

Open Schooling: Horizon Scanning

Implications for the school system
in the United Kingdom



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Introduction: Background to the horizon scanning study

Open schooling is a concept that has attracted considerable interest in recent years in terms of practice and expansion. The COVID pandemic re-ignited practices first established a century ago to enable the disconnected to engage with schooling. Where in the 1920s, the scale of physical separation was the catalyst for the provision of Australia's 'school of the air' to cater for those excluded from conventional schooling by distance, so modern technology offered home-learning solutions a century later. In both cases, the offer provided a diluted school experience.

Indeed, the advance of technology and particularly the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has stirred again consideration of the very purpose of conventional schooling and how it should be organised. This, in turn, has led to the reawakening acceleration of debate about open schooling in the philosophical sense, as discussed in the OECD paper, *Open Schools for Open Societies* (2020), which sees the need for a 'sustainable ecosystem' of schooling in order to support societal growth.

The Open School CiC has begun to explore and influence this ecosystem.

This horizon scanning study sets out to try to understand the development of open schooling by examining and describing examples across the world from a range of perspectives: purpose, organisational construct, scale and whether the intention is to substitute for, complement or enhance conventional schooling arrangements.

Next, there is an analysis of the current provision and need in the UK.

The study begins by synthesising the features of international examples based on longevity, size, intended participation and sponsorship. The examples can be described mainly as mature, government-supported provision.

This leads to a consideration of the initial work of The Open School CiC and the essential elements that will need to be in place to secure intentions in the context of the developing ecosystem in the UK.

1 Can we define open schooling?

1.1 What is open schooling?

Open Schooling is a complex arena of practice. The term 'open schooling' is variably applied. It is used to describe settings other than conventional schooling that offer flexibility of organisation. Development has been haphazard, usually based on the principle of adding potential to conventional schooling arrangements. There is an underlying assumption that conventional schooling is a good thing and that a suitable substitute should be offered for those unable to access it physically. In recent times, some nations have seen an open model of schooling as an effective way of helping education reach a wider population of learners, fulfilling their ambition to bring schooling to all. In some cases, nations have seen the potential to enhance the 'basic' conventional offer.

National or regional 'Open Schools' might or might not provide opportunities for students of all ages to acquire academic and vocational qualifications. They complement, extend and enhance mainstream schooling as well as providing substitute schooling for those not attending physical schools for whatever reason. Typically, when provided as a public service, open schooling is described as augmenting a secure provision. All examples examined are based upon the premise that the system can do more to enable access and enrich educational possibilities rather than to compensate for an implied shortfall in the quality of educational provision.

1.2 What open schooling provides

Although there is no universal approach to open schooling, most examples share common guiding principles such as equity and accessibility. Official sites often emphasise that lifelong learning should be available to everyone. Websites typically stress the importance of all members of society having access to lifelong learning opportunities.

Technology platforms are used to facilitate community building, networking, administration, teaching and assessment, communication and resource sharing. Some espouse an additional principle of open sharing of resources (OERs).

Key features of national open schooling systems, which are open to all learners, are that they offer:

- learning pathways that are achievement-driven beyond and including formal qualifications;
- access to an enhanced curriculum. Attendance at the open school is not a substitute for 'expected' schooling but an 'opening' of possibilities to study specialist areas and in different ways - beyond the standard curriculum and traditional teaching approaches;
- opportunities for students to take part in short, long, intermittent, modular and part-time or full-time courses and programmes. Students do not have to sign up 'forever';
- flexibility around attendance and participation and study times with learning opportunities focused on availability, student interest, commitment, pleasure and what students consider worthwhile;
- full-time and part-time study: full-time for some, for others it may be temporary or part-time, balanced with traditional schooling;

- partnerships between businesses, communities, students, including international collaborations;
- synchronous and asynchronous teaching, offering live as well as online teaching;
- an online platform offering access to students directly, often with bite-sized lessons;
- qualifications beyond the 'traditional' ones: students' study for vocational, modular, micro-credential accreditation;
- diverse personalised pathways, accepting there is no 'one route' through learning;
- opportunities for students of any age through self-funded or scholarship options.

1.3 Misconceptions about open schooling

The complexity of open schooling and the overlap of features within it can lead to misconceptions. Some misconceptions about open schools were brought to light as the research progressed, and the responses below are based on practices identified in mature government-initiated open school systems.

Misconception 1: Open schools are intended to cater mainly for those who have been suspended or excluded.

Response: This is absolutely not the case. Open schools are designed to support a wide range of learners through flexibility of provision.

The student types that government-initiated open schools cater for include students seeking specialist courses and qualifications, those with SEND, hospital children and those in isolated rural communities.

Misconception 2: Open schools just provide online materials

Response: Again, this is not the case. National open schools use a wide range of resourced approaches to motivate learners. The national open schools studied stress the importance of personalising and extending the curriculum and bringing specialist teaching to all learners.

Some also provide mentoring/coaching/counselling on a one-to-one basis, thus ensuring a personal and relational element to the learner's experience. Older learners may be involved in work experience and project links with industry. Teaching can be synchronous, asynchronous, face-to-face and/or online.

Misconception 3: Costs: Open schools are prohibitively expensive

Response: Many examples of open schooling are government-funded, and costs are not readily available. In many US states, Pearsons, a commercial company, is providing open schooling through its Connections Academy chain of schools. It has not been possible to establish what the costs are, but presumably they are financially viable for the company.

Student fees for online schools can be low: see the fees entries in the school lists provided by [World Schools](#).

Misconception 4: Oak National Academy is the open school for England

Response: The Oak Academy curated resources are designed for use in the classroom, provided for access by schools and others, such as homeschooling families. The Oak National Academy has no direct contact with students.

Oak National Academy provides online educational resources (OERs) designed to be used for the teaching of the KS1 to KS4 (5-16yrs) curriculum in England in the classroom. However, the open educational resources (OERs) are freely available to anyone, anywhere in the UK. Their description of their offer is as follows:

“Our resources are designed to support teaching in schools and at home. The lessons are pre-recorded, so there is no direct or live interaction with a teacher through the platform. We always recommend that pupils work under the guidance of their school and teachers. Our resources are not intended to replace contact with teachers but to complement and support existing teaching, whether for homework, revision, or to address gaps in knowledge.”

Misconception 4: Open schools offer access to examination courses and qualifications for students to compensate for school failure.

While many offer examination courses and qualifications, they do so under the guise of offering complementary support for students, especially in terms of access to specialist teaching.

Misconception 5: Open schooling is virtual and qualification-based.

While it is true to say that examples of open schooling are taking advantage of technology and moving towards web-based provision, there are several interpretations of the mechanism for delivery. Qualifications do form the basis of many examples, as they do for conventional schooling. Government-provided open schooling is usually promoted as augmenting an already effective schooling system. Governments tend not to point out the failings in their conventional systems.

