

Listening to Children and Young People's (CYP) Experience and Perceptions During the Period of COVID-19 and Their Advice for Teachers and Schools

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This research project aimed to elicit the views of children and young people (CYP) about their experience of COVID-19, and their advice to teachers and schools. The views of fourteen CYP aged between 9 and 15 years of age from within and around London were ascertained through individual semi-structured interviews and analysed through thematic analysis. There were a variety of responses from CYP, including the following: a deep appreciation for their teachers and their support throughout the pandemic; stories of positive personal growth and spending more time with their family. However, their inability to see friends and the challenges of learning from home had a considerable impact on some CYP who would have liked home learning to have been more personalised, interactive and varied and for there to have been a greater awareness of workload. A list of issues for consideration and a checklist based upon the CYP's views have been compiled, for the use of schools and teachers. Given the small sample, the timing of the study and the fact that the pandemic is ongoing, some suggestions for further research are indicated.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, children's views, children's advice for teachers and schools

Introduction

On 23 March 2020, Boris Johnson announced that England would go into national lockdown (Institute for Government, 2021). Schools, restaurants, non-essential shops and other public spaces were closed, and the general public were instructed to stay at home. England went into its second lockdown in November 2020 and a third lockdown in January 2021 (Institute for Government, 2021). It has been suggested that the lockdowns may have had a huge impact on many people (Viner et al., 2021), with some researchers suggesting that CYP may have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic as a result of school closures and restricted access to health services (Cuevas-Parra & Stephano, 2020).

Given the importance of CYP's views, this research explored the impact that the pandemic was having and continues to have on CYP. Crucially, given the uncertainty around the pandemic and the numerous lockdowns and school closures experienced, the present study explored CYP's advice for teachers and schools, so that schools could consider this thinking and potentially incorporate CYP's views into future planning. In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), this article aims to hold pupil voice at the centre of future planning and actions.

Aims and Purpose of the Study

The current study used semi-structured interviews to explore CYP's views and experiences of COVID-19 and their advice for teachers and schools. The research aims were as follows:

1. To explore CYP's experiences, thoughts and feelings during the period of COVID-19 (March 2020–June 2021, covering three lockdowns).
2. To listen to CYP's experiences during this initial period of COVID-19.
3. To empower and give CYP a voice in helping schools and teachers with future planning.
4. To understand how best to support CYP through any future lockdowns caused by pandemics.
5. To elicit CYP's advice for teachers and schools to support CYP in future lockdowns.
6. Ultimately, to provide information and advice for schools, teachers and other professionals about supporting CYP effectively during pandemics.

Literature Review

Previous literature has highlighted the importance of listening to CYP's views (Gersch, 1992, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Gersch et al., 1993; Gersch et al., 2017; Gersch et al., 2014) as well as the moral, legal and pragmatic reasons for involving CYP in decision-making (Gersch, 1987, 1992, 2001). The recent interest in this topic has, in part, been induced and strengthened by legal and political initiatives (Children Act, 1989; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989), which state that CYP's opinions should be considered and taken seriously when decisions are made that involve them. The SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) also provides a legal basis for the importance of listening to CYP's views.

Research into CYP's views and experiences of previous global pandemics is still an emerging field, and the research team hope that this study will further inform this area of research. For example, in an important early study, Koller et al. (2010) conducted research into CYP's views and experiences of the SARS pandemic. The researchers called for greater involvement of CYP in paediatric pandemic planning and provided some recommendations for attenuating the negative impacts of future outbreaks based on CYP's views. These included psychosocial care, infection control, communication between staff, patients and families, and management of resources.

Regarding COVID-19 there are a number of studies into CYP's experiences of the pandemic and the negative impact that it has had on their mental health. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has created a compilation of studies from across the UK that have investigated CYP's experiences and insights into the COVID-19 pandemic (RCPCH, 2020).

Additionally, the Southend Educational Psychology service carried out a large-scale survey into CYP's views of the pandemic (Sivers et al., 2020). Four key themes emerged, including safety, relationships, certainty and opportunities. Specifically, the researchers identified that many secondary school CYP were anxious about the potential impact of the pandemic on learning, while primary school children were excited by the new opportunities that the pandemic brought. All CYP shared a longing for connection and interaction.

Despite a number of research studies into CYP's views and experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of research thus far has used large-scale surveys or questionnaires to gain views, which do not always allow for detailed accounts of CYP's views and experiences. Additionally, there has been little to no research to date into the COVID-19 pandemic that has investigated CYP's advice and recommendations with regard to the return to schools. For this reason, this study used semi-structured interviews in order to gain more detailed accounts of CYP's views and experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and, in particular, CYP's advice

and recommendations for teachers and schools when considering future pandemic planning.

Since this pandemic was an uncharted phenomenon, and events uncertain for CYP, it was felt to be very important to hear CYP's views and experiences, providing narratives and ideas which could be very helpful for schools, teachers, professionals and parents.

Methodology

Sample and Selection

Participants were selected from mostly ethnically diverse primary and secondary schools (according to their publicly available statistics on ethnicity) within and around London. Participants were identified by the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator and/or a Member of the Senior Leadership Team. School staff followed specific selection criteria which included both male and female CYP without significant special educational needs, who were willing and able to talk about their experiences and had access to the internet from home. The aim was to reduce the complexity of this preliminary and initial study, in the hope that future studies would focus more specifically on those with special educational needs.

The sample consisted of fourteen participants. One student withdrew consent before the interview and so a replacement student was sought. There were two participants selected from each of the year groups 5 to 11 (i.e., two students each from seven separate year groups from Year 5 to Year 11) (one male and one female from each year group) with ages ranging from 9 to 15 years old ($M = 12.57$), (see Table 1). The sample consisted of four primary school participants and ten secondary school participants (see Table 2). The interviews were conducted from the 12th March 2021 to the 11th May 2021.

