



ICICLES

Impact of Covid-19 on Children's Language, Education and Socio-emotional Skills



National
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The Impact of Covid-19 on Children's Language, Educational and Socioemotional Skills

Interim Briefing April 2023 – Impact of the pandemic on teachers, headteachers and other staff members

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As part of the ICICLES project, we are looking at the impact that the pandemic and school disruptions had on teachers, headteachers and other members of staff working with children in Reception, Year One and Year Two. In this interim briefing, we report data collected in the 2021/2022 academic year from interviews with 23 staff members from 21 primary schools participating in the ICICLES project.

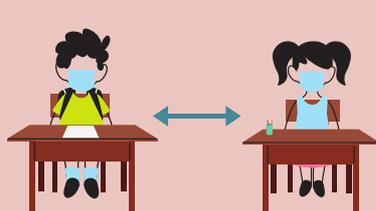
This is what the staff members told us:

During the lockdowns and school disruptions staff members working at primary schools struggled. They had to make sure that their pupils were receiving in-person and/or online lessons while worrying about themselves and their families, as well as overseeing their own children's education.



Their workload and scope of responsibilities increased significantly. Besides providing academic support, schools saw an increase in administrative and pastoral work.

For some families, schools were their only support during the pandemic and school disruptions. There was a lot of pressure on schools to provide all the support possible. However, they had to do so with limited resources and time.



During lockdowns and school disruptions, difficulties were enhanced by the fact that changes in schools had to be carried out at very short notice and with limited budget and resources to implement anything that was not already in their plans.

Since restrictions have been lifted, there has been an increase in pressure on schools to make sure that children are reaching their educational goals and are able to pass statutory assessments. However, children and schools are still dealing with the effect of the pandemic. Thus, this external pressure has increased stress levels on staff members.



Since the start of the pandemic, staff members have felt underappreciated. Teachers and other staff members were working hard to provide online and in-person education, additional support for children and families, while supporting their own families who were also feeling the impact of the pandemic.

Staff members' mental health and wellbeing were negatively affected since the start of the pandemic and have been deteriorating since then. Teachers and other staff members saw a change in the type of work they were doing when the pandemic started. They also had limited social interaction and were worried about themselves and their families during these unprecedented times with many of them losing family members or close friends but still expected to continue teaching and providing support to families, with limited support for them.



Due to the level of stress, pressure and how the profession has been viewed in the last few years, some staff members have decided to leave the profession. Additionally, the profession does not seem to be as attractive as before, which means that fewer people are applying for initial teacher training, and many schools are finding it difficult to get people to replace the ones that leave.



Schools have provided resources to support their staff's mental health and wellbeing. However, most of them agree that reducing their workload and increasing resources to ensure a work-life balance would be more beneficial for them. Due to the limited school budgets and the difficulties with retaining and recruiting teachers, this may not be a possibility for many schools.



Not all impacts of the pandemic and school disruptions have been negative. For some schools, this experience has made them closer and more resilient. Others think that the introduction of online platforms has been more time efficient and has allowed them to be more in touch with hard-to-reach families. Many schools have decided to continue using these online platforms.



While there are no more restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, there are still concerns regarding the physical and mental health of all staff members working in schools, and how to make sure that schools can recruit good quality staff members since many are leaving or not applying at all.



In Conclusion

It is clear that teachers, headteachers and all staff members working in primary schools are under a significant amount of pressure to resume operating in the same way as before the pandemic. However, staff members have been negatively affected by the pandemic and the effects can still be seen to date, potentially exacerbated by other systemic shocks such as the cost of living crisis and the ongoing Ofsted debate. Therefore, any Covid recovery plans should also include support for all staff members and not only children's education because, as seen during the pandemic and school disruptions, they have also been significantly affected. We will continue looking at the long-term impacts of the pandemic in following academic years.

**For more information on this project visit
www.niesr.ac.uk/projects/icicles**

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