2 The evolving case for a version of open schooling in UK

While there have always been educationalists who argue for more flexibility in schooling within the UK, even de-schooling, most criticism comes of conventional schooling suggests that it needs to modernise. Schooling should be more responsive to embrace technology and respond to societal change, including employment trends, awareness of child development and adolescence, with attendant neurodiversity.

Any models of open schooling that are available tend to fit the pattern, seen internationally, of responding to student isolation or widening access to conventional provision that is seen to be effective. The traditional school remains the main vehicle for learning.

A perceived acceleration of need and a distinct shift in emphasis are emerging at present, with many arguing that the schooling system is in crisis, with increasing numbers of students absent and at risk of disappearing from the school system.

While globally open schooling has developed as national education systems try to ensure equity of access and provision, in the UK there is also a new call for provision, which is open to students and their families who appear to be disengaging from conventional schooling. Disengagement is a global issue that has gained pace since the COVID pandemic, with a range of reasons attributed to the growing number of students who are ill at ease with the conventional school setting.

2.1 Is there an escalating need in the UK?

The numbers out of school in England suggest there is a problem with young people's engagement with mainstream schooling.

According to the latest [UK government's statistics \(2024/25\)](#), around 18.7% students are missing 10% of schooling for a range of reasons. This is about 845,000 or approximately 5500 students per local authority (LA), as 153 LAs have a strategic lead on education. Two per cent of students (169,000 or over 1000 per local authority) miss more than 50% of their schooling. These figures do not include those excluded or home-schooled. During 23/24, 153,300 children were homeschooled at some point (approximately another 1000 per local authority). The competition between schools in England caused by the publication of league tables of results is acknowledged by [Ofsted \(2019\)](#) to lead to some learners being encouraged to leave schools to be home-schooled.

In 2023, the Education Policy Institute (EPI) used linked data (GP registration vs school/home education records) to estimate that as many as 305,000 children were missing from education in 2023—a figure much higher than the DfE figures at 117,100 based on local authority reports.

'Severe absence (missing at least half of all sessions) continues to rise – a trend that predates the pandemic and persists across all school types. The size of the severely absent group remains small – at just 2.0 percent – but it has almost trebled since pre-pandemic. We now have 148,000 pupils missing half or more of their time in school. But encouragingly, the rate of increase has slowed considerably since the previous autumn, indicating that severe absence might be approaching its peak.' EPI (11th August 2025)

The Education Policy Institute's report is potentially more reliable than the DfE data, as it looks at the gaps between the numbers of children registered with GPs and children attending school:

- 'By comparing GP registrations with school registrations and data on pupils in registered home education for the first time, EPI finds that up to 300,000 children may be missing entirely from education in 2023, a 40 per cent increase from 2017.[1]
- Up to 400,000 children are estimated to be not in school, a 50 per cent increase. According to available data, the number of formally registered home-educated children has increased by over 100 per cent from 2017 to almost 95,000 children in 2023.
- Additionally, using Department for Education data, findings show that over 50,000 pupils ever registered in a state school, or around 8 per cent of the cohort, leave the system

and are not in a mainstream school, alternative provision or an independent school by year 11. Schools are not required to record the reasons for pupils leaving their rolls, and we do not know how many of these exits are due to migration out of the country.

- Certain groups are at a higher risk of exiting the English education system permanently:
 - 75 per cent of Traveller pupils and 50 per cent of Gypsy/Roma pupils.
 - Almost a fifth of persistently disadvantaged pupils (those who are eligible for free school meals for at least 80 per cent of relevant terms) and permanently excluded pupils.
 - Approximately 1 in 8 care-experienced pupils.
- The number of systems exists rises significantly through secondary school and peaks in year 10 before pupils sit their GCSEs. Around a fifth of all exits through the primary and secondary phases occur in year 10.'

Education Policy Institute (EPI) (4 December 2024)

It is these figures and trends which lead to the call for an expansion of more 'open' schooling. The alternative argument is that to provide for students not engaging with conventional schooling will lead to a greater exodus from the school system (with an implied lack of rigour leading to a drop in national standards) and a two-tier system. The growing availability of 'alternative provision' offered by local authorities is seen as helping students who cannot cope with conventional schooling and risking exclusion (and at the same time removing them as 'problems' for their school). Growing numbers of families, though, are reported to believe the school system is unsuitable for their children and elect to homeschool rather than experience what they see as the stigma of alternative provision.

Through the research, it became apparent that there is minimal practical support for the continuing education of students out of school or attending part-time compared with that available in jurisdictions with national open school systems. Perhaps the AWPU (Age weighted Pupil Unit) funds allocated for their schooling, which are currently lost to the system, could be invested in experiments with new models of schooling which capture the interest of this group of young people?

Whatever the figures of young people out of education, if only a fraction of them wish to improve their education at a later stage, the number of potential students would be higher than for some existing national open schools. Without the option of studying through a national open school, their options are limited to the potential detriment of them, their families and society as a whole.

2.2 An evolving ecosystem

It is into this arena of historic development and urgent need in the UK that the OECD report, 'Open Schools for Open Societies', offers insight. This suggests that open schooling is a concept rather than a provision or service and that mainstream schools need to transform practices rather than students being offered augmented or alternative, substitute provision.

2.3 Open Schools for Open Societies (OECD, 2020)

The learning ecosystem model and transformation advice may be useful in framing a quality assurance regime which would accredit a (mainstream) school as an open school.

The report provides a roadmap for the transformation of a school:

'Becoming an Open School cannot be seen as an isolated 'project' – it demands a root-and-branch rethink, not just in pedagogy, but in every aspect of the way the school is organised: its structure, culture, and the use of space, place, and time. An Open School will be an open, curious, welcoming, democratic environment which will support the development of innovative and creative projects and educational activities. It is an environment which will facilitate the process for envisioning, managing and monitoring change in school settings by providing a simple and flexible structure to follow, so school leaders and teachers can innovate in a way that's appropriate for school local needs. It will provide innovative ways to explore the world: not simply to automate processes but to inspire, to engage, and to connect. It will provide a powerful framework for school leaders to engage, discuss and explore: how schools need to evolve, transform and reinvent; how schools will facilitate open, more effective and efficient co-design, co-creation, and use of educational content (both from formal and informal providers), tools and services for personalized learning and teaching; how schools can become innovation incubators and accelerators.' Open Schools for Open Societies (2020) Open Schooling Model p.15

The Open Schools for Open Societies open school model, as set out in Figure 1, provides additional ideas for assessing whether a (mainstream) school can be considered part of an open school network or not. The cycle of transformation to an open school is Figure 5.4 on p.65 of their report on models for open schools.