Table 1

Breakdown of Participants' Ages

Age	Number of Students
9–10	3
11–12	4
13–14	3
15–16	4
Total	14

Table 2*Primary/Secondary School Breakdown of the Participants*

School	Number of Students
Primary	4
Secondary	10
Total	14

Procedure

Each headteacher invited CYP in their school who were willing and able to express their views clearly about their experiences. A letter or email giving further details together with a Participant Information Sheet was sent to each parent and child who was selected for the study. A letter was also given to the CYP with age-appropriate language and information. Detailed consent forms were included for each participant and their parent to sign.

The semi-structured individual interviews lasted for approximately one hour. Participants were interviewed virtually using Microsoft Teams, either while the child/young person was at home or at school. At all times, the researcher was in a separate location due to COVID-19 restrictions. Another researcher was present on the virtual call and took notes and quotations from the child for later analysis.

Participants were asked to draw a picture of their pandemic experience. The researcher then asked questions about their experience of school closures, lockdown, learning from home, returning to school, changes and advice they would give to teachers and schools. These questions were also given on cards along with pictures to provide visual support for participants.

Data Analysis Method

Data was analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each researcher analysed one question by coding the data and then creating themes. Each researcher worked with a partner to check the internal logic and consistency of the codes and themes and to enhance fidelity and trustworthiness.

Ethical Considerations

Formal ethical approval was obtained from the University of East London. This covered a number of areas including confidentiality, anonymity, safeguarding, recruitment, data analysis, data security and dissemination. The British Psychological Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (2009) and the Division of Educational and Child Psychologists' *Professional Practice Guidelines* (2002) were followed.

Findings

These are discussed under the headings of: drawings, school closures, lockdown, learning from home, returning to school, changes and top tips. It is perhaps important to note that none of the CYP sampled mentioned personally contracting COVID-19.

CYP's Drawings of the Pandemic

CYP were asked to draw something which reminded them of their experience during the pandemic. Their drawings were deeply insightful, descriptive and powerful. The most common picture, drawn by eight students, was a laptop. Three students mentioned the high workload which needed to be completed on the laptop.

The second most common theme, demonstrated in three students' drawings, was the monotony of the pandemic experience.

Two students drew face masks, and three students drew pictures relating to confinement.

A catalogue of CYP's drawings can be found in Appendix B.

Students' Experiences of School Closures

CYP were able to speak about their experience of school closures. Their positive and negative insights about the experience are as follows.

a. Loss

"I missed school as the school environment is just so much easier to work in."

The CYP reported how they missed their friends, the school environment and felt frustrated about losing their freedom.

b. New Opportunities

"The positive thing was that I actually got to spend a bit more time with my family."

The CYP spoke about having more free time, more family time and more flexibility when schools closed.

c. Challenges of Learning From Home

"It's pretty hard to stay focused to learn online."

The CYP explained how learning from home had been a challenge due to home being more distracting, the high amount of screen time and the perceived high workload.

d. *Changing Feelings*

"I was kind of excited since I only thought it was going to be for a couple of weeks. It was kind of like an extended holiday."

The CYP expressed initial excitement about school being closed. They also reported becoming increasingly frustrated but less worried by the second school closure as they had already experienced school closures before.

Students' Experiences of Lockdown

The CYP gave some great insight into their experience of the two national lockdowns. Although there were some definite challenges, they emphasised some positives that came from their experience in the list that follows:

a. *New Opportunities*

"I definitely learnt more sports skills, I didn't really do much sport before."

Most CYP reported that the lockdown enabled them to spend more time exercising, spending time with their families and taking up new hobbies. They also recognised it as an opportunity to have a break.

b. *Loss*

"Football stopped, going out stopped. It was the same thing over and over."

The CYP mentioned most how they had lost opportunities due to lockdown. They also reported the loss of learning in the first lockdown and an overall loss of structure. More secondary school students discussed missing contact with their friends during the lockdowns.

c. *Personal Growth*

"Learnt to cope well with whatever challenges I face in my life, I don't give up, I still continue."

Primary school CYP explained how the lockdowns had helped them to build independence and resiliency, whereas secondary school CYP noticed an improvement in their technological skills.

d. *Challenges of Learning From Home*

"I wish they would have communicated with us more."

The CYP felt overwhelmed by the amount of work set during the second lockdown. They expressed how they had difficulties understanding the work and had wished they could have had more time to communicate with their teachers.

e. *Changing Feelings*

"After a while it was boring. In the beginning it was so new and there were so many things to do and then it gets repetitive."

CYP from both primary and secondary schools felt the positive emotions associated with lockdown diminish the longer it went on. CYP from primary schools reported that they felt less motivated and bored and secondary school CYP felt less excited about being in lockdown.

CYP's Experiences of Learning From Home

The CYP spoke clearly about their positive and negative experiences of learning from home.

a. *Live Online Lessons*

"A bit more normal it was like being back in class but just online."

The CYP mentioned multiple times how much they preferred having live lessons in the second lockdown. They felt as if they made it feel like a normal schoolday.

a. *Communication*

"Let children interact with each other more."

When discussing their experience of home learning, the CYP mentioned how they would have liked more communication with teachers and friends during lessons.

b. *Interactive Activities*

"In history we had shared documents, where the whole class were working on the same document, that was really enjoyable everyone was working together."

The CYP explained how their preferred lessons were those that were interactive with videos and whole class working documents, as it felt like everyone was working together. They wished there had been more lessons like this that may have even incorporated games.

c. *Support*

"My mum would usually help me out because she is good at it, she knows what she is doing."

