

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.

Findings related to pupil progress and predictors of progress during this period can be found in our parallel report *Progress of children through reception and year 1 during COVID-19 school disruption*. Full project details and reports can be found at <https://ickle.leeds.ac.uk/>.

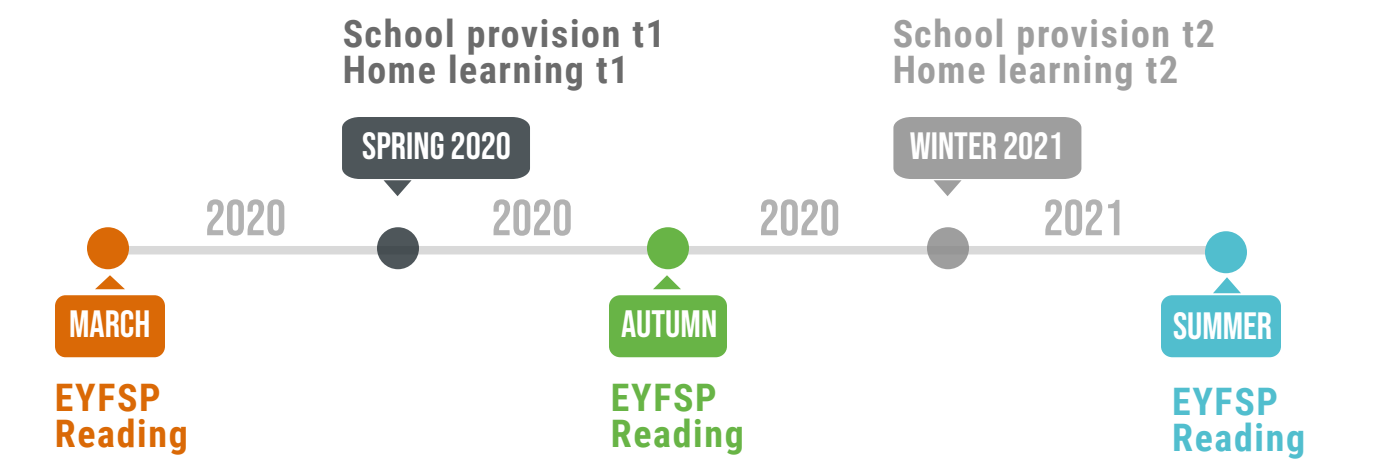


Figure 1: The ICKLE project data collection timeline 2020-2021.

STUDY SAMPLE

Schools

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 that time. 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.

With regard to the subsample of pupils for whom we received caregiver survey data, some children (n=25) were attending school for part of the week. Survey responses indicated that while many families were thankful for this opportunity, others felt some guilt (possibly knowing that other parents who were also key workers had not been able to get a place for their child):

I was back at work during the second lockdown and between my husband and I we could not manage to homeschool our daughter with the jobs we both do. I was considered a key worker and was lucky enough to have our daughter accepted into school for the 4 days I worked supporting care homes but I felt incredible guilt about this

Some families started off the lockdown by homeschooling, but then took up the offer of a school place as the pressure grew:

I was juggling this with a front line NHS job, but because we were advised to put them in school for as little as possible I thought I should leave them at home with my home working husband and catch them up with work on my shorter days and weekends. I ended up putting them in school more days as none of us were coping.

STUDY SAMPLE

Caregivers

At t1 in Autumn 2020, 190 caregivers (92% mothers, 8% fathers) from 9 of the ICKLE project schools, provided us with information about their experiences of facilitating home learning in Spring 2020.

At t2 in Summer 2021, 151 caregivers (90% mothers, 10% fathers) from the same 9 schools as t1, reported on their experiences during Winter 2021. Of these families, 122 (81%) had children at home at least one day a week, and so could provide information about their experiences of facilitating home learning during this period.

Our quantitative analyses are based on data from these 122 families. The subsample used in the analyses involving socioeconomic status is slightly smaller (n=113) because postcode information was not provided by 9 caregivers.

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

SCHOOL CODE	t1		t2	
	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	IDACI AVERAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	IDACI AVERAGE
1	26	.06	22	.05
2	36	.12	20	.14
3	37	.19	16	.18
5	4	.35	7	.34
6	15	.42	11	.43
8	3	.13	7	.12
9	12	.35	7	.35
10	21	.09	4	.09
11	36	.07	22	.07

Figure 5: The number of caregiver surveys and average IDACI scores of respondents, for each school (n=9), at each time-point (t1, t2).

