Progress of children through reception and year 1 during COVID-19 school disruption.

ickle
Impact of Covid on Key Learning and Education

Nash, H., Clarke, P., Davies, C., Hart, P., Homer, M., & Mathieson, R.

Feb 2022

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Restrictions to limit the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic led to two periods in which schools in England were closed to the majority of children. The first in spring 2020 lasted for up to 14 weeks, while the second in Winter 2021 lasted for 9 weeks. During these periods children were not experiencing normal education and this has led to disrupted learning. In the ICKLE project we focus on the impact of this disruption on the youngest school pupils, those in reception during the first period. These children should have been learning the skills and knowledge essential for later academic achievement. We have collected rich data that enables us to determine the school, child and home learning factors that have influenced children's progress. In this way we can add detail to the body of evidence on the impact of school disruptions on children's learning.

In this report we detail the progress of our sample of children from Autumn 2020 to Summer 2021, which includes the second period of school disruption in Winter 2021, the children had moved into year 1. It extends the findings from our third interim report on the effects of the Spring 2020 school disruption on the progress of reception children. We use Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) and reading level data collected at two time-points, the first capturing attainment prior to the pandemic and in Autumn 2020 and the second focusing on attainment in Summer 2021. These data were from approximately 450 children, from a sample of schools that represent a super-diverse city in the North of England.

Key Findings

There was considerable variation in our sample regarding attainment in EYFSP goals. 36% were exceeding the end of reception level (which is appropriate for the end of year 1), but 45% were still working at that level and 19% continuing to work towards it. Focusing on reading, 68% of our sample were not at the expected level for their age at the end of year 1. This is despite 59% of them making the amount of progress we would expect during this period.

We identified child and home learning factors that predicted children's attainment and progress in EYFSP and reading levels. Some of these predictors were the same as during the first period of disruption.

- The strongest predictor of attainment was prior scores or levels.
- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) made less progress.
- Children at schools providing a wider range of remote learning resources made more progress, but when new activities were provided too often children made less progress.
- Access to hard copy books predicted progress in reading, and children who remained in school were more likely to have access to books and have their reading levels monitored.
- Children who were better able to engage in home learning made more progress.

Some were new predictors of EYFSP progress that emerged in the second phase of the study.

- Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) made less progress.
- Children who attended school made more progress.

Some predictors of progress that were significant during the first period of disruption were no longer significant during the second period.

- Age
- Level of deprivation
- Additional classroom support status
- EAL status for reading

It is probable that changes to remote learning provision (e.g., more online lessons, differentiation of activities) and the increase in the number of children learning in school, may have reduced differences between children.

Recommendations

- Our findings have shown that a large proportion of year 1 children were not where we would have expected them to be at the end of the 20/21 academic year, although many have made progress, they have not yet caught up. Schools will need sufficient time and resources to fully support this cohort of children as they progress through primary school. Some children will need enhanced support, including those with SEND and EAL.
- In the event of future school disruption, we recommend that schools provide a range of resources, to allow families of young children to select those best fitting their needs, and more physical resources including hard copy reading books. It is key that new activities are introduced at a measured pace, and not too often.
- A priority needs to be ensuring that children who require extra support continue to receive that support during periods of home learning. This might mean increased investment in teaching assistants, developing a bank of differentiated resources that can be shared with home, and remote delivery of individual and small-group intervention programmes.
- Our findings highlight that there were some children learning at home, who for a variety of potential reasons, were less able to engage in home learning and that these children were at risk of making little progress. Remote learning provision may need to be altered for these children, or in some cases, there may be an argument for educating them in school as vulnerable learners.
- Children who were in reception during the first round of school disruptions in Spring 2020 and year 1 during the second, have significant gaps in the skills and knowledge that form the foundation for later learning. Consideration needs to be given to expectations of attainment in KS1 and beyond: the focus should not be on moving these children along too quickly when there are learning gaps that need to be filled.

INTRODUCTION

From 23rd March 2020, schools in England were closed to the majority of children (except those of key workers or those classed as vulnerable), during two periods of disruption linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.The first, in Spring 2020, lasted for up to 14 weeks, although some reception children went back to school in June 2020. The second, in Winter 2021 (January-March), lasted for 9 weeks. There were several key differences between these two periods. First, in Winter 2021, schools were required to provide remote education for those learning at home, using comparable resources to those used in school by vulnerable children and those of key workers. Second, in Winter 2021, the eligibility rules for children of key workers were broadened, resulting in a significant rise in the numbers of children attending school compared to the previous period of disruption.