The CYP reported that their family had been their main support when learning from home. A secondary school student was also very grateful for the support of friends when they were feeling stuck or demotivated.

d. *Motivation*

"I always liked online lessons, it used to make me want to join cause you want to ask questions, you be more curious."

Secondary school students spoke about their levels of motivation with regard to the type of work set. Although the majority were motivated to access the online lessons, they were less motivated to complete the homework. This led to work piling up and students feeling as though they wanted to give up.

CYP across both primary and secondary schools reported the challenge of not being able to concentrate throughout the schoolday at home.

e. *Workload*

"It was quite overwhelming."

The CYP explained the difference between the workload across their two experiences of school closures. In the first school closure, there was less work, no live lessons but homework. However, in the second lockdown, they felt their workload increased as they had to complete work during their live lessons and then for homework. Most of the CYP found this quite overwhelming.

CYP's Experiences of Returning to School

The CYP retold the experience of returning to school on two separate occasions. Although they were relatively happy to return, they also mentioned some challenges about their return; both are presented below.

a. *Change*

"...having to constantly social distance, wear masks around the building, it got frustrating sometimes."

CYP from both primary and secondary schools mentioned experiencing changes that were difficult and that made them feel weird, frustrated, exhausted, disappointed and angry when they returned to school. These feelings were linked to the new rules they had to endure upon their return, with some mentioning that they were not able to walk around certain areas of the school.

b. *Happy to Return*

"I felt extremely happy to see my friends again."

All but one child mentioned the excitement of seeing people when they returned to school. This was mentioned a number of times and so it seems that the CYP were unanimous in feeling happy and excited to see their friends, teachers and classmates again. Similarly, the CYP found it easier to work at school and expressed that it was much better than learning online. Secondary school students felt a great deal of lockdown fatigue and were ready to return after being at home for such a long period.

c. *Support*

"I got to catch up which was the best thing that could have happened to me."

Some students expressed their appreciation of being able to settle in again and slowly catch up, with some mentioning that they had some time to relax before they started work again.

d. *Returning to Some Normality*

"It felt pretty much the same even though a lot had changed."

Most of the students mentioned that they had missed the structure and routine of the day and liked that they were able to get back to the lessons and the school dinners. Very few CYP had been abroad to their home countries to visit family. However, the CYP that did said that they were able to experience a sense of normality in doing so.

e. *Anxiety*

"I was a bit nervous as there were new people in my class and there was a different teacher."

Students expressed anxiety about transitioning to their new classes after the summer holidays. They were also worried about their schoolwork and the amount they would have to catch up on. Others also mentioned feeling overwhelmed by having to socialise again. Only secondary school students reported feeling anxious about catching COVID-19 once they were back at school.

f. *Loss*

"I was still a bit sad that most of my Year 5 was wasted."

Primary and secondary school students mentioned that they had missed friends and opportunities and still felt a sense of loss even once they had returned to school.

Changes CYP Experienced During the Pandemic

CYP were asked about the changes they have experienced since school closures. Their reflections on the positive and negative changes were as follows:

a. *Safety*

"It's weird, you have to wear a mask. I've gotten used to it now, it's just for your safety."

Students reported the changes in safety that they had experienced, with some mentioning that they had noticed changes in rules, including those in school, home and wider society.

b. *Relationships*

"I connected a lot with my family members and friends."

Half of the CYP mentioned that they had connected with their friends and family a lot during the pandemic. Mostly primary CYP spoke about the difficulties of connecting with friends and family.

c. *Self*

“I am a lot more independent because I have had to do things by myself because even though my family were there for me, it was a bit hard.”

Secondary students in particular spoke about their experiences of personal growth and increased independence and resilience. Similarly, some students reported changes in habits and routines such as sleeping more at home.

d. *Opportunities*

“I did miss out on SATs — that is, I was blessed. I was loving it. I was really happy.”

Many students reported that they had missed opportunities such as school trips or tests. However, CYP were positive about the new hobbies and interests they had acquired during the pandemic such as meditating, exercising and gardening. Others were happy to have had more free time to research career opportunities and to educate themselves about world-wide and national issues.

Advice and Top Tips for Teachers and Schools by CYP

It should be noted that although CYP shared their advice, they recognised that this is a difficult time for everyone and praised their teachers for doing such a good job of supporting them.

“I know teachers worked together and did the best they could and I fully appreciate it.”

Within the advice given, there were nine common themes (see Table 3). Further information on these recommendations can be found in Appendix A.

Table 3

Key Considerations for Teachers

1	Provide more interactive sessions
2	Provide greater wellbeing support
3	Be aware of the high workload
4	Prepare us more
5	Offer more personalised lessons
6	Stay COVID-19 safe
7	Communicate more with us and with parents
8	Track our progress
9	Provide wider learning opportunities

1. *More Interactive Sessions*

“Let children interact with each other.”

CYP frequently mentioned that they would have liked learning from home to have been more interactive, the motivating factor potentially being to allow CYP more socialising opportunities, more interaction with classmates and more opportunities to ask questions. However, it is important to keep in mind that students did find the screen time intense and some students recommended having shorter lessons with more breaks.

2. *Wellbeing Support*

“Have an assembly on supporting your wellbeing and mental health.”

Wellbeing support was mentioned a number of times by CYP. This included teachers offering more check-ins for students and the possibility of wellbeing assemblies.

3. *Workload Awareness*

“To slowly ease us into the work instead of just piling it on us, so we wouldn’t feel such a negative impact in terms of the workload.”

CYP often mentioned that they would have liked schools to be more aware of the amount of work set.

