INTERIM SUMMARY REPORT 1

Leeds schools' remote education provision for reception children during the Spring 2020 lockdown

JULY 2021

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ickle

Impact of Covid on Key Learning and Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This interim report presents insights from 10 schools in Leeds, UK, regarding the resources and guidance they provided to caregivers to support home learning during the Spring 2020 lockdown, which began on 23rd March, 2020. We summarise the range of approaches used, and highlight areas of consistency and difference across schools and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum areas.

Overall, we found considerable variability, across schools and curriculum areas, regarding the amount and type of resources provided, and how guidance was communicated to caregivers.

Our key findings:

- More resources were provided for traditional academic subjects (Literacy and Mathematics)
- Resources for children who remained in school were usually the same as for those at home
- Very few live or pre-recorded lessons were provided
- Worksheets were more common for Literacy and Mathematics, while online resources were more common for phonics
- Games and activities were common across areas of the curriculum
- Most schools made the move to online reading books
- Most schools provided new activities daily or weekly and were in regular contact with families

These findings are important for understanding variation in remote learning provision, and areas that could be improved in the event of future lockdowns.

THE IMPACT OF COVID ON KEY LEARNING AND EDUCATION (ICKLE) PROJECT

ICKLE is a 12-month project, funded by the UKRI/ESRC, which began in September 2020. The project is investigating the impact of COVID-19 school disruption on reception-aged children learning key foundation skills for later academic success. The project uses a retrospective longitudinal design, with data provided by schools and caregivers, to investigate the factors that have moderated and mediated pupil progress.

Full project details can be found at https://ickle.leeds.ac.uk/.

Introduction

When England went into lockdown on 23rd March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were closed to all children, except those of critical workers or those classed as vulnerable. Schools were required, at very short notice, to move to a model of remote provision, a situation which persisted for up to 14 weeks.

We know, from a number of published reports (Lucas et al., 2020; Moss et al., 2020; Nelson & Sharp, 2020; Sibieta & Cottell, 2020), that remote learning provision varied across schools, and that children's engagement with that provision was also variable.

Across the board, children had less teacher-led instruction than normal. It is vital that we establish what was provided, so that we can support children moving forwards and be prepared in the event of any future school disruption.

The current report adds to our understanding of remote learning provision by presenting data collected in the first phase of the ICKLE project.

These data offer a specific insight into the remote learning provision for young children at the very beginning of formal schooling.

What did we do?

Study sample

Between October and December 2020, 10 primary schools in Leeds (a large superdiverse city in the North of England) provided us with information about the remote learning provision they delivered in Spring 2020. Seven of the schools reopened to reception children in June 2020. In the best-case scenario, if schools reopened, reception children had missed around 7 weeks of normal schooling. In the worst-case scenario, this increased to 14 weeks.

Number of schools	% EAL	% FSM	% SEN	SIZE
ABOVE	**4**	**5**	**4**	**8**
National Average 2019/20	*21.3%*	*17.3%*	*14.2%*	*n=281*
BELOW	**6**	**5**	**6**	**2**

Figure 1: Schools in the ICKLE project (n=10) compared with national average data 2019/20.
EAL = English as an Additional Language; FSM = Free School Meals; SEN = Special Educational Needs

Data collection

An online survey was used to gather information from teachers, who received a £15 Amazon voucher as a thank you for participating in the ICKLE study. Each participating school was also given a £50 Amazon voucher.

The survey comprised questions covering the following areas:

Resources and guidance provided by schools
1. The resources and guidance aligned with the EYFS curriculum that were provided to caregivers, specifically, Literacy (with a separate section about Phonics), Mathematics, Communication & Language, and Personal, social & emotional development (PSED).
2. The extent to which the resources and guidance focused on continuation of the curriculum, consolidation of the curriculum, or both.
3. The percentage of the curriculum estimated to have been covered in the school year 2019-2020.
4. The extent to which resources given to caregivers were aligned with those provided for the children who remained in school.
5. The format of the resources - for example, whether they were paper-based, digital, or a combination.

Home-school communication
6. The frequency with which new resources and guidance were given to caregivers.
7. Caregivers' access to reading books.
8. Home-school communication methods and frequency.
9. Submission of work completed at home to teachers, and the extent to which feedback was provided.

