

Interim data summary: May–June 2020

Interim report from ImpactEd's longitudinal research project, 'Lockdown lessons: pupil learning and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic'

Tuesday 7th July 2020





About this project

Over the past few months there has been significant attention paid to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on schools, teaching and young people. At ImpactEd, we wanted to make sure that our research made a genuinely unique contribution to this complex landscape. To do this, we designed our approach to take account of the following:

- ▶ First, this research project focuses on **data from young people themselves**. Most existing research explores 'second-hand' accounts from teachers or parents around impact on young people. While valuable, we have focused directly on young people's experience where possible. Over 50,000 pupils in England will have taken part in this project by the time it concludes, making it the largest pupil-based study in the UK of its kind that we are aware of.
- ▶ Second, the project is **longitudinal and uses data from a range of sources taken at a number of points in time**. Having started in early May, the project will continue until pupils fully return to schools and beyond. The project will link data from fortnightly surveys and a 'return-to-school' diagnostic with information from schools on pupil attendance and attainment. This will build a more complete picture of the impact of the lockdown on learning and wellbeing.
- ▶ Third, the research project has been designed so that we can share timely insights directly with teachers and senior leaders. While we hope that the findings will be used as part of the wider post-crisis analysis, **we want to support schools as they take difficult decisions right now**. All schools who have taken part in the project have received pupil-level information about the impact of lockdown on their students, and we have released interim reports (like this one) to share initial findings with teachers and headteachers.
- ▶ Finally, based on the national dataset collected from the project we have launched a **freely available diagnostic tool** which schools can use to better identify and understand pupils' learning and wellbeing needs as they return in greater numbers to the physical classroom. More information on this is provided in the box below.

School returns diagnostic

Based on the tools used in this research project, we have designed a freely available diagnostic assessment to help teachers and school leaders understand how the lockdown has affected their pupils as they return to school in greater numbers.

The diagnostic takes the form of a short pupil-facing survey, using academically validated scales to assess areas such as pupil wellbeing, anxiety, experience of learning from home and metacognition. Using the ImpactEd platform, schools can see results at an individual level, compare outcomes by demographic factors, and see how their findings compare to the national picture. The tool can be used at whole-school level or with targeted groups, and ultimately aims to help schools make informed decisions about the support they put in place, their curriculum offer, and how to deploy any additional provision.

This diagnostic is available at no cost to schools. More information can be found here: <https://impactd.org.uk/covid-19>.

Executive summary

This interim report analyses the responses from a longitudinal survey of c.7,500 young people. The questions on this survey have been chosen from academically validated scales to give a robust assessment of levels of mental wellbeing, engagement and methods of learning, levels of grit and persistence, as well as contextual information about young people's experience.

The survey has been administered fortnightly since early May. As the project continues, survey data will be triangulated against information from schools on pupil attendance and attainment to reach a total sample of more than 50,000 pupils. The headline findings so far from the pupil survey are detailed below:

1

Pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium and those with SEND report greater challenges with learning and mental wellbeing

Across multiple sets of surveys, pupils with SEND and those who are eligible for Pupil Premium have been reporting consistently poorer mental wellbeing, metacognition and grit. There is nearly a 6% difference between Pupil Premium pupils and their peers in terms of their experience of their home learning environment.

2

Levels of overall pupil mental wellbeing have not varied significantly as the lockdown has progressed

Comparing pupil data from May and June with national data taken from before the lockdown shows little difference in mental wellbeing. The average wellbeing score for pupils in the latest sample was 24.1, compared to an average in our pre-lockdown benchmark of 23.6 and a score of 23.8 recorded in April-May.

3

Pupils report significant challenges with home learning, especially where access to outside space and exercise is limited

Just over half of pupils felt they had a routine for home working that supported them to learn effectively and this fell to only a third of pupils among those who did not get regular exercise. Fewer than 60% of pupils reported that they could ask their family for help when they get stuck with their learning.