4. *Prepare Us More*

“Teachers should explain exactly how to use the apps and platforms with their expectations more.”

Some CYP would have liked to have felt more prepared. Within this comes the theme of technology support. They would have liked more explanations on how to use technology and the online platforms.

5. *Personalise Lessons*

“Make your lessons you, don’t just follow the guidelines. Make the lessons personal ... be personal and want to help them.”

CYP also felt that more personalised lessons would have allowed them to see the effort teachers and school staff were putting in, and benefited them in the long run.

6. *Staying COVID-19 Safe*

"Put on a mask and come to the desk. You can help the student from a distance."

Some students were concerned about spreading the virus and staying COVID-19 safe. Students spoke about how teachers could help students from a distance but not cross the two-metre safety line that some schools have put in place.

7. *More Communication*

"It would have been helpful ... to have more of like 1-1 ... asking if they needed help or if they were confused."

A couple of CYP gave advice on school staff communicating more with themselves and their parents. They felt that keeping in touch would have meant that they had more support with the work and parents' concerns would be listened to. They also mentioned that they would have liked more time to communicate with their friends.

8. *Tracking Progress*

"To just tell us after every lesson, how we did in the lesson."

A few CYP spoke about how they would have appreciated feedback on the work completed during lessons. They felt that this would have supported them to know how well they did.

9. *Wider Learning Opportunities*

"Helping students to find themselves."

Some older secondary school students talked about teachers providing wider learning opportunities in order to help students to explore their interests and future pathways. CYP asked for teachers to provide them with recommendations and career options.

When CYP were asked if they had any advice for other CYP, they suggested keeping motivated, paying attention in school, talking to friends and family and protecting yourself and others from contracting COVID-19.

Original coding data is available from the researchers upon request.

Discussion

The CYP sampled expressed both positive and negative experiences relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, including

school lockdowns. The majority of CYP reported positive pandemic experiences relating to personal growth and spending more time with family. The negative experiences primarily related to an absence of connectedness with friends and teachers, alongside the challenges of remote working. With regard to advice, CYP reported a desire for more personalised, interactive and varied remote learning opportunities, alongside greater communication with teachers (for academic, wellbeing and technological support) and for teachers to have a greater awareness of the workload. These findings will now be discussed in relation to previous research and theories.

Consistent with research conducted by the Southend Educational Psychology Service (Sivers et al., 2020), many CYP commented on the positives of the pandemic and the increased opportunities that lockdown provided, including spending more time with family, learning new skills, spending time outside and doing more exercise. (Such findings were also outlined within the Children's Commissioner's report, 2020.)

In a similar way to research conducted by the Children's Commissioner (2020), CYP reported feeling as though the most negative impact of the pandemic was the inability to see friends and family alongside schools/colleges closing. In particular, many CYP reported concern over the negative effect that school closures would have on their learning and school work; this was also reflected in research conducted by Cuevas-Parra and Stephano (2020). It is therefore not surprising that, upon return to schools, CYP reported feeling most excited about seeing their friends and catching up on schoolwork. These findings are in line with work on the "Recovery Curriculum" (Carpenter & Carpenter, 2020). Carpenter and Carpenter (2020) stated "the common thread that runs through the current lived experiences of our children is loss." (p. 1). Five main losses (routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom) were discussed, and it was argued that school returns should be focused on the recovery from loss and supporting CYP with their social and emotional needs rather than catching up academically.

Unlike in previous studies, CYP clearly outlined the challenges they faced as a result of remote learning. In particular, CYP commented on the high workload, lack of clarity around tasks and online platforms and a desire for more live lessons with a greater level of interaction with teachers and peers. CYP generally seemed to feel more motivated when the remote work contained an interactive element and when they were able to communicate with teachers and other CYP to ask questions and receive feedback.

The changes that the CYP reported experiencing over the pandemic can be explained in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) which include: physiological, safety, belongingness/love, esteem and self-actualisation.

CYP identified a number of specific recommendations for

primary and secondary schools which should be considered in the context of future pandemic planning (see Appendix A). Most of the recommendations were focused on how the remote learning could be improved through providing live and interactive lessons with more personalised and varied activities. However, many CYP also commented on the desire for increased communication with teachers and peers to gain psychological, academic and technological support.

These findings link with previous research that demonstrates the positive impact of student–student interactions during remote learning on student outcomes including engagement (Bernard et al., 2009; Borokhovski et al., 2012; Means et al., 2009) which would be gained through providing live lessons. It also links to research which demonstrates the positive impact that collaborative learning within online learning environments (such as Google Classrooms, Google Meet, Zoom, etc.) can have on learning outcomes (Ellis-Thompson et al., 2020).

One of the limitations of the study is the small sample size. While a small sample was needed in order to gain in-depth information, the small sample of primary and secondary school aged CYP meant the findings were difficult to generalise to the wider population. Additionally, there were only four primary school students in the sample. It is possible that there was more of a focus on some topics, such as well-being, in primary schools compared to secondary schools, which could be explored further.

Another limitation is that this study was conducted in one area of the United Kingdom. It is very likely that CYP in other countries could have had different experiences and perceptions, and therefore alternative advice for their teachers and schools. Further studies could be done in other settings to gain more insight into CYP's views and to compare their recommendations to schools.

Finally, this study did not collect any formal ethnicity data. Future studies could explore if CYP from diverse ethnic backgrounds provide different responses relating to their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, future research might now focus on wider samples such as those with special educational needs or, indeed, different types of special need.

In addition, while this research spanned fourteen months of school closures and lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic is still ongoing and therefore CYP's experiences from June (2021) and beyond were not covered. Therefore, future research could be conducted to examine CYP's experiences of the latter uncertain period of the pandemic.