What did we find?

Resources and guidance provided by schools

🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠 **100% Phonics**

🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠 **100% Literacy**

🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠 **100% Mathematics**

🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠 **90% PSED**

🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠 **70% Communication & Language**

Figure 2: The percentage of ICKLE project schools (n=10) who provided resources in each of the EYFS curriculum areas under investigation.

All schools provided resources for Phonics, Literacy, and Mathematics. Most provided them for PSED but only 70% for Communication & Language. Some schools embedded material to support Communication & Language in resources provided for other areas of the curriculum.

Some schools focused on consolidating existing learning, but **most provided a mixture of resources to consolidate and continue the curriculum.** Few focused solely on continued new learning.

CONSOLIDATION **CONTINUATION** **BOTH**

Phonics
50% / 40% / 10%
n=10 schools

Literacy
40% / 40% / 20%
n=10 schools

Mathematics
50% / 20% / 30%
n=10 schools

PSED
78% / 22%
n=9 schools

Communication & Language
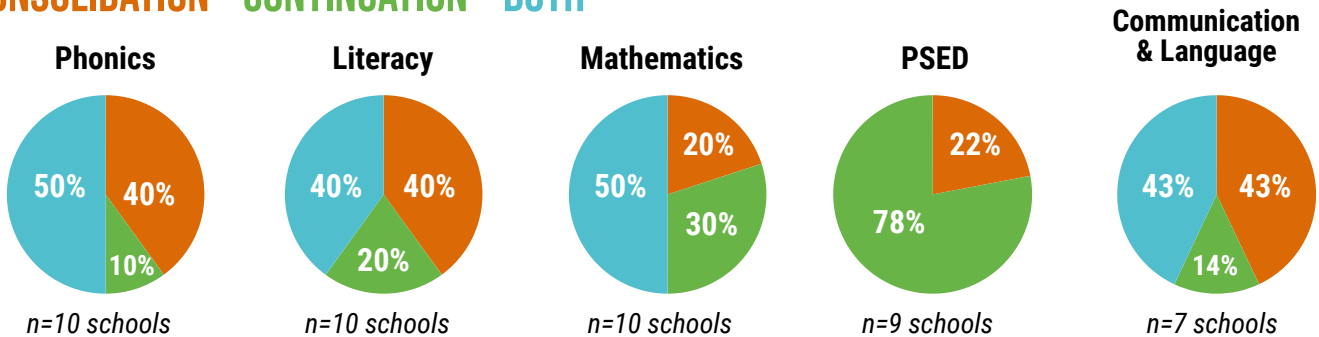43% / 43% / 14%
n=7 schools

Figure 3: The percentage of ICKLE project schools who provided resources for the purposes of consolidation, continuation or both, in each of the EYFS curriculum areas under investigation.

The time spent on consolidating existing learning is reflected in our finding that, on average, **schools reported only covering 60% of the curriculum in 2019/2020.**
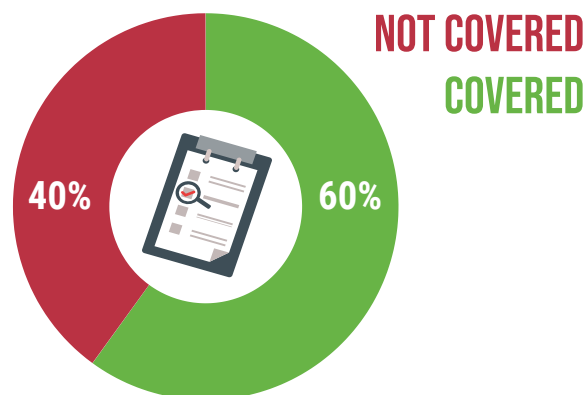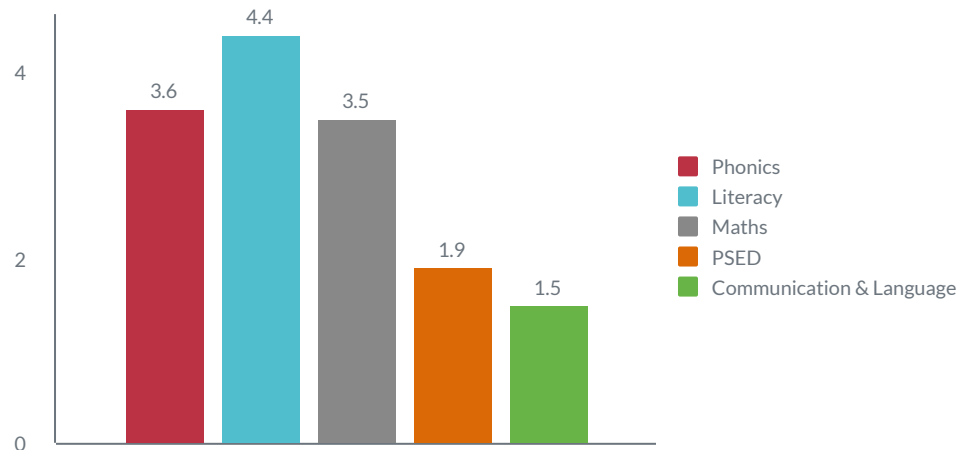
NOT COVERED
COVERED

