Department for Education

Education Recovery Commissioner: role specification and terms of reference

The Commissioner

The 'Education Recovery Commissioner' (The Commissioner) will be appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and report to the Secretary of State and to the Prime Minister. The Commissioner will advise Ministers on the approach for education recovery, with a particular focus on helping students catch up on learning lost as a result of the pandemic.

The Commissioner will be appointed for a period of 9 months with the possibility of extension for a period up to a further 9 months.

Remit

The Commissioner's role will be advisory. The role will focus on education in England for children and young people aged between 2-19. The Commissioner will advise on the design and implementation of potential interventions that will help students catch up learning lost due to the pandemic. The ambition, as set out publicly by the Prime Minister, is that students will catch up with lost learning over the course of this Parliament. Efforts to support education catch up will sit alongside and complement ongoing work on schools and post-16 reform. The Commissioner's advice will focus predominantly on catch-up actions starting from Autumn term 2021 onwards. The Commissioner will support the existing work on education catch up, including that announced by the Prime Minister on 27 January.

The Commissioner will use evidence to focus the work on the potential interventions of greatest impact for children and young people, society and the economy. This will include identifying how schools, early years settings and colleges can support catch-up through their ongoing work and looking at how existing DfE programmes can be pivoted towards helping with education recovery. Informed by evidence and data, the Commissioner will consider how schools and the system can more effectively target resources and support at pupils and areas in greatest need. The Commissioner will be expected to engage with education experts to improve implementation and refine proposals to improve the effectiveness of the delivery of outcomes.

Responsibilities

The Commissioner will:

- Provide advice to government on the most effective potential interventions to support education catch up;

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- Engage with parents, teachers and education settings, including early years providers, schools and colleges;
- Report progress regularly to the Secretary of State and Prime Minister;
- As required, work closely with DfE to provide advice on the catch up package for the current academic year, and ensure future advice dovetails with that work.

The Commissioner will not have a role in relation to schools return; remote education, including delivery of devices; or the process of teacher-assessed grades for qualifications in the academic year 2020-21.

The Commissioner's role will be to advise on potential interventions to support education recovery. Final decisions will be for Ministers to take in the usual way, taking account of their effectiveness, value for money and affordability. These decisions will be made taking account of the wider spending context.

Reporting arrangements

The Commissioner will be appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and report to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister.

The Secretary of State for Education will be accountable for the work produced by the Commissioner and their team and so the Commissioner will need to work closely with them, as well as other Ministers as appropriate. The Commissioner will not have executive authority but will develop advice for consideration by Ministers.

The Secretary of State for Education will be accountable to Parliament for issues relating to the Commissioner's work (for example in answering parliamentary questions or responding to debates).

Financial Accountability

As with all funding held by their department, the departmental Accounting Officer will remain accountable to Parliament for ensuring any expenditure is compliant with the provisions of Managing Public Money. The Accounting Officer should ensure that the appropriate governance procedures are in place to achieve this.

Terms

The Commissioner will be based in DfE and will have a team of officials and a small secretariat of DfE staff to support him/her in providing advice to the Secretary of State. This will include a DG level Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) who will support the Commissioner and coordinate official level support. The Commissioner will be expected to act in accordance with the seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

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