In July 2021, we published a series of interim reports based on our findings from the first period of school disruption (Spring 2020), when the children in our sample were in their reception year. In the first interim report we scrutinised learning resources and guidance provided by schools, and in the second we considered how these resources were used by caregivers and their children. We have also published, alongside the current report, an account of the changes that occurred in school provision and caregiver experiences between Spring 2020 and Winter 2021. These are available at https://ickle.leeds.ac.uk/
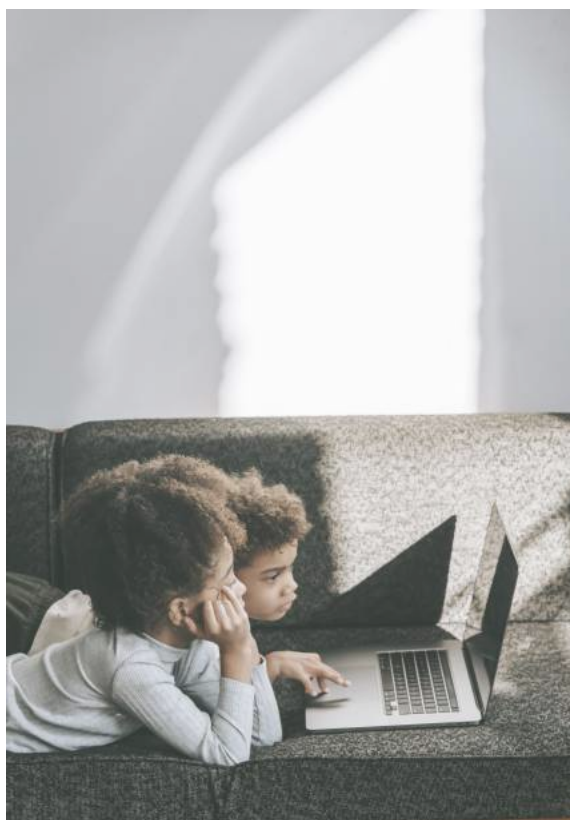
In our third interim report we reported on the children's progress during their reception year. To summarise, we found that children in reception during Spring 2020 made less progress than expected in all curriculum areas, but particularly in Literacy and Mathematics, where a third of children made no progress. Compared to 2019 averages, significantly fewer children achieved the expected levels, with the largest gap being for Literacy.

We identified a range of child and home learning factors associated with children's progress. These included well established factors such as SES and SEND, but the impact of additional needs extended beyond formal identification, to include those children who would normally receive extra classroom support. We also found that children with EAL made less progress in reading. The home learning factors included the range of resources provided by the school, and the frequency of provision of new activities. Children in schools that provided a greater range of resources and hard copy reading books made more progress, but children in schools that provided new activities too often made less progress. The extent to which families were able to engage with home learning was one of the strongest predictors of children's progress.

We made a number of recommendations for policy & practice based on our findings:

- The number of children requiring 'catch up' support extends beyond those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those with SEND

- In the event of future school disruption, we recommend that schools provide a range of resources, to allow families of young children to select those best fitting their needs, and more physical resources. It is key that new activities are introduced at a measured pace, and not too often.

- A priority needs to be ensuring that children who would typically receive additional classroom support continue to receive some form of additional support during periods of home learning.

- Consideration needs to be given to expectations of attainment in Key Stage 1: the focus should not be on moving these children along too quickly when there are gaps in their skills and knowledge that need to be filled.

INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

In this report, we extend our study by detailing the progress made by our sample of children from Autumn 2020 to Spring 2021, during their time in year 1 and covering the second period of school disruption. We make comparisons between these data and our findings relating to the first period of disruption in 2020.

Note that in this report we use the term 'home learning' specifically in relation to the curriculum based activities specified by school; we recognise that a considerable amount of informal learning also took place outside these activities.

The findings of other recently published reports on pupil progress during the first half of 2021 provide context for our own:

- In reading, the learning gap for year 1 pupils in spring 2021 has been found to vary from 3 months (EEF/NFER, Rose et al., 2021) to 4 months (Rising stars Blainey et al., 2021) which is greater than the gap for primary school pupils averaged across year groups (2.2 months, DfE, Renaissance learning & EPI, 2021). At the end of the summer term there was little evidence of the gap closing for year 1 pupils, compared to older primary pupils where the gap did reduce to 1 month (DfE, Renaissance learning & EPI, 2021).

- In maths, the gap for year 1 pupils in spring 2021 has been found to be 3 months (Blainey et al., 2021; Rose et al,, 2021) which is in line with the primary average (DfE, Renaissance learning & EPI, 2021). There was more evidence of the gap closing for maths by the end of the summer term, with the difference estimated to be 1 (EEF/NFER, Rose et al 2021) to 2 months (Rising stars Blainey et al, 2021), which is similar to that seen in older primary pupils (DfE, Renaissance learning & EPI 2021).

- The Rising stars dataset included grammar, where the gap was 4 months in spring 2021 and had reduced to 3 months by the end of the summer (Blainey et al., 2021).

- Across the different datasets, learning gaps were larger (around double) for disadvantaged pupils in Spring 2021 and with some evidence of the gap closing slightly in Summer 2021. They were also larger for children in the north of England, but here children made the greatest recovery too (DfE, Renaissance learning & EPI 2021).

It is clear that primary school pupils' academic progress has been adversely affected by disruptions to normal schooling. Within this cohort, children in year 1 who have experienced disruption to the learning of foundation skills have been particularly affected and have not been able to close learning gaps as much as older children.

However, we know little about progress in areas of the curriculum beyond literacy and mathematics. While we are beginning to understand the influence of known factors such as level of disadvantage, we do not know how family engagement with home learning - a new and important potential source of additional inequality - has impacted on progress.

STUDY DESIGN

ICKLE was a 12-month project, funded by the UKRI/ESRC, which began in September 2020. The project used a retrospective longitudinal design, with data provided by schools and caregivers, to investigate the factors that may have moderated and mediated pupil progress. See Figure 1 for an overview of the project timeline.

There were two data collection points:

- **T1 October - December 2020**
  - 10 primary schools in Leeds provided us with information about the remote learning provision they delivered in **Spring 2020**. Alongside this, caregivers provided their perspectives on home learning during the same period.

- **T2 June - July 2021**
  - The same 10 schools provided information about the remote learning provision during **Winter 2021**, and again, caregivers provided their perspectives.