Contents

Research Project Overview	04	How do pupils feel they are doing overall?	08
Interim Report Findings 1: Learning Engagement	06	What impact has lockdown had on pupils' wellbeing?	09
How well are pupils learning in lockdown?	06	What impact has lockdown had on pupils' metacognition?	09
How much physical activity is taking place and how does this affect learning?	07	What impact has lockdown had on pupils' persistence?	10
Interim Report Findings 2: Self-Perceptions	08		

Lockdown lessons: overview of the research project

Background and context

The outbreak of Covid-19 has contributed to an unprecedented level of change in the education system. Schools have turned quickly to digital technologies and other forms of remote learning provision, while trying to find the balance between enabling learning and providing emotional support to children and families. At the same time, unequal access to technology and home learning opportunities is likely to widen existing achievement gaps, while distance from usual support networks may contribute to a negative impact on young people's wellbeing.

ImpactEd, in partnership with the University of Bristol and the University of York, has launched a national research project which aims to equip schools to understand how the current situation is influencing pupil wellbeing and learning, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, and collate these findings to provide insight for policymakers, practitioners and others as to how educational needs can be most effectively addressed during and following the pandemic.

This interim data release details our findings so far. As such it offers some initial insights as to how pupils' experience of lockdown has developed over the summer term. During July and into August, we will be conducting further analysis to track changes over time and better understand the factors that may be influencing outcomes, which will be shared in upcoming reports.

Methodology and sample

This project is conducted in partnership with an Associate Researcher team from the University of Bristol and the University of York. It will capture data from a variety of related sources, including:

- ▶ A fortnightly pupil survey being administered during the Summer term and into Autumn, using validated scales to assess impact on wellbeing, metacognitive learning behaviours, and grit.
- ▶ Triangulating these results against a rich range of data, including by demographic characteristics (Pupil Premium status, gender, EAL, geographical location and other factors) and linking results to academic achievement and school attendance data in future as this becomes available.
- ▶ A quantitative and qualitative survey being administered to a sample of teachers and school leaders within the study, to assess relationships between staff behaviours and pupil outcomes.
- ▶ A 'return-to-school' diagnostic gathering further insight from pupils in September.

This interim report largely draws upon the fortnightly survey. Future reports will use the wider range of data. This report draws on responses from 7,368 pupils ranging from 6-18 years old. We anticipate that our final analysis will draw on data from over 50,000 young people. This interim report focuses mainly on wellbeing and contextual data about learning with the other outcomes being measured being covered more extensively in further analyses.

As part of this research project, ImpactEd has launched a school returns diagnostic. This tool, which is free to use, will allow teachers and senior leaders to gain immediate insights on their pupils' learning and wellbeing as they return in greater numbers to the physical classroom. If you are interested in finding out more, please visit: <https://impactd.org.uk/covid-19>.

Limitations of the data

There are a number of important caveats to note when interpreting this data. As schools were able to sign up freely to participate in the study, self-selection means that the sample is unlikely to be nationally representative, although we have aimed for representation where possible across a number of different factors (school type, geography, socio-economic context, school performance).

In addition, the data discussed in this report comes direct from young people themselves. In common with all survey methodologies, there may well be biases affecting responses (e.g. willingness to disclose feelings, even when answers are kept anonymous) which readers should bear in mind.

As the study continues to grow and develop as outlined above, we will be able to mitigate against some of these limiting factors, in particular by growing the size of the sample and linking questionnaire data with school administrative data.

Next steps

As the research project continues, we will be releasing a series of further reports tracking longitudinal changes in the pupil cohort and aiming to investigate some of the factors behind the findings we are seeing to date.

For schools that want to use the tools developed as part of the study to understand pupil learning and wellbeing needs, we have made these freely available as a diagnostic assessment for pupils as they return in greater numbers to the physical classroom. This data will in turn contribute to the accuracy and representativeness of the overall research. For more information, visit: <https://impactd.org.uk/covid-19>.