40% / 60%

Figure 4: The average percentage of the curriculum covered by ICKLE project schools (n=10) in 2019/20.

6

What did we find?

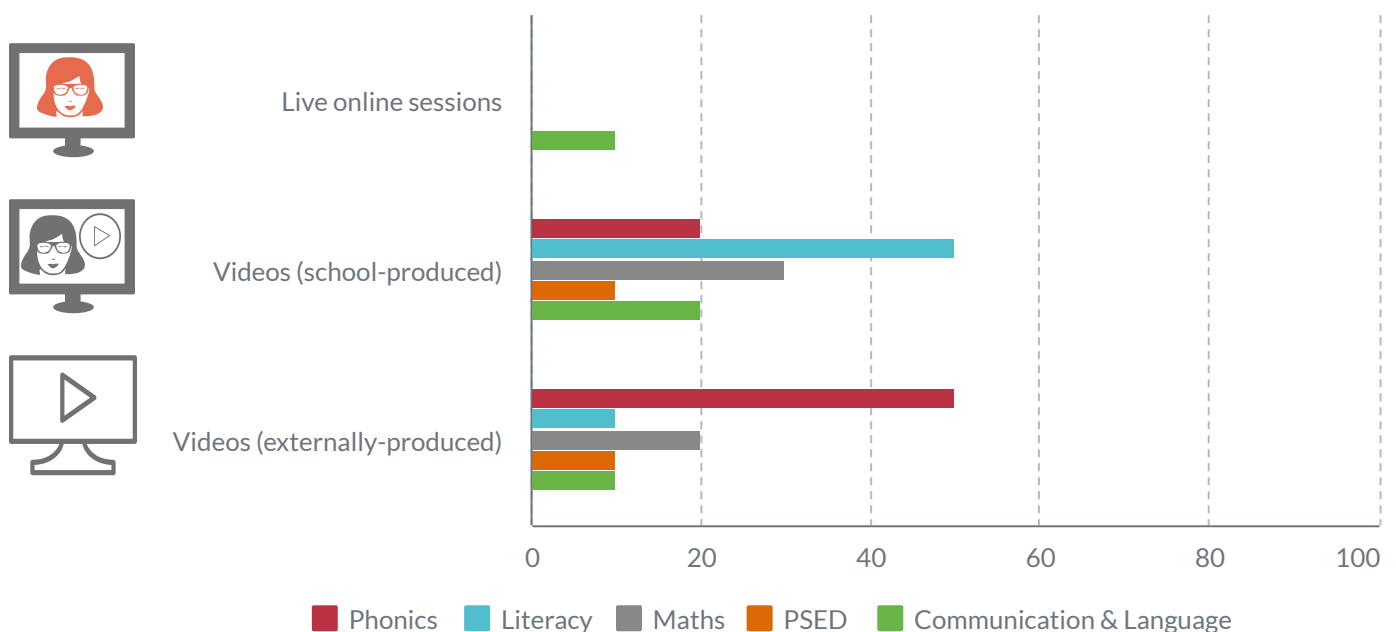## Resources and guidance provided by schools

Most schools (70%) provided the same resources for children in school and those learning at home. Where they didn't, this was due to the children being in mixed year groups (20%) or because they chose to follow the normal in-school timetable (10%).

