

A 'Recovery Curriculum'

<https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/>

No child will pick up exactly where they left off on the day their school closed. Too much has happened since then and schools need to plan the return based on the children's experiences. This is the thinking behind the idea of a 'Recovery Curriculum'.

Developed by Barry and Matthew Carpenter, the Recovery Curriculum is a construct designed to support school leaders to think about and plan the transition back to pupils being effective, engaged learners.

It is based on an understanding that one thing all pupils will have in common when they return is that they will have experienced some sort of **loss** during the pandemic. This includes loss of:

- **routine**
- **structure**
- **friendship**
- **opportunity**
- **freedom**

Loss can lead to **feelings of anxiety, trauma and bereavement** in any child, and many pupils will be experiencing these sorts of emotions when they return to school. **The anxious child will not be ready to learn**, therefore there will be **little point in trying to rush into a fully academic curriculum** and trying to plug the gaps that inevitably will have widened for some pupils. **Emotional wellbeing must come first** and schools must plan for **experiences that provide the space for recovery from these elements of loss**.

All pupils will need a holistic recovery period; some may need a **focused recovery intervention programme**, personalised to their needs, and others may need a **deeper and longer lasting recovery period**. Schools will need to plan for these individual journeys. Barry and Matthew suggest that a Recovery Curriculum is **built on five 'levers' that act as signposts** for leaders to consider when planning the returning curriculum. These levers are outlined below, along with some ideas of what each lever might include in practice.

1. Relationships

Taking time to reconnect with families and giving time to pupils with SEND to rebuild relationships with peers and adults will be essential. Where pupils are returning to **different teachers** or are in a group with **different peers**, help them to establish new relationships. Consider the challenges for pupils with **attachment needs** and ensure any changes to provision are communicated with parents as soon as possible.

2. Community

Start by assessing pupil's needs but ensure this is done in an informal and supportive way. Give pupils a voice and listen to their experiences of lockdown by finding out what was challenging and how they felt about it. Also ask what went well – consider how any positive experiences of home learning can be brought into the classroom.

3. Transparent curriculum

Structures and routines may need to be re-established or new routines or rules set, such as those focused on **socially distancing** or **handwashing routines**. **Visual prompts such as social stories** can support pupils to understand the new expectations. Pupils with cognitive needs may be returning with even wider gaps in their learning or having forgotten previous learning. When pupils are emotionally settled, **revisiting key skills** and engaging in **retrieval practice** will be essential to address some of these gaps.

4. Metacognition

Following a sustained period at home, it may be necessary to **reteach the skills necessary for learning in a school environment,** for example **following a timetable** or keeping to a clear structure. Pupils may have **lost confidence in their ability to plan or organise their own work** and may need practice in re-engaging with these skills of learning.

5. Space

For some pupils, both psychological and physical space will be important to enable them to rediscover themselves as learners in a school environment. Pupils with **sensory issues** may initially be overwhelmed by the relative busyness and noise of a classroom and **may need space for time out and calming.** For some pupils a gradual return, initially on a **part-time timetable may be appropriate** if they are finding it difficult to cope for a full day.

Supporting mental health and wellbeing will be crucial for many pupils with SEND. For pupils with existing social, emotional and mental health needs, the impact of coronavirus may heighten their challenges further. Many schools are aiming to provide **safe spaces for pupils to talk about their feelings** and for some, to cope with **bereavement**. If pupils are feeling anxious or are struggling to adapt to the new environment, they may struggle to communicate effectively. Try using emotional **check-ins** or **emotion wheels** ([link to template](#)) to support pupils to communicate. Pupils who are anxious may benefit from **talking about the virus** itself with adults or peers. It is important that they feel adults are listening to their concerns and answering their questions by letting them know that in a situation like this it is normal to feel sad, worried, confused, scared or angry. Remind them of their **support networks**, at school or at home, or peer relationships that they can turn to for comfort or advice in this time.

Pupils remaining at home:

- **keeping in touch** through regular (and agreed) phone calls or other electronic methods of communication
- **supporting parents to re-establish or review structures and routines**
- **preparing for the transition back to school** e.g. asking pupils to create pupil passports for their new teachers
- continuing to support **home learning** by providing work, resources, online links or online lessons