About ImpactEd

ImpactEd is a non-profit organisation that exists to help evaluate, understand and improve impact in education. We work directly with schools and education organisations to help them to assess their impact, learn from it, and ultimately prioritise what is working best to improve outcomes for young people.

We do this through partnership working to build capacity for research and evaluation and our [digital platform](#) which makes this process easier and more effective.

We are winners of the Teach First Innovation Award, have been profiled in Department for Education case studies on excellent evaluation practice, and our strategic partners include Nesta, Big Change, the Young Foundation and a number of the UK's largest school groups.

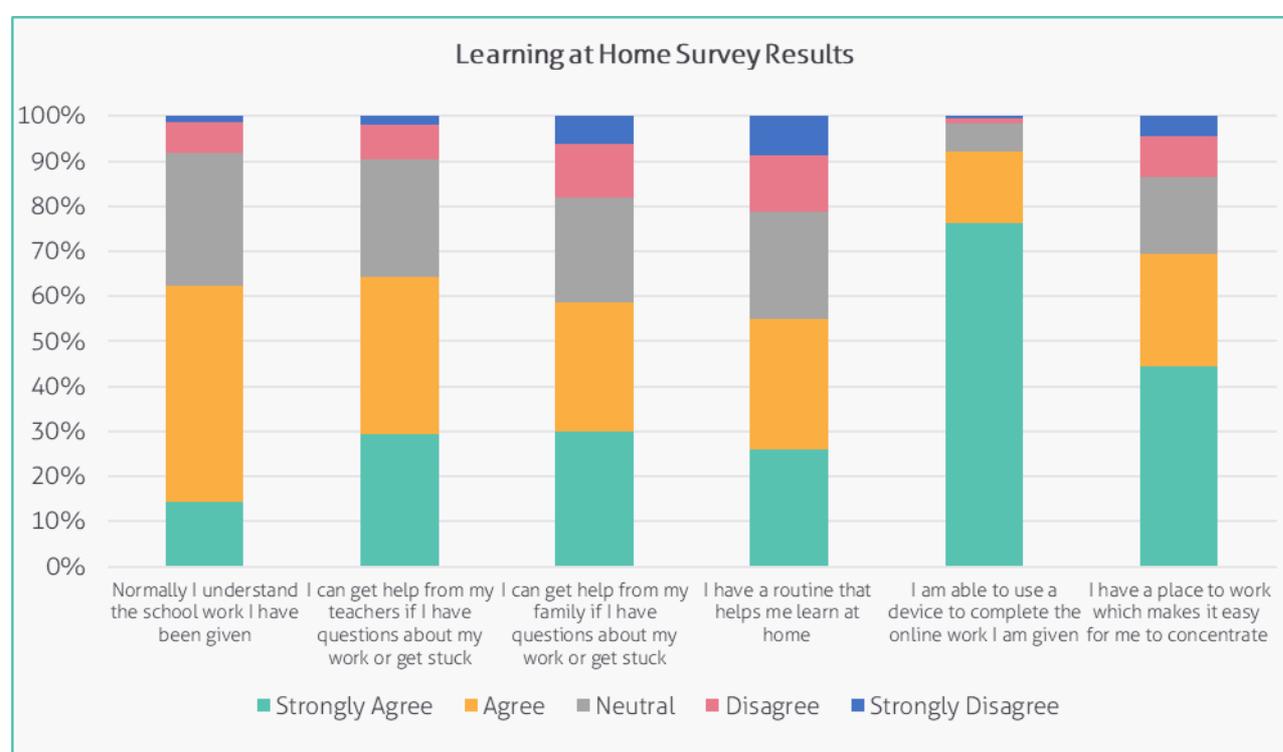
To request further information about the study or to find out more about our work, please contact the research team directly at hello@impactd.org.uk or by visiting www.impactd.org.uk.