Pupil attainment data were collected at both time-points, retrospectively pertaining to Spring 2020 (pre-lockdown), and currently for Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021. We analyse the comparative progress made by pupils over the two phases of the study. The first phase covers March through to Autumn 2020 when the children were in reception and their first term of year 1. The second phase covers Autumn 2020 to Summer 2021, when the children were in year 1. Full project details and all project reports can be found at https://ickle.leeds.ac.uk/.
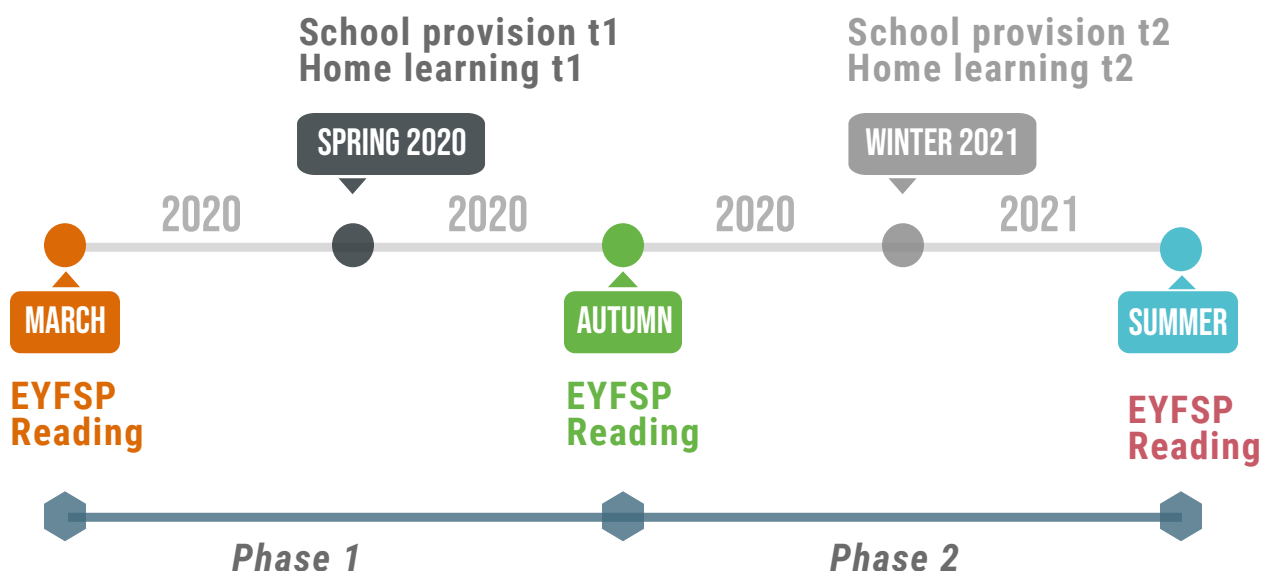
**LEEDS
A LARGE SUPERDIVERSE CITY IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND, UK**

Figure 1: The ICKLE project data collection timeline 2020-2021.

STUDY SAMPLE & DATA COLLECTION

The schools in the ICKLE project vary in size, with most being larger than average. They also vary with respect to pupil characteristics: percentages of children with EAL range from 5% to 95%, children in receipt of FSM from 0% to 45%, and children with SEN from 9% to 20%.

SCHOOL CODE	% EAL	% FSM	% SEN	SCHOOL SIZE
1	5	0	5	343
2	5	10	10	475
3	5	10	15	461
4	95	22	9	779
5	5	45	20	234
6	40	40	20	407
8	5	20	15	332
9	35	30	20	230
10	55	10	15	448
11	5	5	10	448

Figure 2: Schools in the ICKLE project (n=10).

EAL = English as an Additional Language; FSM = Free School Meals; SEN = Special Educational Needs

Half of the schools are above average with regard to the percentage of children in receipt of FSM, and half are below average. With regard to the percentage of children with EAL, 6 schools are below average and 4 above. Regarding the percentage of children with SEN, 4 schools are below average and 6 above.

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

Figure 3: Schools in the ICKLE project (n=10) compared with national average data 2019/20.

Following the first period of school disruption in Spring 2020, 7 schools reopened to all reception children in June 2020. In the best-case scenario, reception children had missed around 7 weeks of normal schooling during Spring 2020. In the worst-case scenario, this increased to 14 weeks.

During the third national lockdown in Winter 2021, schools were closed to the majority of pupils for 9 weeks. However the percentage of pupils in school in Winter 2021 was considerably higher than the percentage of pupils in school in Spring 2020. In our sample just 5% of pupils were in school during Spring 2020, compared to 33% in Winter 2021.

Schools were asked to provide a set of pupil data, including:

1) Pupil attainment data, measured through 10 teacher-assessed Early Learning Goals comprising literacy, mathematics, communication and language, and personal, social and emotional development (PSED), and through school reading scheme book band levels;

2) Teacher estimates of engagement with home learning;

3) Demographic information, including socio-economic status (SES), EAL, SEN, FSM, and level of extra classroom support;

4) Information about the remote learning provision delivered by the school.

Schools and individual members of staff were offered vouchers as tokens of gratitude for their participation.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

t1		t2

452 CHILDREN

Average age 5 years 10 months

47% Male : 53% Female

443 CHILDREN

Average age 6 years 4 months

46% Male : 54% Female

IDACI

Low	52%
Med	20%
High	28%

26% EAL

14% SEND

IDACI

Low	52%
Med	21%
High	27%

26% EAL

13% SEND

Figure 4 Summary of demographic characteristics of the ICKLE project sample at each data collection time-point

The sample characteristics were very similar at both data collection time-points. Nine fewer children were in the study at time 2 compared to time 1.