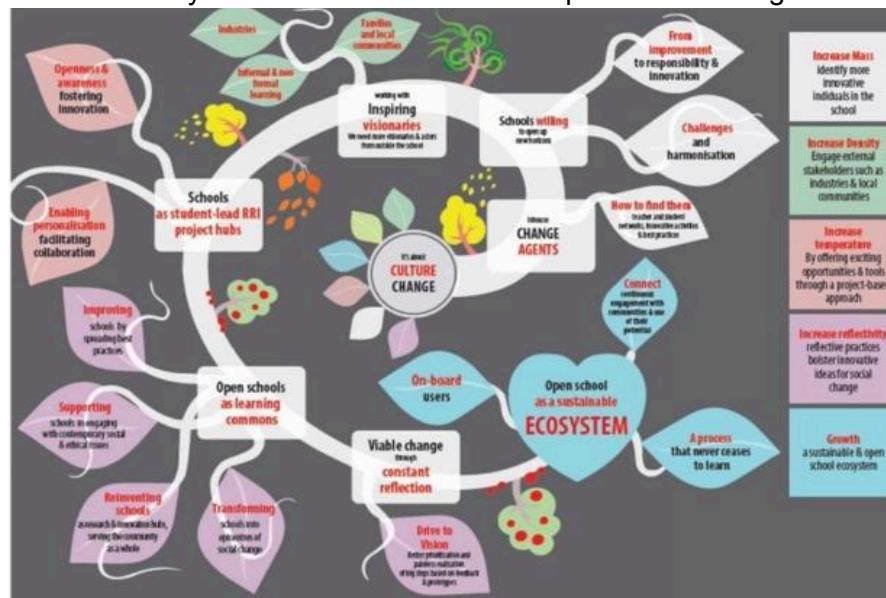


Figure 5.4: The full cycle of the school transformation with the support of the OSOS support mechanism. The process starts with the Change Agents who are becoming Inspiring Leaders of the school community. The OSOS support mechanism offers open, interoperable and personalized solutions meeting the local needs, supports school leaders capture innovation, to decide on the appropriate strategy to diffuse innovation to the school and through constant reflection is guiding them towards the transformation of the school to Open Schooling Hubs and finally to sustainable innovation ecosystems.

Figure 1: OECD ecosystem: reproduced with the permission of the authors (Sotiriou et al, 2017)

2.4 What is the current state of open schooling in the UK?

Given the historic influence of the UK on global education, the concept of open schooling is relatively underdeveloped across the four nations. Such provision as there is aims to provide access to 'courses' for students in remote areas or in the context of specialist subjects of national priorities.

Government-initiated open schooling is available in Scotland ([e-Sgoil](#)) and in Wales ([e-sgol](#)). It was not possible to identify a provision in Northern Ireland. Both the Scottish and Welsh governments have learning platforms: Hwb in Wales and Glow Connect in Scotland. [Scotland](#) has a [National e-learning offer](#). Both the Welsh and Scottish versions provide access to virtual platforms, offering access to both live and recorded lessons.

In Scotland, the aim of the [e-Sgoil course] offer is 'to help schools create personal pathways for their young people, making courses available where they otherwise wouldn't be, either due to small numbers, lack of local subject-area expertise or both. It is intended that this offer can sit alongside the school's in-house option choices, to be considered along with other timetabled courses.'

Scotland's practices for live online lessons mirror those of other providers:

'We are pleased to offer a range of full-year, certificated courses that learners anywhere in Scotland can access. These courses are taught via live, online lessons by either e-Sgoil's GTCS registered teachers, further education lecturers or other approved educators e.g. accredited training officers who deliver Foundation Apprenticeships.'

'Quality assurance at a strategic and operational level is embedded in all e-Sgoil programmes. This includes a robust quality assurance calendar, regular classroom observations, audits and feedback... The quality assurance journey continues, with staff becoming more familiar with the standards and gaining understanding of how to continuously strive for improvement.'

[Wales' e-sgol](#) describes their provision as 'Supporting hybrid learning across Wales.' The Hwb website explains that:

'E-sgol is a project funded by the Welsh Government assisting schools to aim for equity in terms of provision and experiences offered to their learners. We do this by:

- *forming collaborative partnerships between secondary schools to expand post-14 and post-16 provision*
- *offering professional development to secondary school staff as they deliver their courses online*
- *assisting primary schools to offer diverse opportunities and experiences to their learners*
- *supporting Welsh language education nationally.'*

In England, there is no government-sponsored model of open schooling to mirror Scotland and Wales, and currently, in England, DfE advice discourages what it calls 'remote learning', implying its use as an unfavourable substitute for school attendance. 'There should only be limited circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend school but is able and well enough to continue their education remotely.' DfE 19 August 2024.

Children out of mainstream schools for reasons of SEND, health or behaviour are the responsibility of local authorities who provide alternative provision, pupil referral units and home tutoring by individual tutors. Provision is uncoordinated and patchy, with some students being provided with access to online commercial schools and others having a tutor for nine hours a week, with the tutor provided with no teaching materials.

There seems to be no category for virtual or open schools on the UK Government private and state schools register. There is no glossary entry for virtual or open schools on the schools' registry, but there is an entry for online schools. The only DfE advice found on open/virtual/online schooling concerns quality assurance for online schools. Gov.uk advice about registration appears to be that registration is optional:

'Providers of online education may choose to become accredited under the online education accreditation scheme.' DfE (2019)

The DfE has set up a system of voluntary registration linked with Ofsted inspection. Currently, nine providers are listed. This sector appears unregulated, particularly when compared with physical schools.

The English government introduced the Oak Academy during the pandemic to curate online lessons accessible to teachers, and since then, the resource has been expanded.

The Oak Academy is an online repository of lessons written for teachers to adapt and revision aids for pupils' use. The Oak Academy is an OER repository, not a school with enrolled pupils and a teaching staff.

The stated goal of the Oak Academy is:

'From primary through to key stage 4, across all national curriculum subjects, we provide free access to thousands of resources that help you prepare high-quality classroom teaching for all your pupils. Created by UK curriculum and subject experts, they're quality-assured and tested by teachers. They support planning at every level – from curriculum design to lessons. And they can also offer your pupils a high-quality learning experience away from the classroom, supporting their homework and revision'.

The government's lack of involvement is complicated by the prevalence of commercial providers which operate both within the UK and internationally. A Swiss-registered organisation - World Schools - lists 33 private online schools recruiting UK students, one of which claims DfE endorsement and uses the DfE logo. Some of these schools include Cambridge or Oxford in their title, although there is no connection with those universities.