Schools provided, on average, a greater number of different resources for Phonics, Literacy and Mathematics than for Communication & Language and PSED.

Figure 5: The average number of different resources provided by ICKLE project schools (n=10) in each of the EYFS curriculum areas under investigation.

The percentage of live or recorded lessons provided was very low, across schools and curriculum areas. Where externally-produced recordings were used, this was primarily to support Phonics; school-produced videos were most commonly used to support Literacy more broadly.
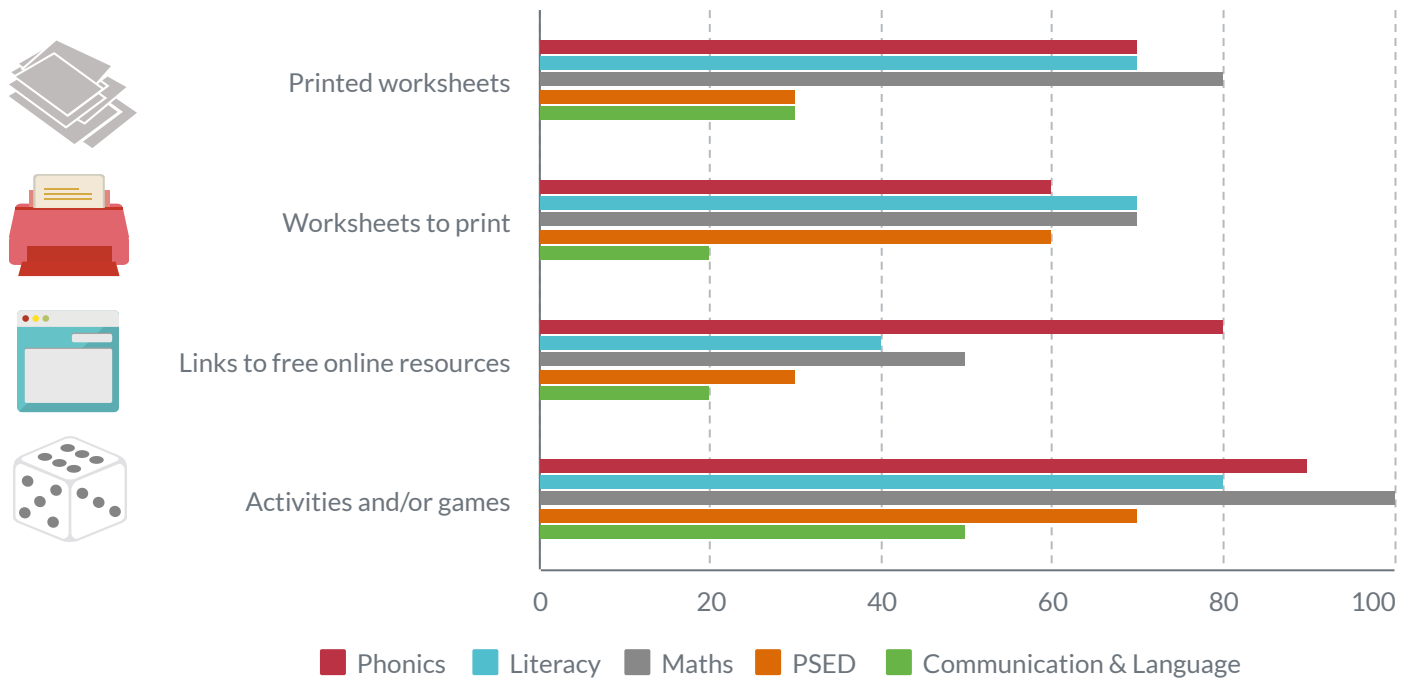

Figure 6: The percentage of ICKLE project schools (n=10) who provided live sessions or recorded content in each of the EYFS curriculum areas under investigation.

What did we find?

## Resources and guidance provided by schools

Figure 7: The percentage of ICKLE project schools (n=10) who provided worksheets, online resources, activities and games in each of the EYFS curriculum areas under investigation.