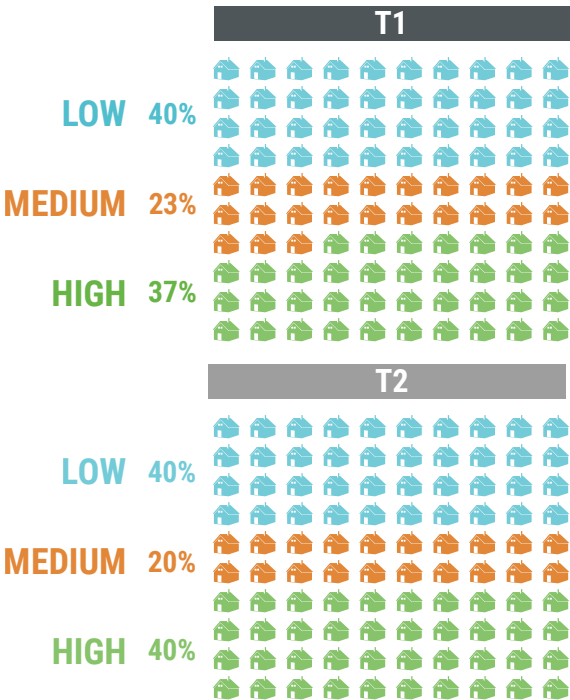


Figure 4: Percentage of caregivers who completed surveys at t1 (n=190) and t2 (n=113) assigned to low, medium and high IDACI bands.

We used the IDACI rank (where 1 indicates the area with the highest proportion of children living in low-income houses, and 32,844 indicates the lowest proportion) to create three bands, with neighbourhoods ranked in the lowest third (1 – 10,948) assigned to a ‘low’ category, those in the middle third (10,949 – 20,197) assigned ‘middle’, and those in the highest third (20,198 – 32,944) assigned ‘high’.

The distribution of respondents across these bands was consistent across time-points. A similar percentage of caregivers were from Low and High band neighbourhoods (approx. 40%). A much smaller percentage (approx. 20%) were from Medium band neighbourhoods.

DATA COLLECTION

Schools

At each time-point an online survey was used to gather information from teachers, who received a £15 Amazon voucher as a thank you for taking part. Each participating school was also given a £50 Amazon voucher. The surveys were created and shared using Qualtrics.

Both surveys asked about **resources and guidance provided by schools** and **home-school communication**.

Some changes were made to the survey at t2. This was in light of the findings of the interim report, and also because the children were now in Year 1 and working to the KS1 curriculum. We relabeled the curriculum areas such that Phonics, Literacy and Language & Communication were now all considered as sub-categories of English, and PSHE became PSHE. We also asked for more detail about provision in each area rather than across the areas as a whole.

So, in regard to each area we asked about:

- Consolidation versus continuation of the curriculum
- The level of activities provided and differentiation
- The amount of time children were expected to spend on that area in a typical day
- How often new activities were provided for that area
- Whether parents were asked to submit work and if so, how often
- Whether feedback was provided on submitted word and if so, how often

In addition we asked whether an overview or structure was provided for home learning and how often this was updated.

Finally we probed in more detail the nature of the reading material that schools were providing. We asked whether books were hard copy, online, or both, whether the type of books were the same for children learning at home and in schools, and how progress through book levels was monitored in the different learning contexts.

See Appendix 1 (t1) and 2 (t2) for the full school surveys.

Caregivers

At each time-point caregivers were invited to complete an online survey, for which they were offered a £10 Amazon voucher. The surveys were created and shared using Qualtrics.

Although the t1 and t2 surveys focused on similar topics, they differed in length, comprising 23 and 35 questions respectively. The t1 survey was used to collect information regarding the Spring 2020 period. The t2 survey primarily asked caregivers about their experiences of supporting home learning in Winter 2021, and how these compared with their experiences in Spring 2020.

Both surveys asked about **home learning resources**, **home learning routines** and **home-school communication**.

However, informed by the findings contained in our interim reports, we included some more focused questions about specific aspects of home learning experiences in the t2 survey, i.e.

Work expectations

- How much of the work set by school was completed, reasons for non-completion, total amount of time that schools expected families to spend on home learning, caregiver attitudes to these expectations, and level of difficulty presented by the activities set by school in each curriculum area.

Book provision

- Level of difficulty, format (hard copy or online), accompanying guidance, and parental attitudes to reading book provision.

School contact

- Frequency of contact, medium of contact, and caregiver attitudes towards contact provided.

Feedback

- How often was work submitted to school for feedback, and information about the specificity of feedback received.

See Appendix 3 (t1) and 4 (t2) for the full home surveys.