Conclusions

This preliminary qualitative research project aimed to elicit a snapshot of the views, experiences and ideas of CYP about the pandemic, including their experiences of school

lockdowns and remote learning. The study invited CYP's suggestions for teachers and schools about the most effective ways of supporting students in the future. The small sample of fourteen children, across the school age range has revealed a range of experiences, both positive and negative, about the pandemic. The CYP sampled appreciated the support provided by their teachers and schools, whilst being able to list a number of suggestions and advice which are highlighted in Appendix A for the use of schools. Naturally, teachers and schools will need to consider such suggestions through the lens of their own individual experience, expertise and practicability but in any event perhaps to consider such suggestions as areas of interest. Further research is needed with a larger, wider sample, enabling events to progress, and for CYP to share their experiences and views with the passing of time.

It is hoped that the findings from this study (and the checklist in Appendix A) will be of value to schools, teachers, educational psychologists, and other relevant professionals.

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Appendix A

Considerations and a Checklist for Teachers and Schools

This summary for teachers and schools was compiled with a view to identifying some ideas that schools and teachers could consider based on these findings. It should be stressed that some of the ideas will of course be familiar to many schools and teachers who are already including these ideas in their general practice. They are however included to provide a selection of student views to support teachers and schools, but of course may be selected, augmented and refined by professionals where they feel appropriate.

At the outset, it is perhaps important to report that many of the CYP sampled expressed their deep appreciation of what teachers were doing and how supportive they had been to the students. Some CYP were also sensitive to the fact that school staff themselves had been exposed to serious pandemic stresses and losses, and generally thought that the schools and teachers were doing the best they could under the circumstances.

The following suggestions, therefore, are provided in the spirit of the above sentiments.

Now follows two sections, namely

A. Some suggestions for schools and teachers to consider

B. Checklist of top tips for schools and teachers (from the perspective of CYP who experienced COVID-19 based lockdowns)

The first section summarises the main issues which the CYP in the sample identified and is presented in a format for teachers to consider.

The second section summarises the same issues, which the CYP in the sample identified, and is presented in a checklist format enabling schools and teachers simply to utilise the information as directly and simply as possible.

It is the view of the authors that these sections are best used, not as a prescriptive instructional document, rather in a way that raises issues for attention with the teacher and school making their own professional judgement, in the light of their own context, experience and judgement.

A. Some Suggestions for Schools and Teachers to Consider

For Schools to Consider

1. Mental health and wellbeing

- a. How has the school planned for a programme of mental health and wellbeing?
- b. Could there be a special assembly on supporting your mental health, or has this already taken place?

- c. Are students aware of the NHS 5 ways to wellbeing i.e. "be active, connect, keep learning, give and take notice"?
- d. How often are staff able to check in with students on their wellbeing? Is there a schedule for this?
- e. Do students feel there is someone that they can talk to about their mental health and wellbeing?
- f. Could we provide small group student check ins?
- g. Can we create monitored student chats for students to talk to each other about their concerns?
- h. Are parents able to contact school for help with their child's wellbeing?
- i. Do school staff feel supported with their mental health and wellbeing?
- j. Do schools feel that their current arrangements are sufficient?

2. Preparation for technology

- a. Are students confident in using all of the apps, platforms and technology required?
- b. Do they know who to talk to if they are confused about the technology?
- c. Are there or could there be special lessons on technology?
- d. Do all students have access to a laptop?
- e. Do schools feel that their current arrangements are sufficient?

3. Staying COVID-19 safe

- a. Do schools feel that their current arrangements are sufficient?
- b. Do schools feel that they have enough resources from the government e.g. masks
- c. Are all the students confident in their knowledge of what to do?
- d. Do we need a whole school assembly to inform students and staff of how to stay COVID-19 safe?

4. Communication with home and students

- a. Do schools feel that their current arrangements could be enhanced?

- b. Could we involve parental feedback more fully?
- c. Do students know and understand their timetable?

5. Economic provisions for students

- a. Is there, or could we provide a free school bus for students to be able to attend school?
- b. Do we, or could we provide free school meals for students during this time?
- c. Do we, or could we provide a breakfast club for students during this time?
- d. Do schools feel that their current arrangements for students are sufficient?

6. Student transition

- a. Do we have virtual tours available to help students with the transition to a new classroom?
- b. Could new teachers do a video introduction?
- c. When coming back to school, have we, or could we check whether students would like refresher activities during the first week back, or whether they would like to return to a 'normal' school timetable?
- d. Do schools feel that their current arrangements for students are sufficient?

For Teachers to Consider

1. Planning virtual interactive sessions

- a. Is your camera on?
- b. Do students want to have their cameras on?
- c. Is there enough time for students to ask questions?
- d. Could you make the lesson shorter by 5 or 10 minutes?
- e. Could you provide a short screen break?
- f. Is there time built in for peer interaction e.g. an interactive game or non-lesson-content related activity?
- g. Do students have workbooks to reduce screen time?
- h. Is there time built in for whole class activities e.g. a zoom story time, a Kahoot?
- i. Could there be, or is there a class chat to open lines of communication between peers and/or teachers?

- j. Are students able to fully participate and share thoughts, ideas and work?
- k. Do students know who to ask for help with their work?

2. Workload

- a. Are we slowly easing the students into the workload?
- b. How much other homework does the student have at the moment? Do they understand how to complete their homework?
- c. Could we check student experience e.g. whether it is taking the CYP more time to complete tasks than had been estimated?
- d. Could we have a general homework schedule?

3. Personalising lessons

- a. Is it possible to relate the learning to individual children?
- b. Is it possible to provide greater differentiation of the learning tasks?
- c. Is it possible to build on the children's individual interests, passions and future career interests?