Interim report findings 1: engagement with learning

How well are pupils learning in lockdown?

We asked pupils about a range of factors relating to their experiences of learning during lockdown. Responses showed:

- ▶ 62% of pupils agreed or strongly agreed that they normally understood the work they were given.
- ▶ 64% reported being able to get help from their teachers if they got stuck, down slightly from earlier in the lockdown, with only 59% reporting the same for support from their family.
- ▶ Routines for learning at home were a particular challenge, with only just over half of pupils (55%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had an effective routine for home learning.
- ▶ We also found significant challenges in the suitability of the working environment, with only 70% of pupils reporting being able to find a quiet place to work at home.



How well are pupils learning in lockdown?

In order to better compare how different groups of pupils have been affected by the lockdown, we assigned an overall 'score' to represent the home learning context, which provides an average across the different responses pupils provided on a 1-5 Likert scale. In particular, pupils were asked about their learning routine, the support they are receiving from teachers and family, and their understanding of school work.

Using this home learning score, we found substantial differences in responses between groups of pupils with particular characteristics. The table below shows that pupils who are eligible for the Pupil Premium were more likely to report challenges with the home-learning environment than their peers.

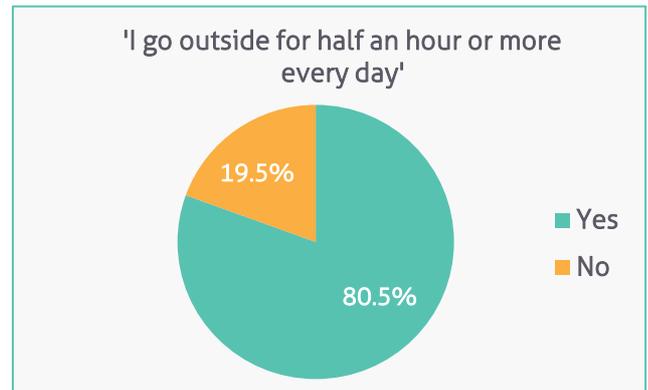
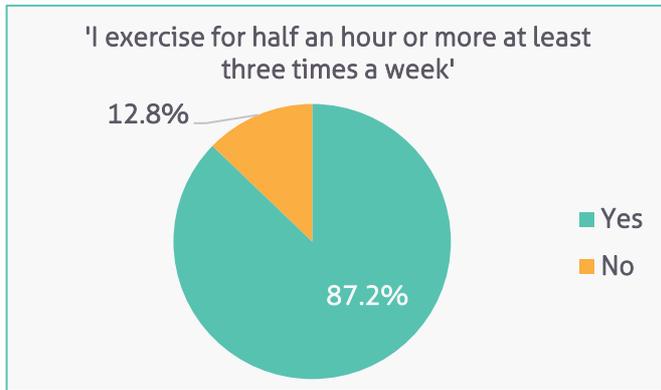
Home Learning Score

All Pupils	Pupil Premium (v. All Pupils)	SEND (v. All Pupils)
3.66	3.43 (-5.9%)	3.60 (-1.7%)

How much physical activity is taking place and how does this affect learning?