The sample was split fairly equally in terms of gender, with slightly more girls than boys. The percentages of children who have EAL or SEND are comparable with the national averages from 2019/20. There were more children living in areas more   similar numbers of children living in medium and high areas of deprivation, and more living in low areas of deprivation.

Deprivation was measured using the English Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). IDACI scores are based on the postcode of the family home (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019) and measure the proportion of children aged 0 – 15 who live in income-deprived households for each of the 32,844 neighbourhoods in England.

We divided the data into three bands, with neighbourhoods ranked in the lowest third (1 – 10,948) assigned 'low', those in the middle third (10,949 – 20,197) assigned 'middle', and those in the highest third (20,198 – 32,944) assigned 'high'.

During Spring 2020 the majority of children in our sample (95%) were learning at home. In contrast, during Winter 2021 a third (33%) were learning in school.

8

FINDINGS

Progress in EYFSP

We calculated pupils' average score across the ten EYFSP goals from the four curriculum areas of interest. A score of 1 is working 'below expected' levels, 2 is 'expected' and 3 is 'above expected'.

In March 2020, the average score for children in the ICKLE project was 1.09. This increased to 1.83 in Autumn 2020, and to 2.44 in Summer 2021. 2.44 is at the expected level; but crucially this is the expected level for the **end of reception,** whereas the ICKLE children were approaching the end of year 1.

March 2020	**Autumn 2020**	**Summer 2021**
below expected	expected	above expected
1	**2**	**3**
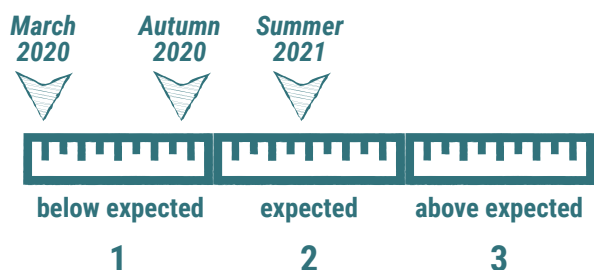
In Summer 2021, 36% of children were working above the expected level for the end of reception, i.e. where we would expect them to be by the end of year 1. However, 45% were still working at the level expected at the end of reception. More worryingly, 19% were working below that level.

In the first phase of the study between March and Autumn 2020, the children made more progress on average in **PSED** and **communication & language** than in **maths** and **literacy**. The opposite pattern was found during the second phase of the study between Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021.

The average amount of progress in maths and literacy remained fairly stable across both study phases. What changed was that the average amount of progress in PSED and communication & language reduced in the second phase relative to the first.
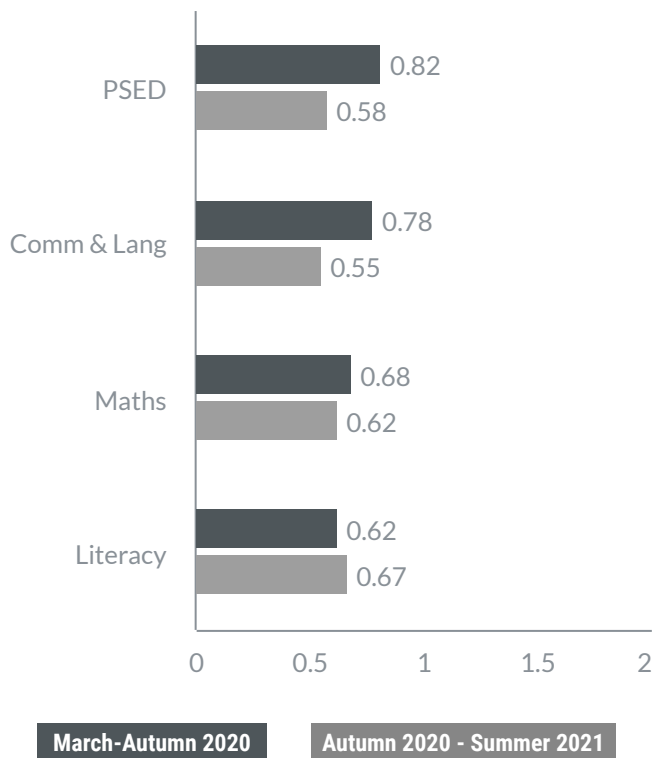

Figure 5: Average amount of progress made by ICKLE project children in each EYFSP curriculum area, in each phase of the study.

FINDINGS

Influences on EYFSP progress

Figure 6 shows the factors that predicted children's attainment and progress in EYFSP goals across each study phase. In both phases, **previous EYFSP total score** was one of the strongest positive predictors of a child's later score. Providing a **wider range of resources** for learning was associated with more progress, but providing **new activities more often** was associated with less progress. These patterns were consistent across both phases of the study. The ability of **families to engage with home learning** was a significant positive predictor of EYFSP progress in both phases of the study, but it was a weaker predictor in the second phase relative to the first.

Age was a significant positive predictor of EYFSP progress in the first phase when the children were in reception but not in the second when they had moved to year 1. In contrast, **school attendance** was a significant positive predictor of progress in the second phase but not the first, which may be related to the increase in the proportion of pupils who attended school in the second period of disruption.

Additional classroom support status (in March 2020) was a significant negative predictor of progress in the first phase of the study but not the second, which may imply that school provision and home learning support for this group of children improved between the two periods of school disruption.

SEND status was a significant negative predictor of progress in EYFSP goals in both phases of the study. **EAL status** did not predict progress in the first phase but was a significant negative predictor of progress in the second. Conversely, **IDACI score (SES)** was a significant negative predictor of progress in the first phase but not the second.