Schools were more likely to provide worksheets (printed or to print at home) for Phonics, Literacy and Mathematics than for Communication & Language or PSED. Resources for Literacy typically focused on stories, writing, and reading comprehension. Links to free online resources (videos, activities, games) were provided more often for Phonics than for other curriculum areas. Suggestions for games or activities, using items in the home or environment, were common across the curriculum areas. Compared to the other curriculum areas, schools took a different approach to PSED; here they reported sometimes supporting parents using phone calls.
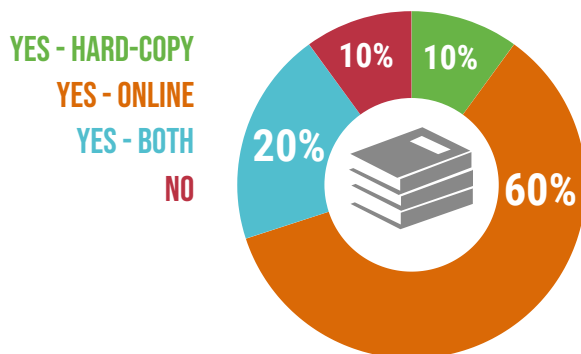
Most schools provided access to online reading books, or to a combination of both online and hard-copy books. One school provided only hard-copy books and one school provided neither hard-copy nor online books.

Figure 8: The percentage of ICKLE project schools (n=10) who provided online and hard-copy books.

What did we find?

Home-school communication

Most schools provided caregivers with new home learning activities on a daily basis or a few times a week.
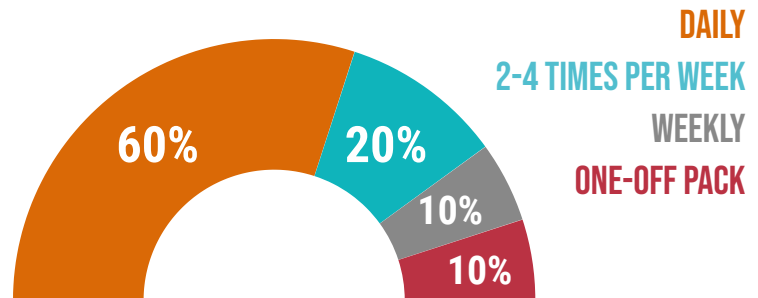
DAILY
2-4 TIMES PER WEEK
WEEKLY
ONE-OFF PACK

60% 20% 10% 10%

Figure 9: The percentage of ICKLE project schools (n=10) who provided new resources at each frequency interval.

Most schools were in daily (30%) or weekly (50%) contact with families. Schools used a range of communication methods. Notably, video calls were not used by any schools, and the most common methods were telephone call and virtual learning environment messaging.
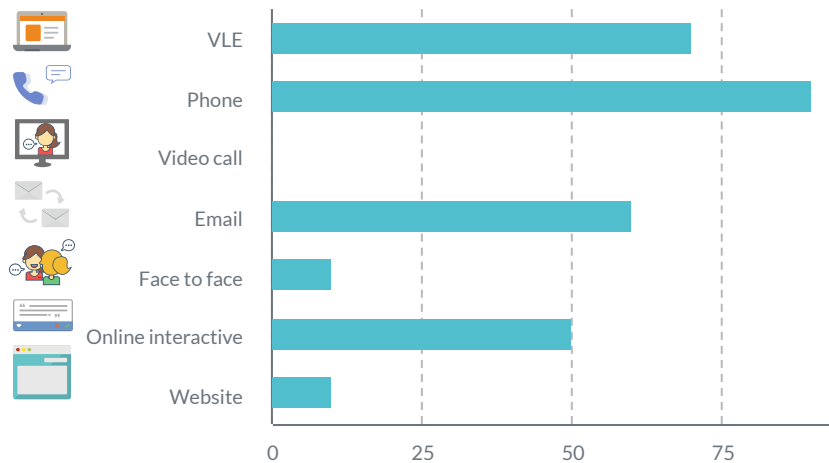
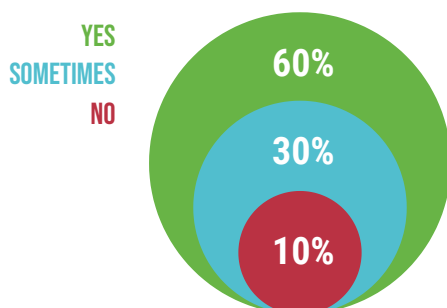*Figure 10: The percentage of ICKLE project schools (n=10) who used each communication method to contact caregivers.*

YES
SOMETIMES
NO

60%
30%
10%

The majority of schools (90%) asked for work to be submitted. All of these schools reported subsequently providing feedback on the work.