The National Extension College provides a range of online experiences for school-aged and adult learners. Their portfolio includes an Open School, which offers a series of programmes aimed at course completion for qualifications. Individuals can register for a fee and join online classes and access self-managed learning resources.

Examples of specific initiatives in the UK intended to open schooling

There are several examples of specific initiatives to provide open schooling possibilities to students in the UK. Three are provided here showing contrasting purposes.

Example 1: Links to employment sectors

These are typically sponsored by business seeking to expand understanding of its sector and to interest students in career pathways. These offer students unique learning experiences linking business and society's needs to the students' interest. They are providing the personal intellectual development and critical thinking skills offered by a learning pathways approach.

One example is to be found at the SaxaVord Space Port in Shetlands which provides a bridge between students with specialised interests and the emerging space industry. This example has been selected because:

- SaxaVord is already partnering with Scotland's open school e-Sgoil to provide opportunities for Scottish learners to engage with the space-related industries,
- Such opportunities could be extended through engagement with learners UK-wide through a UK-wide open school,
- The emerging space/satellite industry is located in an area of low population, which means the employees will need to be drawn from a national pool.
- the industry needs employees with knowledge in a range of areas and with a range of expertise beyond what can be provided locally,
- it provides an example of how experts in an emerging industry are working with teachers to create courses leading to new qualifications in areas where knowledge is being created,
- schools partnering with a national open school initiative could bring these opportunities to learners and be given some form of 'open school' support and recognition.

Example 2: Increasing student engagement

There are a number of educational settings across the UK which offer models of open schooling for the English context, where the priority is providing a learning environment which engages and motivates the learner who would otherwise be lost to the system. In this sense, the settings set their stance as being 'open' to negotiation about the way schooling is managed compared with the compliance aspects of conventional schooling. There is an openness to negotiation about timetables, courses, pace of learning and contribution, as well as aspects of conduct and dress. Such examples tend to be small, initiated by a parent group concerned to find an alternative without the perceived stigma of exclusion for their children.

A specific example from an English Local Authority provides a positive picture. The PLACE programme in Bedford shows how existing funds (the High Needs Block Grant) held by local authorities can be used to support the learning of children out of school through a partnership with a local secondary school. 115 children are currently being catered for in the PLACE programme. The Local Authority partners with a local secondary school to provide face-to-face

teaching access to resources and premises for children currently being homeschooled for a range of reasons.

'PLACE is a Bedford Local Authority funded support service for home educating families supported by parents and in partnership with Biddenham International School and Sports College. To be eligible to register with the scheme, children should be on the elective home education (EHE) register of the Bedford Borough local authority. The PLACE Programme is based in an independent building and provides significant support for all PLACE registered learners, including part-time specialist support for a number of GCSE subjects and entrance for public examinations. PLACE is a welcoming, friendly community of home educators. We offer a busy enrichment programme for all enrolled youngsters. Activities include music, parkour, sports, French, art and swimming groups; as well as regular trips and workshops.' The PLACE Programme (2025).

If several schools in a Local Authority area adopted an initiative like this, then a considerable number of young people out of school in any area could be supported in their ongoing education.

The PLACE programme has been successful for more than 20 years and can demonstrate a well-tested model which could be adapted for use in other settings. However, provision on a national scale to address the numbers now outside current conventional schooling would need to be extensive and be supported by dedicated funding. Some of those contributing to the research noted that wider accessible, external and less formal provision may risk accelerating the disaffection with and rejection of conventional schooling.

Example 3: Open access to learning for students

BBC Bitesize, supporting students in all contexts, was established in 1998. BBC Teach 'aims to support teachers by curating the best of BBC videos, BBC archive and other curriculum-related resources for use in the classroom' offering '...a personalised structured learning experience...Bitesize...supports the UK curricula in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales using a rich mix of video, audio, games, interactive activities, written content, infographics and guides. The Bitesize website also provides UK students with careers inspiration and advice; articles to support students as they navigate difficult person challenges; plus guidance for parents. Today Bitesize welcomes 2.5 million unique browsers on average each week during term time. It was the top resource used by GCSE students in the last school year, as well as being rated as the most useful.'

2.5 Is an Open School needed in the UK?

Why would the UK want to develop the Open School concept?

The research study describes the reasons why open schooling has been established. Many of those reasons apply to the UK, but some are different.

Reasons why a UK-wide national open school provision could benefit the UK include the following:

- Open schools nurture talent by providing specialist teaching. In England, elite sports and music schools already exist, offering scholarships particularly to the 16-18 age group,

e.g. The USA NFL academy at Loughborough University and the UK Government Music, Dance and Drama scholarships to over 30 specialist institutions. A UK National Open School may be able to support exceptional talent in a wider range of subject areas which are currently poorly supported - the sciences, mathematics and technologies, for example - in ways that are currently outside the scope of conventional schools.

- Specialist teachers are in short supply, with schools in disadvantaged areas less likely to have specialist teachers than schools in more affluent areas (Worth and Faulkner-Ellis, 2022).
- There may be efficiency savings and other benefits to be gained by sharing online resources openly with schools, learners, and communities. Currently, in England, no system exists to support the sharing of teaching materials created by teachers and professional associations (West et al, 2022). The Oak Academy is addressing this issue and might therefore have a role to play in future open schooling.
- Schooling was disrupted for many learners during the COVID pandemic, so catch-up provision may help these learners gain lost ground.
- Traditional schooling is not working for many students: high numbers of learners are out of school or attending school part-time.
- Learners with special educational needs and disabilities are more likely than other learners not to be catered for by traditional schooling, and open schooling provides access to both resource and expertise.
- Local Authorities have to pay for individual schooling for those out of school, so there may be financial incentives for local authorities in England to collaborate in the founding of an English National Open School: a cost/benefit analysis is needed.
- There is potentially a risk to the well-being of society in the UK of having a large percentage of the population undereducated, with no opportunities for personal development. This could lead to a waste of talent and the unrealised potential of those not in employment or training.
- The development of AI is likely to accelerate these changes in systems which are open to embracing new ways of teaching and learning using opportunities available through the use of technology. Commercial providers of online schooling are offering rosy visions of what a child might achieve in examinations, in surroundings safe from outside influences. Fees can appear quite low so an exodus of families from mainstream schools cannot be discounted. This would have implications for society as local schools play a role in social cohesion and in inducting children into society's values and civic responsibilities.

3 The international perspective

3.1 Descriptive findings on national and regional examples of open schooling

To shed light on aspects of open schooling, the horizon scanning study examined the development and provision of open schooling in international examples. The synopsis describes prominent examples of mature provision by national governments though some are regional examples in nations with federal arrangements for education.

It should be noted that all figures are self-reported. Most examples claim a size of enrolment but few mention attendance, completion rates for courses or success rates in examination.