The data were analysed using multiple, simultaneous OLS regressions. The model for the second phase predicted slightly more variation in EYFSP 55% compared to 46% for the first phase.
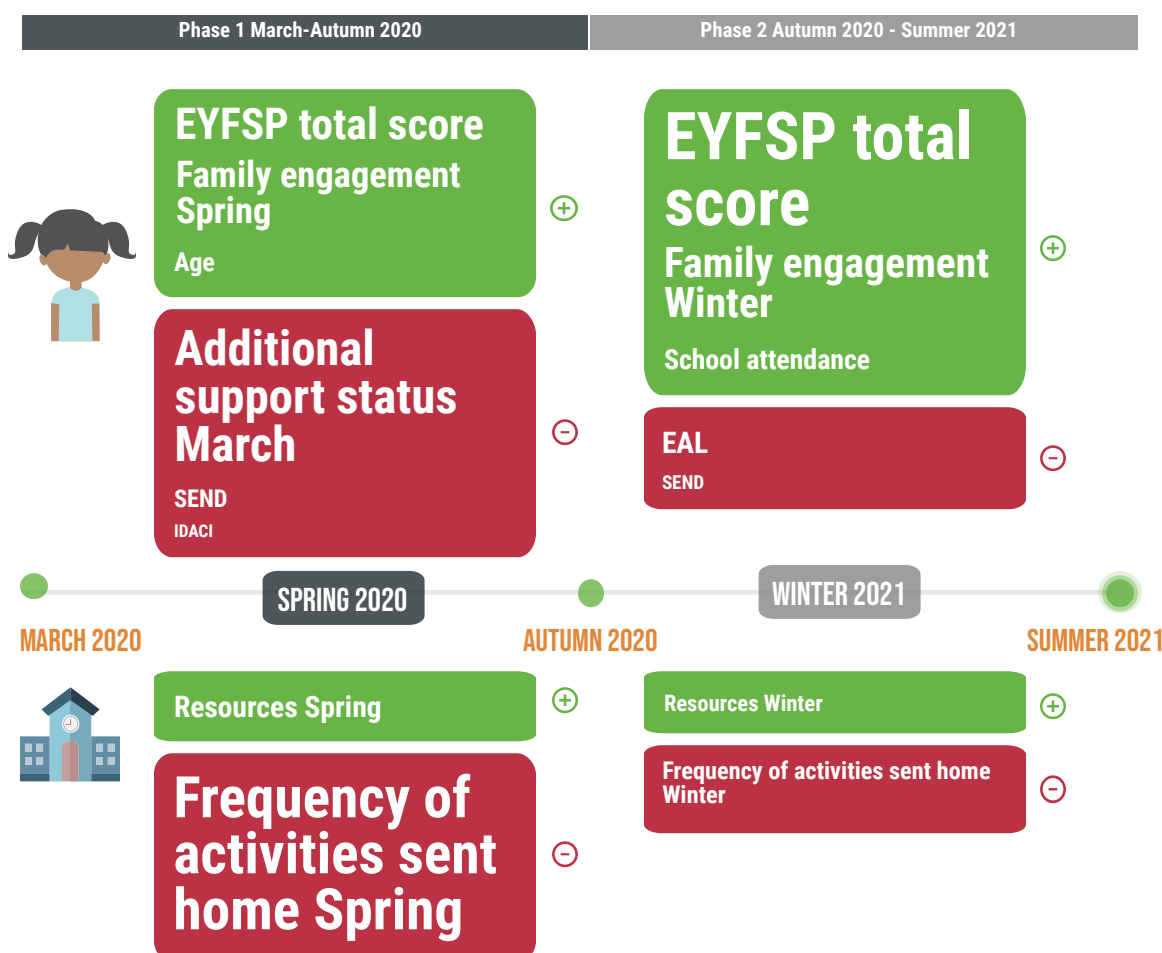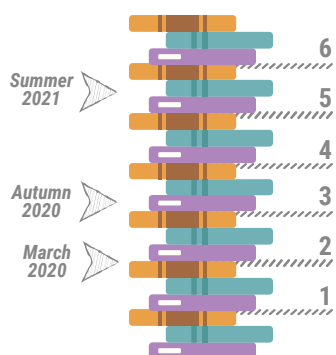

Figure 6: Factors linked to children's attainment & progress in EYFSP goals, in both study phases (font size approximately indicates magnitude of relationship).

FINDINGS

Progress in reading book band levels

In March 2020 the average reading book band level of the children in our sample was 2.47. This increased to 3.60 in Autumn 2020 and to 5.43 in Summer 2021.

When considering attainment in reading book band levels we have assumed the following expectations for most children:

- March 2020 - Level 3 (Red Oxford Reading Tree)
- Autumn 2020 - Level 5 (Blue Oxford Reading Tree)
- May 2021 - Level 7 (Orange Oxford Reading Tree)

