

Children and young people's experiences during lockdown – Secondary school response from survey

Just over 400 children and young people living in Barnet completed a questionnaire based on their experiences. The survey ran between July and August of 2020. 165 respondents were secondary age.

This report highlights what the children and young people said and what they felt would facilitate the return to school in September.

What they said

When asked 'How have you felt during lockdown?'

7% said very happy

26% said they were happy

48% said they were OK

12% said they were unhappy

6% said they were very unhappy

There were seven main response themes about lockdown in order of frequency were as follows:

Safety

Weird, unusual, lost

Boring/quiet

Hard to work

Scary/anxious

Ok/neutral

Mixed/good days and bad days

Young people talked about distraction, lack of structure, and lack of interaction as their key difficulties with schoolwork.

The following quotes illustrate these experiences and concerns:

it's been difficult to concentrate doing all the work that gets sent because of all the distraction and there is no one available to help me.

in need of help to plan my day to be able to finish the daily homework set on class chart.

Hard to learn. Disconnected from school.

Disappointed in the school for lack of interaction.

It's really difficult to do schoolwork at home. Very hard and demoralised

A bit announcer because there isn't anyone who can help you much if you don't understand something.

I am 178 pieces of work behind and no one will talk to me or help me delete them or prioritise.

Some young people preferred working from home:

Good because I was working at the pace best for me and my learning

It has been great staying at home for this period of time as I used that time to catch up on work.

I feel nicer because I am not in school and can stay at home but it is harder to learn without a teacher there in person

I've kept a busy routine. And been keeping fit and healthy and happy

For year 10+ the issues were similar but with more emphasis on schoolwork and exams

Concerns were more specifically about understanding the work, difficulties with 'self-teaching', and managing the workload. The following quotes illustrate these experiences and concerns:

I really miss my friends and I am worried about all the work I am missing in preparation for my GCSE. I have had difficulty completing assignments.

I have missed school and find it hard to study at home. Missed my friends and social interaction with teachers

isolated, missing my friends, struggled to do some school work due to not understanding fully and then being unable to contact specific Teachers for clarity

Boring but productive.

Anxious/difficult

Specific anxieties and challenges focused on work issues, isolation, missing friends and boredom. A small number of young people talked of high levels of fear and stress.

When asked ‘How has it felt being in school during lockdown?’ there was a real difference between the reported primary and secondary school experience. 86% of the younger children reported being in school as happy, fun or amazing. Secondary age young people were less effusive, 18% of the students were pleased to get ‘face to face with teachers’ and were happy to be in school. 70% talked about how weird or strange it was. 12% felt the school was not prepared for them, didn’t plan for them to be there, or did not let them attend on a full-time basis.

Survey responses about going back to school

6% said they were very confident

28% said they were confident

38% said they were not worried or confident

25% said they were worried

3% were very worried

When asked ‘What are you looking forward to?’ the three main themes in order of frequency of response were:

- **Friends**
- **Learning in school, especially:**

Having a teacher there to help you

Having proper interactive lessons

Being able to have my teachers really teach me”

Seeing teachers

Have time with teachers.

- **Getting back to routine**

There were two main concerns about going back

1. How school would have changed and the impact in terms of uncertainty and engagement and how they would adjust to being back at school

I hope I am not behind my friends with school knowledge.

Will I fit anymore?

I like taking my time on my work projects and not being rushed around a building other than my home.

2. Concerns that school will not be prepared.

Boris has never really addressed students and teachers and how they will be safe like masks and resources provided by the government.

Year 7 pupils (going into year 8) expressed specific concerns about just getting the hang of things in the Spring term 2020, they detailed how lockdown has unsettled newly formed friendships and confidence.

When asked What are you not looking forward to? The main themes in order of frequency of response were:

- **Learning**

Concerns about learning were about missed work, failing, having to concentrate for long periods of time and the pressure of catching up.

- **Covid concerns**

Covid concerns were about catching it, spreading it, being in a bubble with unfamiliar people, a second wave, masks, crowds, and socially distancing.

- **Travel to and from school**

- **Change to routine**

What schools can do

When asked 'What would help the return to school. The participants responded with the following key themes:

Adjusting the school day

go back for shorter to start with, maybe only mornings

Maybe more time so we can catch up? Maybe 1hr a day so school finishes at 430pm and we can catch up, I have exams in January!

Travelling arrangements

starting the day later so we are not all crammed in on the bus together in rush hour

starting after rush hour/avoiding busy public transport

Help with learning

Get rid of long list of outstanding work.

Homework club with teacher support

Talking about it

Get back to routine

A proper structured transition

Recap a few things before quarantine and a slow gradual build up of work over time.

Going in later and more individual teaching to help get grades for uni

staying in close touch

More help and explaining

Making the transition from going to another year easier and not hectic

Covid safety

If everyone wore masks

wear mask and not compulsory attendance

spreading out when lots of people are in school together and making sure people keep their distance and don't sit close in lessons

More confirmation about how schools will be run and the limit on the number of people on buses, even before lockdown the buses were very busy. So if all schools go back, how will the buses cope.

Summary

The questionnaire highlighted that many children and young people who were not at school during lockdown had a mixed response with some feeling safe and secure at home, but also feelings of being confused, bored, lonely and isolated. However, most of the children felt OK, happy or very happy during lockdown. The children that did attend school noted that their experience was strange and different and any contact with teachers was valued.

Most children and young people said that they were happy and confident about returning to school and are looking forward to seeing their friends and teachers again. The opportunities for a predictable routine and new experiences are highlighted. Some young people were anxious about fitting back into school, especially with schoolwork, catching-up, routines, pressure and friendship groups. There were some concerns about catching coronavirus, how the school would ensure social distancing was adhered to and how school might change due to the outbreak. Those transferring to a new school were also concerned about how they would adapt to a new environment.

Key points on return to school requested from the survey responders:

- Clear communication from school and staff (knowing what it's going to be like, letting us know what to expect)
- Reassurance and good measures put in place
- Help with learning
- A supported catch up plan.
- A structured transition
- Talking about it
- Getting back to routine and relationships