The descriptions and reference backgrounds are summarised in Annexe 1, and Table 1 collates information across the survey around key principles and features.

Annexe 1: Individual summaries by nation, with reference background:

[Table 1: Overview of international examples](#)

Each nation or jurisdiction is described separately with a background to the formation of the provision and then a description of key features.

3.1.1 Australia

Complementary approaches to conventional schooling have been part of the landscape of education in Australia since the first two decades of the 20th century (ACER, 2020). Australia's geographic vastness creates significant challenges for conventional school provision, especially in remote and rural areas. Alternative approaches such as online and distance education, home schooling, and flexible hybrid approaches to learning have become crucial to ensure all young people can receive educational provision, no matter where they live. These approaches often

use technology and community-based initiatives that enable learners in even the most isolated regions to take part in educational experiences.

As part of being a federated nation, the eight Australian States and Territories have individual authority over school education, this means that there are different virtual and distance options for young people and their families in each jurisdiction. These alternative options are usually teacher designed and led, aligned with State or Territory curricula and offer programmes that enable young people to undertake national testing and sit final secondary school examinations. Post-COVID, some students are able opt to 'attend school' through one of the virtual providers, even if they are geographically able to attend a physical school. This is because online/distance schools often offer greater flexibility with curriculum programming, support students to leverage their interest and learn in a less socially intense environment (Learning First, 2020).

Home schooling also offers another education option for young people. Home schooling is usually organised and managed by parents and carers, while state-initiated virtual and distance schooling is administered by trained teachers, and is subject to the same responsibilities as conventional schools. Homeschooling in Australia is legal in all states and territories, and it is a legal requirement for parents or carers to register their child with their state or territory Department of Education if they are being home schooled.

3.1.2 Finland

Finland has a national open school and at least one 'open/online/virtual school' which comes under the governance of the local municipality, as well as private online schools.

Reference was found to a Helsinki online upper secondary school with an emphasis on special subject learning beyond what is available in the student's own school e.g. the study of Japanese.

As with France and Belgium, there is a government-supported online school for expatriate students: Kulkuri Online School. This is run by a foundation and there are suggestions that it is not well funded. It appears to be open to youth all over the world and has under 500 students per year. The offer is described on their website as follows:

'If the [student's] destination area has no suitable local school and there are no international schools available, a student can do all compulsory studies within the Finnish National Curriculum through Kulkuri.

The main subject is the Finnish language and literature. There are courses in Finnish as a mother language or second language.

Students can choose to study one subject, several subjects, or all compulsory subjects in the Finnish National Curriculum through Kulkuri.

Students must have a Finnish-speaking instructor at home (usually one of the parents).

Kulkuri Online School maintains and develops the Finnish language skills for Finnish expatriate children and youth as well as strengthening their cultural identity. At Kulkuri we offer our

students modern, high-quality, and professional teaching in all compulsory school subjects in the Finnish National Curriculum.

At our school we invest in professional staff, the developing of our teaching methods and practices, as well as creating and maintaining a learning environment with the latest technology and skills. A continual development process and evaluation ensures high quality teaching and practices.

Kulkuri has been operating since 1975 and has a solid history of providing quality education for Finnish expatriate students in all parts of the world. Today, Kulkuri has a vast and active co-operational network in Finland and internationally through which knowledge and experiences about online teaching and ICT in education is being exchanged.'

Kulkuri is a member of ICONS, the International Community of Online Schools, and the Kulkuri School Director is a Member of the Board of ICONS.

Quality assurance for the schools and universities comes under the one agency: the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre.'

The ministry is involved in the EU Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 and has set out the following vision:

'The vision is for Finland to become the world's leading developer and user of sustainable digitalisation in teaching and education and training by 2027.'

(Finnish National Agency for Education, 2024).

3.1.3 New Zealand

The New Zealand government's Te Kura school evolved from a correspondence school established in 1922. With 28,000 students per year, it is New Zealand's largest school, with most students being part-time. It is a strong example of a mature national open school catering for a wide range of student types. It has the slogan:

'Ki te ti, ki te ta, ki te katoa Anyone, anytime, anywhere'

Te Kura offers 'synchronous and asynchronous' learning opportunities to all age groups through virtual classrooms and scheduled classes. Students can work at their own pace. Students include elite sports people and those whose families are working out of the country as well as those for whom conventional schooling is not accessible or suitable.

In addition, there is a collaborative network of primary and secondary schools called Kōtūi Ako. The network is one for physical schools which collaborate over timetabling and online teaching so the teachers can teach to their strengths and so that the curriculum provides wider opportunities than could otherwise be managed by an individual school. The website describes pedagogies being used that would be expected in open schools. The schools:

'Work together to improve access to educational opportunities for their learners, via the online environment. Participating schools are able to offer their learners a wide range of programmes, based on the New Zealand Curriculum and NCEA qualifications. By contributing to the Kōtuiti Ako VLN online learning community, schools gain access to over 100 programmes, enabling them to more successfully meet the learning needs of their students.'

3.1.4 Canada

Provincial examples from Manitoba and British Columbia

Manitoba and British Columbia utilise the same government learning platform but they utilise it differently for the benefit of the schools and students in their geographical and economic context. Homeschooling is allowed in both provinces.

Manitoba remote learning offers flexible learning pathways to 260,000 students in the Manitoba education system, which includes approximately 28,000 international students representing 80 countries.

Schools work within the guidelines set out in the Remote Learning Framework (Manitoba) and are the main hubs of the system but they also support students at distance either online or in hybrid programmes.

Options that respond to the different needs of students, schools, and school divisions provide flexibility and increased educational opportunities for learners in Manitoba, regardless of geographic location.

The platform used for this provision is the provincial learning management system (LMS), D2L Brightspace operating through licence and inclusive of maintenance of a course server. The system works on the basis of a clearly defined set of principles that are detailed fully in a set of documentation available on the website:

1. Student learning and well-being are enhanced when students feel like they belong to a community in which everyone is valued, accepted, and supported.
2. Student learning and well-being are enhanced when students have a sense of efficacy in their ability to demonstrate progress and achievement in an online environment.
3. Student learning and well-being are enhanced when students feel a sense of autonomy and responsibility fostered through student voice, self-regulation, and metacognition.' (Manitoba Education 2020a)

British Columbia uses the same learning management systems, D2L Brightspace, but the approach may not be as well developed as in the province of Manitoba, possibly due to use of other established alternatives.

The provincial LMS is required for Provincial Online Learning Schools, and optional for other schools.

All Provincial Online Learning Schools are required to participate in the AQA quality assurance process.

3.1.5 France

The French Government's Centre National d'Enseignement à Distance (CNED), established in 1939, caters for home students as well as French learners overseas. It claimed 350,000 students in 2022.