Level 5 is halfway through the Oxford Reading Tree blue band, which introduces phase 4 phonics. We might expect most children to be reading at this level at the beginning of year 1. However, in our sample the children were on average at this level near the end of year 1. There was however considerable individual variation in attainment in Summer 2021, and it is notable that 32% of children were reading at level 7 or higher (in line with May of year 1 expectations).
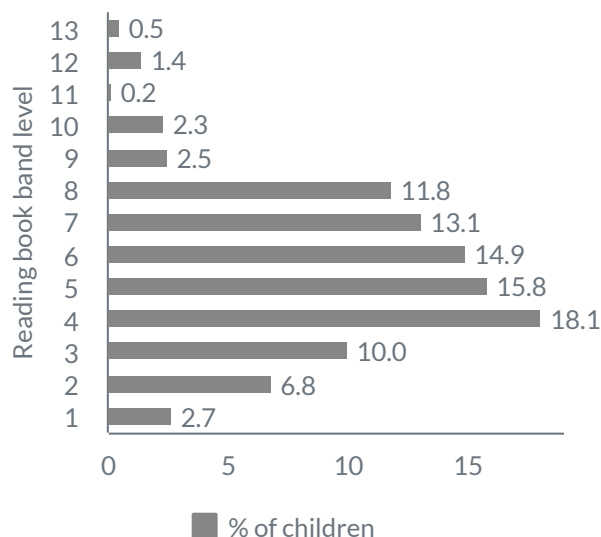

Figure 7: Percentage of ICKLE project children attaining each reading book band level in Summer 2021.

Reading progress between March and Autumn 2020 (phase 1) was 1.13 levels on average, and between Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021 (phase 2) it was 1.82 levels. This means that on average, in the second phase of the study, the children made approximately the expected amount of progress (2 levels). However, this didn't fully compensate for the slower progress made in the first phase.

The percentage of pupils making no, or less than expected progress in reading reduced from 31% and 32% respectively in the first phase, to 23% and 16% in the second phase.

The percentage of pupils making expected levels of progress in reading remained stable across the two phases, whereas the percentage making better than expected progress (of more than two levels) increased from 12% in the first phase to 35% in the second.
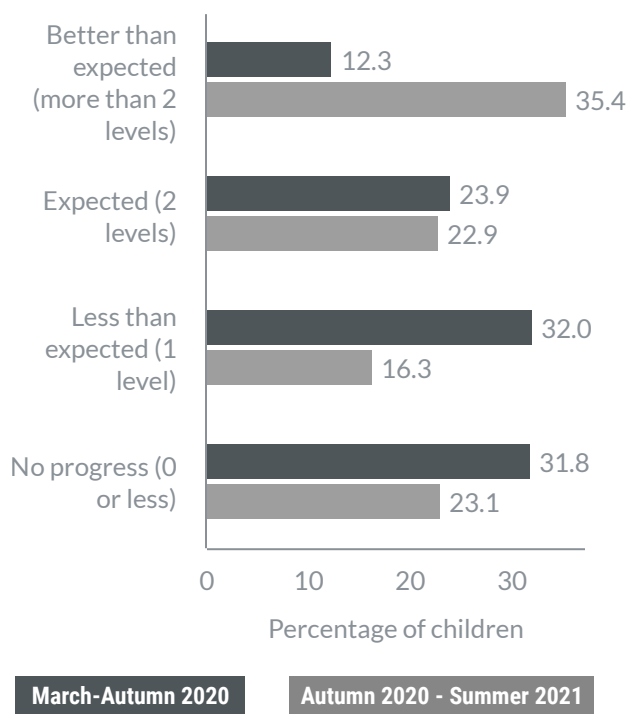

Figure 8: Percentage of ICKLE project children, who made different amounts of progress in each phase of the study.

FINDINGS

Influences on reading progress

Figure 9 shows the factors that predicted children's attainment and progress in reading across each study phase. In both phases of the study, **previous reading level** was the strongest positive predictor of later reading level.

The **number of different formats** in which literacy resources (including phonics) were offered, and the **provision of hard copy books,** were significant positive predictors of progress in reading levels in both phases.

However, **providing new literacy activities too often** was associated with less progress in reading levels in both study phases.

When controlling for other variables:

- **EAL** and **additional classroom support status** (in March 2020) were significant negative predictors of progress in reading during the first phase of the study but not the second.

- **SEND** and **IDACI scores** were not significant predictors of reading progress in either phase of the study.

The data were analysed using multiple, simultaneous OLS regressions. The models for each phase predicted a similar level of variation in reading levels (53% & 55% respectively).

Phase 1 March-Autumn 2020	Phase 2 Autumn 2020 - Summer 2021

Reading March

Family engagement Spring ⊕

Additional support status March
EAL ⊖

Reading Autumn ⊕

MARCH 2020 — SPRING 2020 — AUTUMN 2020 — WINTER 2021 — SUMMER 2021

Literacy resources Spring
Hard copies of books Spring ⊕

Frequency of activities sent home Spring ⊖

Literacy resources Winter

Hard copies of books Winter ⊕

Frequency of literacy activities sent home Winter ⊖

Figure 9: Factors linked to children's attainment & progress in the reading levels, in both study phases (font size approximately indicates magnitude of relationship).

SUMMARY

EYFSP

- By the end of year 1, the average score across the EYFSP goals was in the 'expected' range, but this would be the expected level at the end of reception. This was also true in the individual curriculum areas.

- There was variation among the children in our sample, with 36% exceeding the end of reception level (which is appropriate for the end of year 1), but with 45% at that level and 19% still working towards it. Our findings fit with those from published reports, which have shown that learning gaps in literacy, maths and grammar persist for children in year 1 (Rose et al., 2021; Blainey et al., 2021).

- A number of the predictors of attainment and progress in EYFSP goals between Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021 (phase 2) were the same as between Spring 2020 and Autumn 2020 (phase 1):

  - Children's starting score was one of the strongest predictors of their later score.

  - Children with SEND made less progress.

  - Children at schools providing a wider range of remote learning resources made more progress, but when new activities were provided too often children made less progress.