Figure 11: The percentage of ICKLE project schools (n=10) who asked caregivers to submit work to teachers.

SUMMARY

Provision for remote learning for children beginning their formal schooling was variable across the diverse sample of ICKLE project schools. This supports the observations from existing reports (Lucas et al., 2020; Moss et al., 2020; Nelson & Sharp, 2020; Sibieta & Cottell, 2020). With less time available for learning and a focus on consolidating what children had already been taught, a reduced percentage of the curriculum was covered. Overall, schools provided more resources for traditional academic subjects (Literacy and Mathematics) and Phonics than for other curriculum areas.

Resources were typically the same for children learning at home and those in school, supporting the findings of Nelson & Sharp (2020). It is notable that schools provided very few live or pre-recorded lessons (either school- or externally-produced) for young children during the first lockdown.

Worksheets were typical resources for Literacy and Mathematics, while online resources were commonly used for Phonics. Most schools provided access to online reading books rather than hard-copy paper books, which is unsurprising, given that the distribution of hard-copy books was limited by the perceived risk of virus transmission.

Games and activity ideas were provided to support learning across the curriculum, reflecting the young age of the children and the focus on learning through play. These findings support those of Moss et al. (2020).

Schools provided new activities daily or weekly, and most were in regular contact with families via a range of methods.

PARALLEL REPORTS

Our second Interim Summary Report summarises caregiver perspectives on remote learning provision during the first lockdown. https://ickle.leeds.ac.uk/interim-report-2/

Our third Interim Summary Report summarises pupil-level data provided by schools in Autumn 2020, examining what it says about pupil progress towards Early Years goals. https://ickle.leeds.ac.uk/interim-report-3/

We produced a report for the UK Parliamentary inquiry into the Department for Education's response to the COVID-19 lockdown (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2021), which synthesises the information we gathered from schools and caregivers, and offers some preliminary recommendations based on our initial findings. To access this report, please visit our website: https://ickle.leeds.ac.uk/data-and-publications/

WHAT ARE WE DOING NEXT?

The longitudinal nature of the ICKLE project means that we can follow the same cohort of children, about whom we have data from when they were in reception, right to the end of year 1. In the second phase of data collection, in June 2021, we have been asking schools about their provision for remote learning and in-school provision during the second significant period of school disruption, between January and early March 2021.
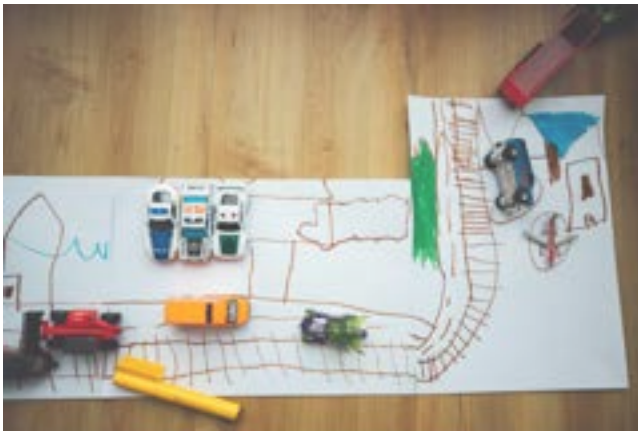
By following the same schools and children for 12 months, which include two periods of significant school disruption, we will be able to document precisely which aspects of provision changed, and which remained the same, between the first and the most recent national lockdowns. When comparing the two lockdown periods, we anticipate finding many differences between the type and the number of resources and activities provided by schools.

Caregiver perspectives are also being sought again, in order to gain a rich picture of the learning activities which took place at home. It will be important to see how the changes have impacted on the experiences of caregivers and children.