'The CNED method is based on a range of online courses and educational resources for students of all levels, from kindergarten to university, as well as for adults in vocational training. Students can study at their own pace, with access to online courses and homework, as well as a variety of educational materials to support their learning.'

In 2009, CNED set up a free online learning platform - Academie en ligne - delivering courses across all ages of compulsory education. This now seems to dominate the French open schooling approach. It contains interactive learning units' summaries of key concepts and activities designed for young people and families.

A private company, CGI, supports a virtual learning network called OpenENT. 'ENT stands for Espace Numérique de Travail in French, or virtual learning environment in English. Designed to benefit the entire educational community, OpenENT is used by 2 million pupils and students in France at more than 1,700 schools. "monLycée.net", "Paris Classe Numérique" and "lyceecconnecte.fr" are all digital workspaces based on OpenENT

3.1.6 Germany

In Germany education is the responsibility of the Lander (regions). Researchers found references to forthcoming legislation focused on digital education as well as federal initiatives such as a portal for resources (Lehrer-online). With respect to the provision of open/online/virtual schooling, very few references were found for Lander initiatives or commercial providers. An exception is the Online School Saarland (OSS), established in 2020.

Online School Saarland, Germany provides an integrated Saarland Statewide Systematic Media Lending Service (LSMS). This is a government-funded initiative through the Ministry of Education and Culture in the Saarland Region. Education organisations from kindergarten to secondary schools can become registered users, allowing teachers access to over 50 activities and content types in a virtual classroom. H5P is used to create interactive educational materials. The system is utilised across Saarland elementary schools through to secondary to support learning across the region. It encourages schools to produce and share learning materials throughout the region.

All services are located on a trusted, legally compliant, and data-protected platform. Research is currently underway with 76 registered users to consider the effectiveness of the innovation. The intention is to create 'Motivating learning arrangements, such as the free design of learning pathways based on competency expectations, enabling collaborative and individualised work.' Automated feedback can be provided to support teacher development.

The regional system uses a range of Open Education Resources through OERinfo as the community portal. This includes, firstly, transferring relevant information to the OER World Map to increase the visibility and connectivity of 'OER-active' institutions and secondly, developing concrete follow-up measures for community expansion. This involves engaging with representatives from the educational sectors to learn more about their respective starting points and needs. The next stage is building on this to offer targeted information, consulting, and networking using Online School Saarland and OSS cloud through Nextcloud Hub to facilitate shared resources across OSS. This initiative began in 2023 and is currently welcoming schools that wish to be involved in the network.

3.1.7 India

The National Institute of Open Schooling in India was founded in 1989. It has 23 regional centres, each serving a population roughly the size of England. Over the last five years, it has registered over 4 million students. It also serves as an examination board and, as well as running traditional assessments, provides 'On Demand Assessment'. The following text is an extract from their website:

Overview of the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), often referred to as the 'Open School,' serves a diverse group of learners up to the pre-degree level. NIOS functions through an extensive network comprising five departments, 23 regional centers, two sub-regional centers, two dedicated NIOS cells, and over 7,400 study centers (Accredited Institutions and Accredited Vocational Institutions) across India and abroad. With a cumulative enrollment of 4.13 million over the past five years, NIOS stands as the world's largest open schooling system, delivering flexible, inclusive education to a broad learner base.

Initiated in 1979 as a flexible educational project under the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), it evolved significantly over time. The 1986 National Policy on Education emphasised expanding open learning systems nationwide, leading to the establishment of the National Open School (NOS) by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, in November 1989. The CBSE's initial project was integrated into NOS, and by September 1990, NOS gained the authority to enroll, assess, and certify students for pre-degree courses, as formalised through a government resolution.

In July 2002, NOS was renamed the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), reflecting its mission to deliver accessible education through an open learning framework. NIOS aims to contribute to universal education, promote social equity, and foster a learning-oriented society, aligning with national education policies and addressing community needs.'

'...NIOS supports its OBE [Open Basic Education] programme through partnerships with approximately 853 agencies, providing study centers, curriculum resources, training, and joint certification. Its secondary and senior secondary programmes offer 28 subjects in multiple languages, including Hindi, English, Urdu, and regional languages, with an On-Demand Examination System (ODES) for flexible testing. Study materials are available in English, Hindi, and Urdu, supplemented by audio-video resources, personal contact programmes, tutor-marked assignments, and a biannual magazine, Open Learning.

The vocational programmes align with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) and emphasize skill development through a strategic framework for open and distance learning.

NIOS collaborates with industries and educational organizations to enhance these offerings, prioritizing first-generation learners, differently-abled individuals, and marginalized communities.'

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has been heavily committed to developing open and online schooling for all. This followed the covid pandemic crisis. There is a number of initiatives, including ones which make educational resources freely available to all:

'A comprehensive initiative called PM e-Vidya has been started as part of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan on 17th May, 2020, which unifies all efforts related to digital/ online / on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education. The initiative includes the following components:

- *DIKSHA the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in states/UTs: and QR coded Energized Textbooks for all grades (one nation, one digital platform)*
- *One earmarked Swayam Prabha TV channel per class from 1 to 12 (one class, one channel)*
- *Extensive use of Radio, Community radio and CBSE Podcast- Shiksha Vani*
- *Special e-content for visually and hearing impaired developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language on NIOS website/ YouTube*

Where the digital facility (mobile device/DTH television) is not available, Ministry of Education has taken many initiatives like Community Radio Stations and a podcast, textbooks, and worksheets supplied to residences of learners. Handbook on 21st Century Skills and community/mohalla classes are organised. Innovation Funds of the Department are used to set up mobile schools, virtual studios, and virtual classrooms in schools. A Continuous Learning Plan (CLP) has been initiated in all States/UTs, pre-loaded tablets in various states and UTs are effectively used in remote rural areas where online classes are difficult.

Further, an Alternate Academic Calendar has been prepared for learning solutions including self-assessment for grades 1 to 12 for both children with and without devices. Bridge Course Modules have also been developed for bridging the learning gaps of Out of School children studying in special training centres (STC) under the provisions of RTE Act, 2009. Also, PRAGYATA guidelines were issued to the States/UTs to facilitate continued education through various modes. The guidelines inter-alia include situations where internet connectivity is not available or available with very less bandwidth, resources are shared through various platforms like television, radio etc. that do not depend on the internet.'

(Kamaldeep Singh, 2024)

4 Implications for Open Schooling in the UK

The international research provides insights into how current models of government-funded schooling are changing to offer students personalised education through a choice of subjects, pace of learning and attendance and assessment types.

It also illustrates that the context for the development of partnerships between a national open schooling system and schools in England is very different to that in the countries studied. The fragmentation of the English school-based education system may make more difficult the

efficient use of national resources as compared with other nations where schools are expected to collaborate freely.