  - Children who were more able to engage in home learning made more progress.

  - A new factor to emerge was school attendance. The number of children in our sample attending school increased from 5% to 33%. Our analyses show that the children who attended school made more progress.

  - Whether or not children were classed as having EAL was a significant predictor, with children who have EAL making less progress during the second period of disruption. This was not the case between Spring 2020 and Autumn 2020. This may indicate that children with EAL were less able to benefit from the changes that were made to remote learning provision.

- Some predictors of progress between Spring 2020 and Autumn 2020 (phase 1) were not significant between Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021 (phase 2):

  - When the children were in reception, their age was a predictor of progress. However, it had less of an impact when they were a year older.

  - IDACI was a significant predictor of progress during the first period of disruption but not the second. It is possible that changes to remote learning provision, and the increase in the number of children learning in school, may have reduced differences between less and more advantaged children.

  - Finally, whether or not children would normally receive additional classroom support when they were in school was predictive of progress during the first period of disruption but not the second. In our survey of remote learning provision, teachers reported more differentiation of activities and an increase in online lessons. These developments may have helped to support these children.

SUMMARY

Reading

- Children made more progress in reading levels between Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021 (phase 2) than they did between Spring 2020 and Autumn 2020 (phase 1). The average amount of progress was just under two levels, which is approximately the amount we would expect over this period.

- There was variation in the amount of progress children made. While 59% of children made the expected amount of progress or more, 41% made less progress than expected or none at all.

- The average reading level of 5 is where we would expect children to be at the start of year 1, not at the end. We expected children to be reading at level 7 (orange in ORT) but only 32% of our sample were reading at this level or higher. 68% of our sample were not reading at the expected level for their age. So, although children made more progress in reading book levels during the second round of school disruption, many have not caught up to where they should be. This fits with the findings of Rose et al. (2021) and Blainey et al. (2021), where the learning gap for reading had not closed by the end the summer term for year 1 pupils.

- A number of the predictors of attainment and progress in reading book levels between Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021 (phase 2) were the same as between Spring 2020 and Autumn 2020 (phase 1). Children's starting level was the strongest predictor their later level.

- School provision of resources also had an impact on children's reading progress. Children who were provided with hard copy books made more progress. We know from our school survey data that access to hard copy books was more common for children who remained in school, and reading level was more likely to be monitored there. Children learning at home were more likely to have access to online reading books. Access to online reading schemes was also a predictor of reading progress (children who had access made more progress) but a little less than hard copy books.

- The range of literacy resources provided by schools was also a significant predictor of progress, with children in schools that provided a wider range making more progress. However, when new activities were provided too often children made less progress.

- There were two predictors of progress between Spring 2020 and Autumn 2020 (phase 1) that were not significant between Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021 (phase 2). These were children's EAL status and whether they we receiving additional classroom support before the pandemic. It is possible that the provision of reading support for EAL children and for children who normally receive additional classroom support improved between the two periods of school disruption. In our survey of remote learning provision, teachers reported more differentiation of activities and an increase in online lessons. These developments may have helped to support these children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Differentiate catch up support

Our findings show that a large proportion of year 1 children were not where we would have expected them to be at the end of the 20/21 academic year, even though many made progress. In the foundation skills of literacy, maths, communication & language and personal, social and emotional development, more than two thirds are either working at the level expected at the end of reception or below. Two thirds are reading below the level expected by the end of year 1. Our data show the importance of ensuring that schools have sufficient time and resources to fully support this cohort of children as they progress through primary school. Teachers' knowledge of their pupils and community is of paramount importance in responding to the needs of these learners, as it is likely that there will need to be increased differentiation of curriculum provision and learning resources.

2. Adjust attainment expectations

Our findings have implications for the measurement of progress against curriculum goals. For this cohort of children, given the disruption experienced, careful attention will need to be paid to how best to use and interpret Key Stage 1 attainment targets. There will likely need to be flexibility and an adjustment of expectations. It is of vital importance that children are not moved on too quickly, as learning gaps in key foundational skills, if left unaddressed, could put children at risk of experiencing significant difficulties at later stages in their education. An example of a statutory approach to identifying such gaps has been for schools to administer a past version of the phonics screening check to year 2 pupils during the second half of the 2021 autumn term and return the results to their local authority. The check is designed to highlight those year 2 pupils who need support in learning to decode using phonics and to ensure that their needs are not missed.

3. Enhance in class additional support

There were some pupil characteristics that impacted progress. Children who had SEND and children with EAL made less progress against the foundation stage goals. Children who would normally have received additional classroom support made significantly less progress than other children during the first period of disruption but not the second, which suggests that changes to remote learning provision had a positive impact. As a priority, children who require extra support should continue to receive that support during future periods of home learning. This might mean increased investment in teaching assistants, developing a bank of differentiated resources that can be shared with home, and remote delivery of individual and small-group intervention programmes.

4. Provide a range of resources

In schools that provided a greater range of resources, children made more progress. Having more resources to choose from may have given caregivers the flexibility to choose the ones that best fitted the needs of their child and their home learning situation. We therefore recommend that attention is paid to ensuring that a variety of resources are available for families to use to achieve learning goals, and that other resources which might be found in the home or the local community are clearly signposted. To ensure that families are not overwhelmed by options, and to promote engagement, it will be necessary to carefully organise recommended resources, and to provide accessible guidance on how to use them flexibly to meet learning objectives.