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- Sibieta, L. & Cottell, J. (2020). Education policy responses across the UK to the pandemic. Education Policy Institute. https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UK-Education-Policy-Response_Pandemic_EPI.pdf

Appendix 1: The full survey

Q1 What is your name?

Q2 What is your school's name?

Q3 What is your job title?

Q4 When schools were closed to the majority of children in March 2020, did you provide remote learning activities for Phonics? (Yes/No)

Q5 Were these activities (tick all that apply)
· Printed packs of worksheets provided by the school and sent/delivered to parents
· Electronic worksheets for parents to print at home
· Live online lessons provided by school
· Pre-recorded videos provided by school
· Activities/games
· Links to free online video lessons created by others [if yes, which providers]
· Links to free online resources or interactive games created by others [if yes, which providers]
· Other [please specify]

Q6 Please describe the resources and guidance you provided to families to support Phonics

Q7 Was the remote learning provision for phonics focused on consolidating existing knowledge or continuation of the curriculum?
· Consolidating existing knowledge
· Continuation of the curriculum
· Combination of both

Q8 When schools were closed to the majority of children in March 2020, did you provide remote learning activities for PSED? (Yes/No)

Q9 Were these activities (tick all that apply) *(Same response options as Q5)*

Q10 Please describe the resources and guidance you provided to families to support PSED

Q11 Was the remote learning provision for PSED focused on consolidating existing knowledge or continuation of the curriculum? *(Same response options as Q7)*

Q12 When schools were closed to the majority of children in March 2020, did you provide remote learning activities for Language and Communication? (Yes/No)

Q13 Were these activities (tick all that apply) *(Same response options as Q5)*

Q14 Please describe the resources and guidance you provided to families to support Language and Communication

Q15 Was the remote learning provision for Language and Communication focused on consolidating existing knowledge or continuation of the curriculum? *(Same response options as Q7)*

Q16 When schools were closed to the majority of children in March 2020, did you provide remote learning activities for Literacy (beyond Phonics)? (Yes/No)

Q17 Were these activities (tick all that apply) *(Same response options as Q5)*

Q18 Please describe the resources and guidance you provided to families to support Literacy

Q19 Was the remote learning provision for Literacy focused on consolidating existing knowledge or continuation of the curriculum? *(Same response options as Q7)*

Q20 When schools were closed to the majority of children in March 2020, did you provide remote learning activities for Maths? (Yes/No)

Q21 Were these activities (tick all that apply) *(Same response options as Q5)*

Q22 Please describe the resources and guidance you provided to families to support Maths

Q23 Was the remote learning provision for Maths focused on consolidating existing knowledge or continuation of the curriculum? *(Same response options as Q7)*

Appendix 1 cont.

Q24 How often were home learning activities sent to parents?
· Every day
· 2-4 times per week
· Once per week
· One off pack
· Other (please specify)

Q25 Were the home learning activities translated into the parents' home languages? (Yes/No/Sometimes)

Q26 Please can you provide more information about translating the home learning activities into the parents' home languages

Q27 Were the same activities and resources provided for key worker/vulnerable children who attended a school hub? (Yes/No)

Q28 Please describe what the children did at school

Q29 Did parents submit completed work to you? (e.g., upload videos or photographs of work, email work to you, post work) (Yes/No/Sometimes)

Q30 Was feedback provided on this work? (Yes/No/Sometimes)

Q31 Were you in regular contact with children/parents from your class during this period? (Yes/No)

Q32 How often were you in contact with parents?
· Daily
· Weekly
· Other (please specify)

Q33 How was this contact carried out? (tick all that apply)
· Virtual learning environment
· Telephone calls
· Video calls
· Emails
· Face-to-face contact (e.g., home visits)
· Online conversations (e.g. blog posts, interactive chats etc.)
· Other (please specify)

Q34 Did your school re-open to all reception children on or after June 1st 2020? (Yes/No)

Q35 Before school closures in March 2020, when was your last EYFSP assessment carried out with the 2019/2020 reception cohort? (please provide month and year)

Q36 What percentage of the whole EYFS curriculum do you estimate you covered last year in reception?
Q37 What percentage of the usual literacy curriculum do you estimate you covered last year in reception?
Q38 What percentage of the usual numeracy curriculum do you estimate you covered last year in reception?
Q39 What percentage of the usual communication and language curriculum do you estimate you covered last year in reception?
Q40 What percentage of the usual PSED curriculum do you estimate you covered last year in reception?