A national open school system for the constituent nations of the UK could be designed to complement, work alongside and with existing Local Authority services, Pupil Referral Units, Alternative Provision as well as secondary schools, FE colleges, special schools, hospital schools and other specialist units.

What is missing at present is a sufficient range of models that enable consideration of the changes necessary within conventional schooling that would address some of the emerging challenges to the school system. Open schooling should not be seen as an alternative to conventional schooling but the concept can be explored within mainstream schools in order to encourage reconsider traditional assumptions. A conventional school system can encourage non-binary, non oppositional development, influencing learning and learners positively.

4.1 Moving forward: potential next steps in UK

Because open schooling is a developed provision elsewhere in the world is not, in itself, a reason for establishing such a system in UK.

However, many nations have recognised that schooling can be more than simple, place-based provision.

The links between success in education and societal benefits are well established. The Open School CiC recognises and has analysed the social and environmental changes which need to be addressed in order to continue to secure those benefits: the changing world of work and employment patterns, the growth of technology and artificial intelligence, the changing nature of adolescence and the growing disaffection with conventional schooling approaches.

In UK, it is becoming more obvious that conventional institution-based provision is not working for many as more and more families withdraw their children by determination or default, particularly at the secondary stage. Disaffection grows at early secondary.

An Open School could be an alternative or a supplement. It must guard against the risk of accelerating disaffection with traditional schooling. It is not a separate provision but could incorporate provisions available elsewhere such as virtual curricula or stand-alone qualifications or micro-credentials, short courses and experiences. These would help learners acquire valuable skills and experiences as well as to build a sense of confidence around their potential to achieve.

The Open School CIC is working to develop an Open School as a supplement based within the school system at the secondary stage.

The challenge is not simply to make an Open School available but to enable all students, and particularly those at risk, to access it. The intention should be to encourage schools enabled students to make meaning from their engagement with learning to sustain their educational involvement.

The UK and its schools provide multiple opportunities for students beyond the traditional school day. The key difference in the Open School CiC development is the provision of learning coaches and mentoring within schools to point students towards opportunity.

The Open School CiC is working to match student need to appropriate pathways of provision via coaching and mentoring. This 'personalised learning' supports students within their schools rather than encouraging them to turn away.

Most Open Schools provide pathways and open access. Open School CiC is working to enable the right students to access the right experiences and pathways at the right time and this is relatively unusual.

These pathways would include academic, vocational and practical programmes. They would offer students experiences which might be recreational, work related, specialist or generalist. The programmes and experiences might be short term, long term, extensive or limited. They might be provided locally, regionally, nationally or globally and available in person or virtually, accredited or not, leading to qualification or personal fulfilment or both. The commitment is to the student finding a unique pathway within the context of the expectations of a national curriculum and more.

The economic benefits would be significant in terms of an increased working population, with fewer NEETs and reduction in social, health, judicial and custodial costs.

The Open School CiC has been working with school and business partners to test out various aspects of open school approaches in mainstream schools across five localities in the UK. The results of the first stage development programmes are promising. The data on student progress, attendance, attitude and commitment are all strong compared with the baseline. However, the results of this pilot work should be evaluated independently by further research to establish an evidence base for further development.

As more schools affiliate with the design stage programme, the evidence of value will be more accessible. Further research will enable the concept of a UK open schooling system to be defined alongside the development of a working model.

4.2 Realising intentions

For these sorts of intentions to be realised, there will be a need for significant funding. All non-commercial examples in this research are government-funded within their national provision for education. Much of the ambition of The Open School CiC is focused on working within existing infrastructure and supporting mainstream institutions to transform in line with OECD recommendations. This is far less tangible and obvious than creating a 'product' or a 'service'. Creating a new ecosystem requires funding to make it work, and the following drivers for success.

- Leadership at a local level... as in the Manitoba example
- A community of interest and learning on the part of all involved in the system... as in Manitoba and British Columbia

- Access to virtual provision and resource... as in the Florida, German and Indian examples.
- A wide repertoire of assessment and qualification opportunities, including micro-credential and when ready examination... as in the India example.
- Links with industry and Higher Education ... as with the Scotland and Finland examples
- Links with cultural and community priorities... as with Wales and Manitoba examples
- Opportunities for students to meet high-level specialist teaching... as in the Finland examples.
- Commitment to 'hard to access' communities... as in New Zealand and Australia examples.
- Mechanisms for students to become known individually in terms other than their education (academic) progress... as in the Manitoba example.

This analysis of global provision to date provides a framework for this further work.

4.3 Case studies in the UK: emerging models

The establishment of case studies and careful analysis of impact through a first-stage design process should enable proof of concept. Evaluation of results will show potential impact at individual, regional and national levels, revealing potential benefits and operational challenges.

First stage design work is underway in locality areas, mainly centred on Multi-Academy Trusts, but with some individual school models in place along with local authority supported programmes. The case studies represent a range of contexts: Shropshire, Leicester, County Durham, South Gloucester and Bristol, Kent, Southampton, Cardiff, Bedford, Cheshire and London.

The case studies are designed around the three key features of the Open School practice:

- Knowing the student: through effective online analysis at the student level
- Coaching and mentoring: with trained coaches and mentors helping the student connect with appropriate provision
- Provision mapping: knowing what is available locally, nationally and virtually

Initially, these case studies, based mainly in mainstream schools, are examining aspects of open schooling:

- Encouraging attendance and engagement through a more focused and personalised curriculum offer.

- Addressing student disaffection with learning via curriculum relevance, tailored to capability and relevance.
- Take up and commitment to post-16 learning, particularly in rural towns.
- Making full use of local and wider resource and opportunities for learning.
- Addressing individual needs, SEND or neurodiversity through a revised use of time, resource and people.
- Working with families who have lost confidence in the conventional school system.
- Use of virtual, synchronous and asynchronous teaching.

Working in locality clusters, the design phase brings together participants to share understanding and practice and to refine development. The initial involvement of 16 schools (5 localities) in the first year, growing to 24 (8 localities) in the second and 36 (12 localities) in the third, will release sufficient evidence on the viability of the model. As the number of schools grows, the level of diversity in the model can expand, ensuring a balance of setting, circumstances, histories of success and priorities.

Initially, schools are funding the programme themselves, supported by significant pro-bono contributions from educational practitioners who are committed to the principles and vision and are managing the infrastructure. If the benefit of the Open School model in the UK can be established, then there will be a need to define the Open School CiC role in line with fulfilling emerging assumptions.

4.4 Early Indicators and positive signs: where next?

The first stage design model has been underway for eighteen months and there are early indicators of impact. There are observable signs of improved student engagement within the current schooling framework. Schools report breakthroughs and improvements at cohort level and individual student level in comparison with previous and student cohorts not involved in the case studies.