4. Providing wider learning opportunities

- a. Bearing in mind that distance learning has its limitations, is it possible to extend learning opportunities for different CYP e.g. provide some CYP with personalised reading, and other non-screen activities?
- b. Are there any opportunities to teach students life skills?

5. Lesson content

- a. What software can we use to enhance lesson delivery e.g. interactive videos?
- b. Do students have an overview of what they will study across the year?
- c. Are students aware of the learning pit?
- d. Could we do a class project each term/half term?
- e. Do we have a range of revision sessions and websites available for students to access e.g. SENECA?
- f. Do students have access to study skills sessions to help them revise/prepare for exams?
- g. Do we, or have we done tests to review where students are at currently and their strengths and needs?
- h. Do we have teachers or tutors who could provide more 1-1 sessions in Maths and English?

B. Checklist of Top Tips for Schools and Teachers

Preamble

- The following checklist of top tips for schools and teachers is derived from the advice and ideas suggested by the CYP in the study sample.
- Naturally, each school and teacher will need to determine which points are relevant and suitable in their particular circumstances.

- It's appreciated that many teachers and schools will already be carrying out many of these recommendations and therefore they can be provided for information only, in order to be aware of the children's views.
- It is suggested that the following checklists are used as a flexible aide memoire, selectively and as a monitor or check of arrangements that are being made for students.

Checklist for Schools to Consider

1. Mental health and wellbeing

- a. Plan for a programme of mental health and wellbeing. ☐
- b. Arrange a special assembly on supporting your mental health. ☐
- c. Make sure students are aware of the NHS 5 ways to wellbeing, i.e. "be active, connect, keep learning, give and take notice". ☐
- d. Check in with students on their wellbeing and ensure that there is a schedule for this. ☐
- e. Provide a member of staff for students to talk to about their mental health and wellbeing. ☐
- f. Provide small group student check ins. ☐
- g. Arrange monitored student chats for students to talk to each other about their concerns. ☐
- h. Set up parental contact to help parents with their child's wellbeing. ☐
- i. Support school staff with their mental health and wellbeing. ☐
- j. Is anything else required? (Please specify.) ☐

2. Prepare for technology

- a. Check students are confident in using all of the apps, platforms and technology required. ☐
- b. Make sure students know who to talk to if they are confused about the technology. ☐
- c. Ensure there are special lessons on technology. ☐
- d. Ensure all students have access to a laptop. ☐
- e. Is anything else required? (Please specify.) ☐

3. Staying COVID-19 safe

- a. Check that schools has enough resources from the government e.g., masks. ☐
- b. Ensure that all students are confident in their knowledge of what to do. ☐
- c. Arrange a whole school assembly to inform students and staff of how to stay COVID-19 safe. ☐

d. Is anything else required? (Please specify.)

☐

4. Communication with home and students

a. Involve parental feedback as fully as possible.

☐

b. Ensure students know and understand their timetable.

☐

c. Is anything else required? (Please specify.)

☐

5. Economic provisions for students (the following are suggested by students but may or may not be financially realistic within the school's budget but are provided for information)

☐

a. Provide a free school bus for students to be able to attend school.

☐

b. Provide free school meals for students during this time.

☐

c. Provide a breakfast club for students during this time.

☐

d. Is anything else required? (Please specify.)

☐

6. Student transition

a. Create virtual tours to help students with the transition to a new classroom.

☐

b. Create video introductions from new teachers.

☐

c. Check whether students would like refresher activities during the first week back, or whether they would like to return to a "normal" school timetable?

☐

d. Is anything else required? (Please specify.)

☐

Checklist for Teachers to Consider**1. Planning virtual interactive sessions**

- a. Check your camera is on. ☐
- b. Give students the choice as to whether to have their cameras on or off. ☐
- c. Plan enough time for students to ask questions. ☐
- d. Make the lesson shorter by 5 or 10 minutes than normal lessons. ☐
- e. Provide a short screen break. ☐
- f. Arrange for enough peer interaction, e.g. an interactive game or non-lesson-content related activity. ☐
- g. Ensure students have workbooks to reduce screen time. ☐
- h. Allow time for whole class activities, e.g. a zoom story time, a Kahoot. ☐
- i. Create a "class chat" to open lines of communication between peers and/or teachers. ☐
- j. Allow students to fully participate and share thoughts, ideas and work. ☐
- k. Tell students who specifically to ask for help with their work. ☐

2. Workload

- a. Slowly ease students into the workload. ☐
- b. Check how much other homework the student has at the moment. Check they understand how to complete their homework. ☐
- c. Check student experience, e.g. whether it is taking the CYP more time to complete tasks than had been estimated. ☐
- d. Provide a general homework schedule. ☐

3. Personalising lessons

- a. Relate the learning to individual children. ☐
- b. Provide greater differentiation of the learning tasks. ☐
- c. Build on the children's individual interests, passions and future career interests. ☐

4. Providing wider learning opportunities

- a. Extend learning opportunities for different CYP, e.g. provide some CYP with personalised reading, and other non-screen activities. ☐
- b. Think of further opportunities to teach students life skills. ☐

5. Lesson content

- a. Use available software to enhance lesson delivery, e.g. interactive videos. ☐

- b. Provide students with an overview of what they will study across the year. ☐
- c. Where used, ensure students are aware of the “learning pit”. ☐
- d. Set up a class project each term/half term. ☐
- e. Provide students with a range of revision sessions and websites, e.g. SENECA. ☐
- f. Ensures students have access to study skills sessions to help them revise/prepare for exams. ☐
- g. Deliver tests to review where students are at currently and their strengths and needs. ☐
- h. Provide teachers or tutors who could provide more 1-1 sessions in Maths and English. ☐

