded mainstream schools in England. Our research found that the transitional arrangements introduced to smooth the roll out of Universal Credit and the Covid-19 pandemic have significantly increased the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) – a key measure of disadvantage in schools. The report, **Investigating the Changing Landscape of Pupil Disadvantage**, shows

that these increases will affect the composition of the disadvantage group. On average, newly free school meal eligible pupils have higher attainment compared to those who are already eligible, albeit lower attainment than their non-disadvantaged peers.

The findings highlight that the disadvantage attainment gap measure will no longer provide a meaningful indication of how the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is changing over time. To provide schools with a reliable means to understand how the attainment of their disadvantaged pupils is evolving, we recommended that researchers and policymakers urgently explore adopting a range of measures which more accurately reflect gaps in attainment between the disadvantaged and their peers.



○ Identifying essential skills for the future

This year saw the first of a series of papers published by a strategic research partnership, led by NFER, whose purpose is to identify the essential employment skills people will need for work by 2035. **The Skills Imperative 2035** is a five-year research programme that will see NFER and our co-investigators working with employers, policy makers, and education leaders to provide practical insights and evidence that will inform longer-term planning for how to meet future demand for essential employment skills.

○ Supporting improvements within education systems across the globe

We have continued to grow our portfolio of research, evaluation and assessment projects delivered in collaboration with international development partners.

This work has included being involved in the development of a pioneering assessment measure, the first **Botswana Educational Achievement Monitor**, which will accurately measure how learners have

achieved against national educational goals. The design is based on a curriculum-based assessment framework for maths, reading and life skills for children aged nine to ten. This new national educational achievement monitor will enable Botswana to gain reliable insights into educational quality and respond effectively to trends over time.

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO:

- Education Endowment Foundation
- Botswana Examinations Council
- International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
- Cambridge Econometrics
- Nuffield Foundation
- Kantar Public
- Deloitte
- University of Sheffield
- Department for Education
- The Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick
- Learning and Work Institute
- University of Roehampton

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- Participate in current research
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