Formal evaluation is underway and analysis is beginning to show impact which can be claimed to be a result of the Open School involvement as well as impact which is more difficult to claim without further evidence.

There are already definite indications that involvement in the Open School programme has the potential to make a long-term difference to employability, qualifications, school attendance and behaviour.

The formal evaluation will provide tangible evidence of progress and inform future development into a second stage design model. The intention is to work with policy orientated think tanks to

influence DWP, DCMS and DFE evidencing a clear link to national priorities and bids for funding to expand the infrastructure to support schools.

The role of the Open School would then be articulated so that schools wishing to become part of the development would be clear about the unfolding agenda.

4.5 The Open School CiC

Secondary schools across the UK can affiliate to the Open School CiC which will provide and manage a programme to enable gradual organisational reform. The Open School CiC will commit to five key provisions, expressed for the schools involved as follows:

- We will help you to feel confident that you know each of your students well and have an **purposeful relationship** with each which points the way towards fulfilling learning opportunities.
- We will help ensure there is a **supporting adult** for every learner in the right form for them, who 'holds responsibility for their school experience' as an individual, and scaffolds their journey academically and beyond.
- We will help you to get an increasingly broad, reviewed and **validated range of opportunities** to develop for students, presented in a considered balance of 'what's interesting, what's helpful right now'.
- You will take part in a regular peer **review process** that allows 'stretch and challenge' sessions to evolve definitions of 'what good looks like' and how we are moving towards them, as well as the indicators and elements of the platform to improve.
- We will connect you with support to enable Open School principles and processes in the context of organizational reform. You will work with a **UK wide network of like-minded professionals with whom to associate and develop innovative practice.**
- We will connect you with a **platform that forms the backbone of broader development**, with 'make or buy' flexibility for schools in extension areas and support in delivering it.

4.6 Interconnected assumptions

If The Open School CiC intends to seek funding to develop and support a national model of open schooling, it needs to work on a set of interconnected assumptions.

If the purpose of the Open School in the UK is to offer opportunities to students, then:

It needs to operate where most students are to be found within mainstream schools.

If the Open School in the UK is seeking to affect students' commitment to learning and their own education, then:

It needs to be available to them via their school.

Mainstream schools should see the Open School as a community of learning in which they are involved rather than a service for which they pay. Their involvement should be driven by a willingness to share their own learning and resource with the community, allied to their commitment to each student.

If the Open School in the UK seeks to personalise learning, then:

It needs to help each student to be known and know themselves.

Mainstream schools should be offered tools by which to get to know their students and their needs, including appropriate surveys and coaching, mentoring and tutoring training. Each student should have access to Open School experiences, dependent upon need, with some engaging for five times more than others at various points in their school lives.

If the Open School offers tools to mainstream schools, then:

It needs a cost-effective infrastructure to make resource and expertise available.

If the Open School seeks to enable mainstream schools to work together, then:

The infrastructure needs to accommodate new forms of practice sharing that enable schools to benefit.

If the Open School UK seeks to make opportunity available to students via their school, then:

It should map opportunity, locally, regionally, nationally, internationally and virtually. Some of that opportunity will be provided within the mainstream school itself and should be made available to students in other schools. Some of the opportunities can be offered virtually, with access open to students themselves to make decisions and choices. Some opportunities will be qualifications-driven, and many will be directly linked to knowing the student. Opportunity will lead to engagement that might be recreational, vocational, community/civic-driven, work-related or problem-oriented. It is a personalised opportunity.

If the Open School wishes to use a virtual online capability, then:

It needs to establish an accessible platform which harnesses and evaluates what exists elsewhere to the benefit of users.

If the Open School wishes to enable students to have enhanced and improved experiences via their own school, then:

A set of standards for working practice should be negotiated to enable confidence on the part of schools in using providers.

If the Open School wishes to influence approaches to student profiling and assessment, then:

The Open School will need to act as a broker for agencies developing innovative approaches and enable schools to be innovative in implementation.

If the Open School aims to connect students with agencies offering resource to support their productive learning, then:

The Open School CiC will need to develop processes to ensure credibility and enable schools to use the opportunity provided.

If the Open School seeks to offer students the highest quality teaching, then:

Access to the best teachers in other schools should be a routine part of learning, and students should be pointed to wider opportunities enabled by technology.

If the Open School is to act as a Quality Assurance body and one which enables growth while ensuring standards, then:

The Open School CiC, working with mainstream schools, should develop practices that establish and regulate standards of provision. The Open School CiC should be an affiliative body, responsible for support, coherence, coordination, and quality assurance.

If those students currently not attending school are to be supported effectively, then:

The Open School CiC can enable greater understanding of how to meet the needs of such students through effective practices, which can be infused into mainstream schooling to bring about a gradual transformation of practices.

If the Open School seeks to connect students with good experiences through effective coaching, then:

It will need to establish protocols for schools in each of these aspects as a commitment to affiliation.

4.7 The Open School CiC vision and approach for Open Schooling in UK

This report concludes with a vision statement from those commissioning the research study - the Open School Community Interest Company.

The purpose of The Open School Community Interest Company is to supplement and support the existing mainstream secondary school system to get the right support to the right students at the right time, regardless of their circumstances, such that they achieve success and pursue educational opportunity. It offers a new paradigm in learning to the many young people who are unable to thrive in the current mainstream provision.

The Open School is not a building. It is not an online resource. It is not an institution or alternative provision. It is for all - not just for some. Mainstream schools affiliate to The Open School rather than students attending it. It is a way of incrementally personalising the developmental experience of young people, whilst coordinating the rest of the sector around this aim. The Open School works with schools to provide a transformative learning experience for some of the most disenfranchised, as well as inspiring those who are succeeding to seek further experience and challenge. Our focus, over time, is to help schools open opportunities for increasingly personalised learning for secondary-aged learners, at scale.

'Wouldn't it be wonderful if young people genuinely believed that their school was opening doors for them? They would learn in settings which are open-minded about progress in all its forms. Just imagine how they would feel if the school spotted their interests, skills, talents and frustrations and helped to point them towards opportunity.'

The Open School concept sets out to connect all young people with learning that matters to them, harnessing talent and energy by fueling hope, ambition and success. The Open School seeks to challenge young people and encourage them to commit to their own futures by enjoying a productive present.

... The Open School will reduce the waste of human talent as fewer young people leave school with a sense of failure and it will reduce the eventual burden on health, social care and custodial services. It will open up avenues of interest for the succeeding and enthusiastic students and usher them towards specialism, experience and opportunity.

... The Open School will do this by engaging young people in charting their own pathway towards adult life, building interest, and helping young people to believe they can open their own doors.' The Open School (2024)

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