5. Provide resources at a measured pace

In schools which provided new home learning activities very frequently, children made less progress. This implies that the pace of home learning needs to be carefully judged, and that communication with families should not become so frequent as to overwhelm or become a stressor. Families need to be given sufficient time and flexibility to complete learning activities. More resources, but provided less often, may therefore be the most appropriate approach for this group of learners and their families.

6. Ensure access to appropriate level books

Children learning in school were more likely to have access to hard copy books, while those learning at home were more likely to be accessing books via online reading schemes. Access to hard copy books was a significant predictor of reading progress. This could reflect the benefit or interacting with a physical book or the fact that progress through reading levels was more likely to be monitored for children in school with access to hard copy books. We therefore recommend that for children accessing reading books online, a member of teaching staff should regularly listen to children reading, ensuring they are reading at the right level.

7. Learning situation

Children who were better able to engage in home learning made more progress, as did children who remained in school. This highlights that there were some children learning at home, who for a variety of potential reasons, were less able to engage in home learning and that these children were most at risk of making little progress. Remote learning provision may need to be altered for these children, or in some cases, there may be an argument for educating them in school as vulnerable learners.

REFERENCES

- Rose, S., Twist, L., Lord, P., Rutt, S., Badr, K., Hope, C., & Styles, B. (2021). Impact of school closures and subsequent support strategies on attainment and socio-emotional wellbeing in Key Stage 1: Interim Paper 2. Education Endowment Foundation, National Foundation for Educational Research, London. https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/projects/Impact_of_School_Closures_KS1_-_Interim_Findings_Paper_2_-_July_2021.pdf

- Blainey, K., & Hannay, T. (2021). The impact of school closures on autumn 2020 attainment. RS Assessment and School Dash. https://www.risingstars-uk.com/media/Rising-Stars/Assessment/RS_Assessment_white_paper_2021_impact_of_school_closures_on_autumn_2020_attainment.pdf

- Department for Education. (2021). Understanding Progress in the 2020/21 Academic Year Findings from the summer term and summary of all previous findings. Renaissance Learning & Education Policy Institute. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1029841/Understanding_progress_in_the_2020-21_academic_year_Report_4_October2021.pdf

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 Peter Hart

Peter is a Lecturer 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

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.
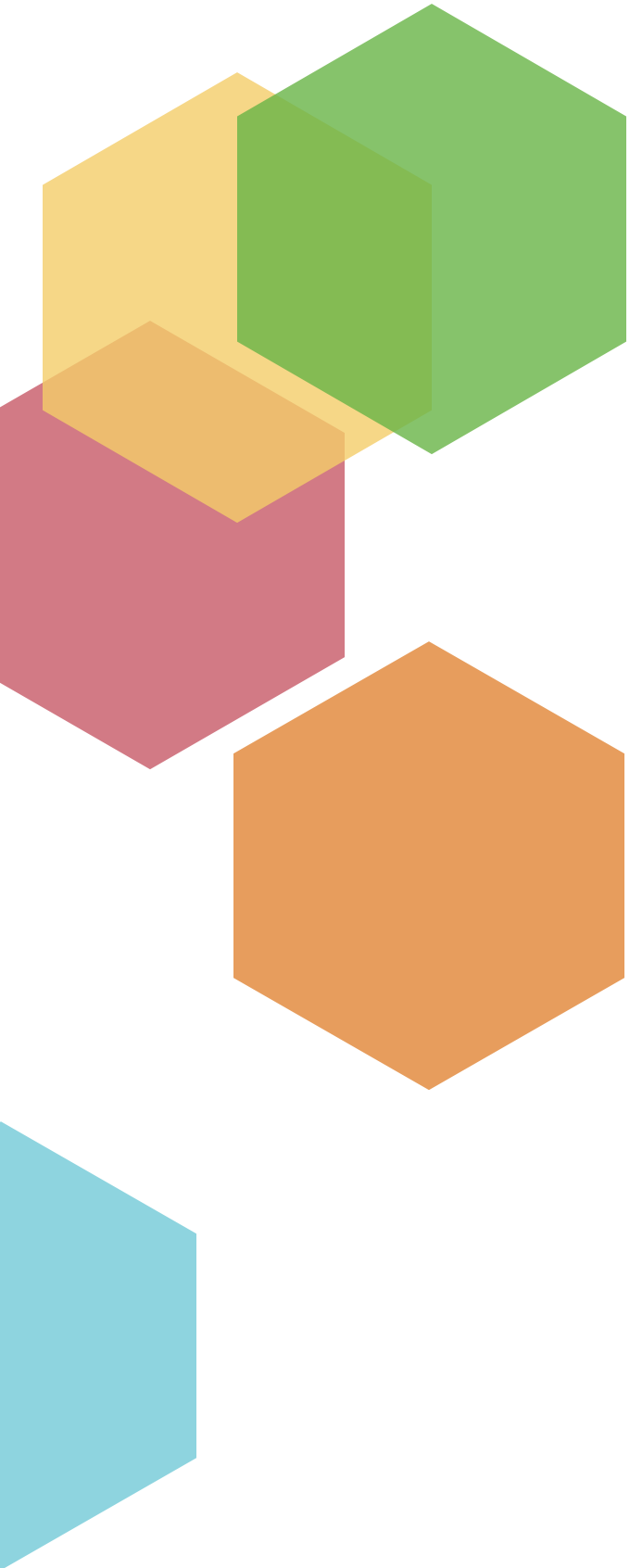https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/education/staff/152/dr-rachel-mathieson

XX

ickle

Impact of Covid on Key Learning and Education

https://ickle.leeds.ac.uk/

ickle@leeds.ac.uk

@IckleProject