Appendix B

Examples of the Children's Drawings

Figure B1

"Whenever I am doing something to take up time, I realise I still have work to do." (Child D)



Figure B2

"Everything was very similar ... every week was similar ... it would just go round and round." (Child C)

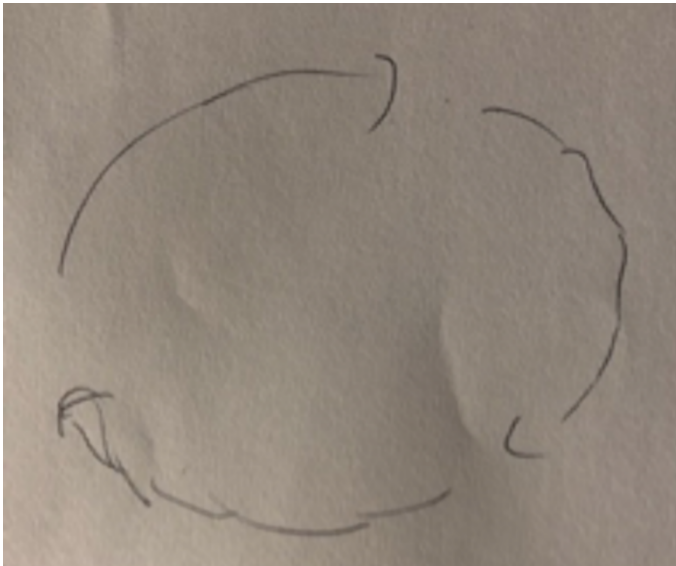


Figure B3

“People who can’t see each other at all are confined from each other.” (Child B)

**Figure B4**

“Every single time we have to go to the shops, we have to wear a facemask and if we don’t wear one, we can’t go into the shop.” (Child H)

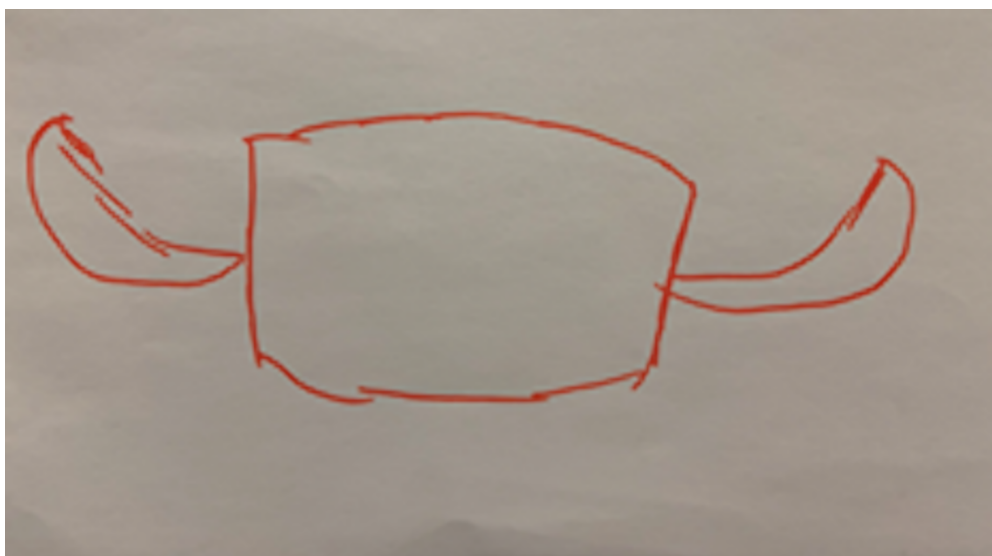
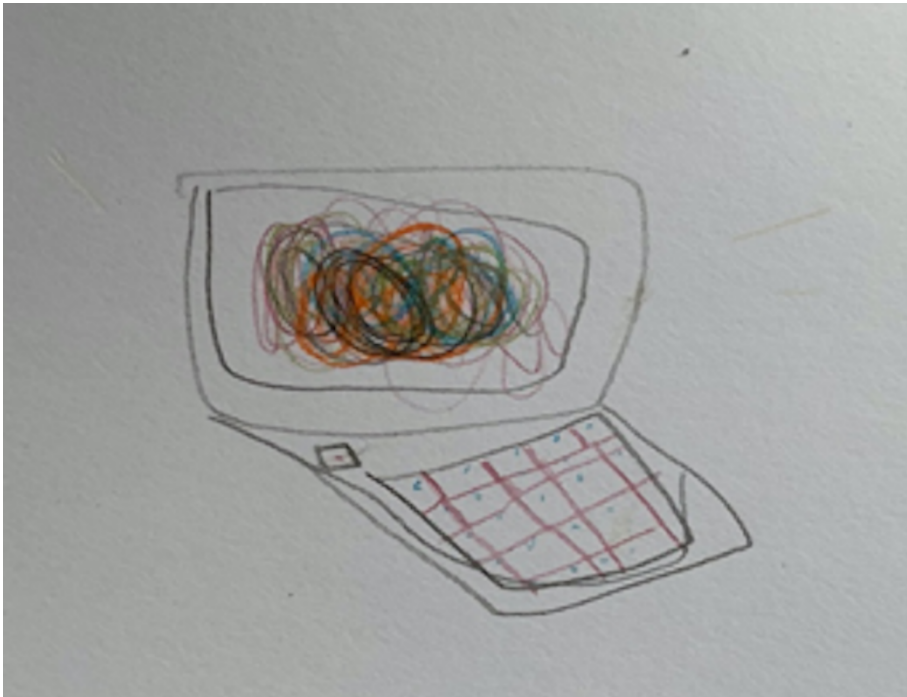