Q41 How do you monitor EYFSP progress? (For example, which systems do you use and how often do you use them?)

Q42 What reading scheme do you currently use in EYFS?

Q43 Is this the same as the reading scheme you used in the previous year (2019/2020)?
· Yes
· No (please provide details)

Q44 Is this the same the reading scheme as you currently use in year 1? (Yes/No)

Q45 Please provide details of the reading scheme used in year 1

Q46 Is there anything else you would like to tell us about EYFS provision?

THE ICKLE TEAM

Dr Hannah Nash - Principal Investigator

Hannah is a Lecturer in the School of Psychology. Her research focuses on how children learn to read and why some children experience difficulties. As principal investigator, Hannah oversees all aspects of the ICKLE project.
https://medicinehealth.leeds.ac.uk/psychology/staff/639/dr-hannah-nash
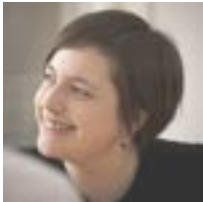
Dr Paula Clarke - Co-Investigator

Paula is an Associate Professor in the School of Education. Her research focuses on reading and language comprehension skills and includes the development of assessment and intervention approaches. On the ICKLE project, Paula is working on the reading progress data and the write-up and dissemination of project findings.
https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/education/staff/644/dr-paula-clarke-
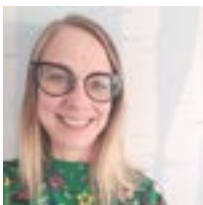
Dr Catherine Davies - Co-Investigator

Catherine is an Associate Professor in Language Development in the School of Languages, Cultures, and Societies. Her research focuses on the role of children's language environment in their lexical and pragmatic development. On the ICKLE project, Cat is working on the home learning environment data and the write-up and dissemination of findings.
https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/languages/staff/699/dr-catherine-davies

Dr Matt Homer - Co-Investigator

Matt is an Associate Professor in the School of Education. He has over 15 years' experience of analysing assessment and educational data across a range of educational projects and settings. On the ICKLE project, he is mainly responsible for quantitative data analysis.
https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/education/staff/475/dr-matt-homer

Dr Rachel Mathieson - Research Fellow

Rachel is responsible for the day-to-day progress of the ICKLE project, including liaising with schools, development of research instruments, and data collection. She is also contributing to the write-up and dissemination of findings.
https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/education/staff/152/dr-rachel-mathieson

Dr Peter Hart - Research Fellow

Peter is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Inclusion, Childhood and Youth (ICY) in the School of Education. Peter is assisting with quantitative data analysis on the ICKLE project.
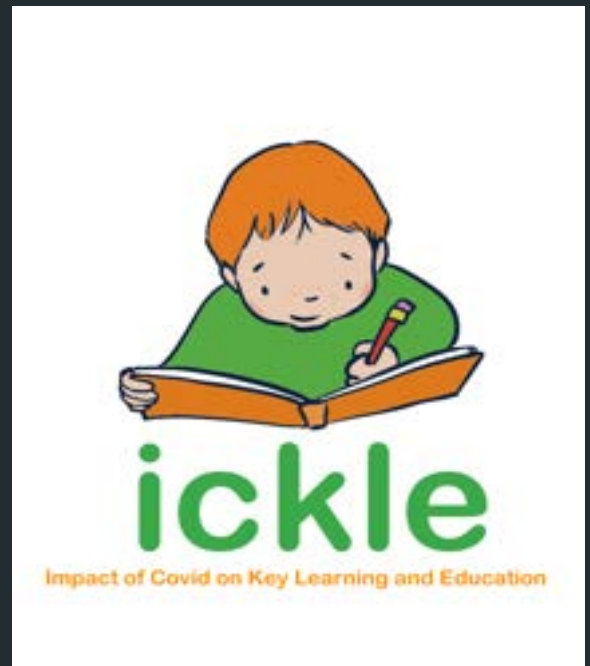https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/education/staff/136/dr-peter-hart

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