

## PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Paediatrics Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

### ARTICLE DETAILS

<b>TITLE (PROVISIONAL)</b>	Impact of lock-down and school closure on children in special schools - a single centre survey
<b>AUTHORS</b>	Banerjee, Tapomay Khan, Amjad Kesavan, Piriyaanga

### VERSION 1 – REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Reviewer name: Dr. Dharendra Singh Institution and Country: National Health Service England, Community Paediatrics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Competing interests: None
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	24-Dec-2020

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>1. Please choose a baseline to compare. Whether children were 'more' anxious in comparison to pre lockdown level or in comparison to SEN children in mainstream school or in comparison to children without SEN. When you say 'more' you need to say more than what.</p> <p>2. it is a survey collecting information on parental perception which is not a statement of fact unless corroborated by a verifiable tool. The wordings in your conclusion should reflect this being only a perception.</p> <p>3. Please reconsider ascribing 'increased anxiety' simply to 'school closure' or simply to 'Lockdown'. The overall situation itself was very anxiety provoking for everyone. It was not only the school, but their favourite fast food outlets, leisure centres, clubs, cinema etc were all closed as well. Children can sense the unusualness in environment such as their parents losing job or having less income, some of their relative might have died due to Covid19. Unless you have enquired all these adequately, it might not be very scientific to assume it was school closure/Lock Down that was causing the (increased) Anxiety. Please account for all confounding variables in your discussion.</p>
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<b>REVIEWER</b>	Reviewer name: Dr. Rob Webster Institution and Country: UCL, PHD, 26 Woburn Square London, WC1E 6BT United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Competing interests: None
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	23-Dec-2020

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>This is a useful summary of a small scale survey conducted on a population that have been under-researched and under-represented in the pandemic in the UK. This article should be considered for publication, subject to the following (mostly minor) clarifications.</p> <p>Abstract. The study appears to relate to the spring/summer lockdown. It would be worth clarifying this timeframe, as to date, there have been 2 national lockdowns in England, and we may be into a third by the time the letter is published.</p>
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	<p>Abstract, line 10. Add a line to explain the methods (a survey of parents of children in 3 special schools in Bedford)</p> <p>Page 3. The finding/conclusion about the usefulness of virtual clinics ('What this study adds', line 22) needs to be more clearly evidenced in the main body. It was not clear to me how this was reached on the basis of the data supplied.</p> <p>Page 6, line 16. The sentence about the emotional wellbeing of the majority of children in special schools being negatively affects requires a qualification that links it more clearly to the sample (3 special schools in Bedford).</p> <p>Page 6, line 38. The claim about the effects of school closures are plausible, but require some supporting evidence beyond what the data provide. The authors may wish to refer to this report on special education during lockdown:  <a href="https://mk0nuffieldfounpg9ee.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Special-schools-during-lockdown.pdf">https://mk0nuffieldfounpg9ee.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Special-schools-during-lockdown.pdf</a></p> <p>Table 1 needs to be explained in the body of the text. There is presently no reference to it.</p> <p>TYPOS  Abstract, line 1 &amp; Page 4, Line 1. Child or young people  Page 5, line 12. 'some words but WERE unable to..'  Page 5, line 18. 'parents about THE emotional..'</p>
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### VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

First of all, my sincere thanks to all the editorial team and both the reviewers for their help and support. I have learned a lot during the whole research process and writing it up. I am summing my responses here.

I have attached my revised submission with tracked changes in this page.

Reviewer 1 comments-

We agree to most of the comments and we have mentioned clearly in the re submission that, it is a small study in special schools in Bedford, UK . Our aim was to represent this under represented group and to have a wider picture we need a bigger study involving multiple centers. We have also mentioned that it was related to the first lock-down started in March 2020.

We have taken out the virtual clinic part of this study and also "what this study adds" part as these are not required in a research letter submission and also difficult to accommodate within 600 word limit.

We have added another line to refer to table 1.

Reviewer 2 comments-

1. This is a great suggestion but probably needs a much bigger study or a RCT if we want to compare with mainstream school children. When we mentioned "more", we meant, more than usual time which is pre-lock down. This was explained to parents
2. We have mentioned clearly that the questionnaires were sent to parents to complete and they were encouraged to capture their children's voice. Most of these children have very little communication abilities and their parents understand them better than anyone else.
3. We looked into emotional well being during lock down, along with school closure. We have not presumed that all these difficulties are only because of school closure.

Associate Editor's comments-

1, 2. and 6. We acknowledged, it is a small scale study in a single centre (In Bedford, UK) during first lockdown.

4. Amended in re submission.

5. Included in appendix.

7. Amended, I have removed "thematic analysis"

8. Added in methods section.

9. Mentioned in text.

10. In our service we usually advice parents to contact nursing team/paediatricians if they have any issues. We wanted to look at whether parents had to seek help from other teams like CAMHS or CAMHS crisis team. I tried to be more specific in re submission.

11. We had 2 different questions. Question 5 is specific about anxiety(31/53) and Question 7 about emotional well being in general(42/53).

12. I have taken this line off from introduction as advised by Professor Choonara but in the discussion part added suggestions from parents.

13. Ethics approval attached.

All comments from Editor in chief were noted and amended in the submission.