Figure B5

"I drew scribbles in the middle because ... I didn't really get much of a break so it kind of represents that." (Child J)

**Figure B6**

"... the school closures happened and hundreds and thousands of deaths during the quarantines." (Child I)

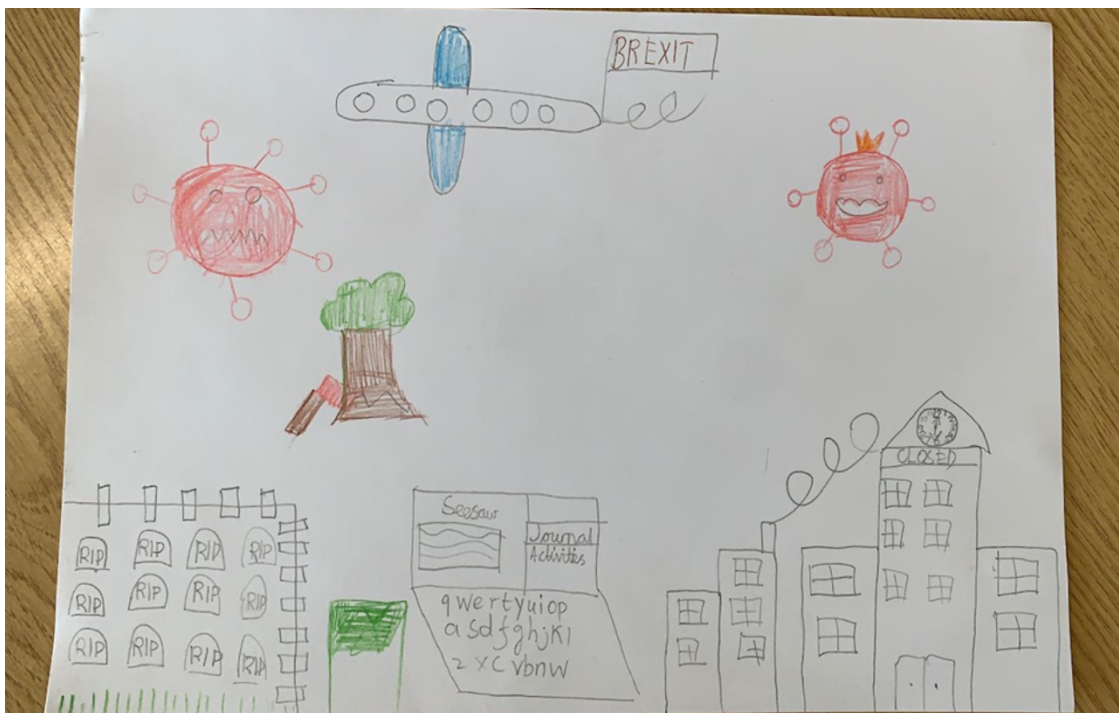
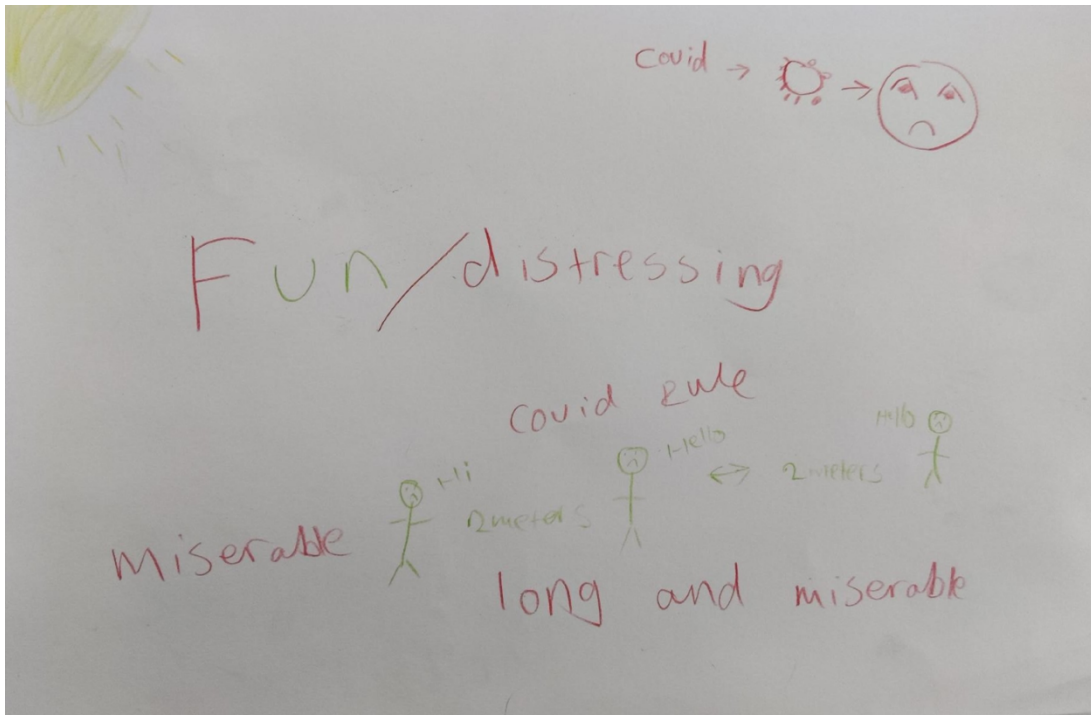


Figure B7

"... these stick men are apart and not allowed to be near each other." (Child E)

**Figure B8**

"I want to be out in the world." (Child L)