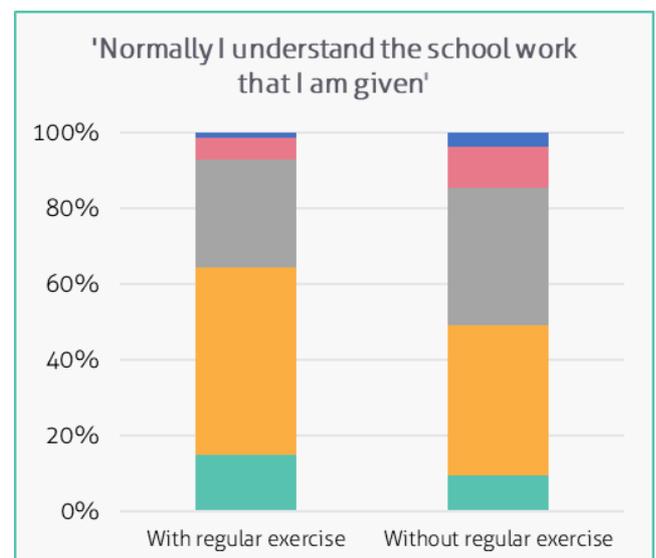
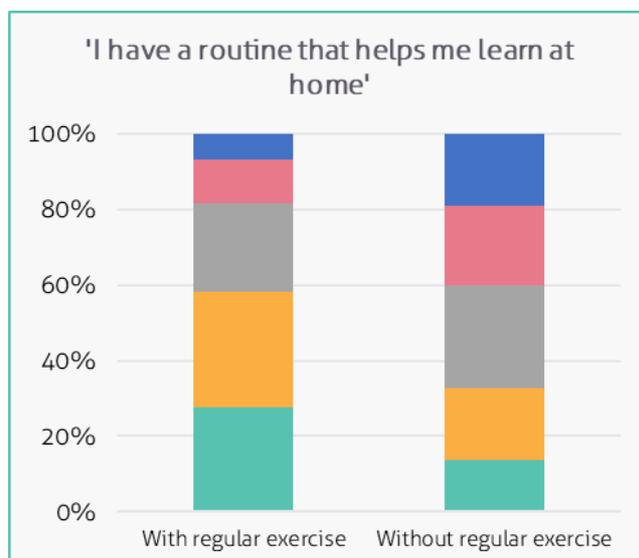
Pupils were also asked about how they behaved in terms of exercise and using outside space:

- ▶ The majority (87.2%) of pupils reported regular exercise at least three times a week.
- ▶ A lower number reported getting outside for at least half an hour every day. Over 1 in 5 of all pupils reported that they did not manage to do this.



The amount of exercise that pupils complete has an impact on their learning:

- ▶ 64.3% of pupils who exercised three times a week understood the work that they were given, compared to less than half of pupils (49%) who did not (this is down by 6% from late May).
- ▶ Those who exercised are also far more likely to say that they have established an effective learning routine (58.3%) compared to those who do not (32.8%).
- ▶ Similar gaps exist between those who got outside and those who did not, both in relation to establishing a routine (58.9% v. 39.1%) and understanding the work they have been set (64.2% v. 54.7%).



■ Strongly Agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly Disagree

Interim report findings 2: overall self-perceptions

How do pupils feel they are doing overall?

The three questionnaire scales we are using to measure wellbeing, metacognition and grit allow for the calculation of an overall score relating to pupils' self-assessment in that area, reported below. We have cut the data across two different time periods of three weeks, from the week beginning 27th April 2020 and the week beginning 1st June 2020 respectively, to provide a sense of what the level of change over time, if any, has been during lockdown.

Overall, pupils reported stable levels of wellbeing, metacognition and persistence. However, across all three outcome measures, Pupil Premium and SEND pupils showed consistently lower self-reported raw scores, with gender variation also being particularly prominent for wellbeing scores.

There has been little variation in the scores as the lockdown has progressed, with pupils – in general – reporting small improvements in wellbeing and metacognition and a small decline in grit. The sharpest declines were reported by pupils who have English as an Additional Language (EAL).

Please note that the sample size for these subgroups is smaller than the entire sample and so results are likely to be more subject to measurement error or reflect the biases of the sample.

Summary statistics from June (change from April-May measurement)

Group	Wellbeing	Metacognition	Grit
All pupils	3.45 (+0.05)	3.51 (+0.03)	3.29 (-0.02)
Male	3.56 (+0.06)	3.53 (+0.04)	3.33 (-0.02)
Female	3.35 (+0.04)	3.49 (+0.02)	3.24 (-0.03)
Pupil Premium	3.31 (+0.02)	3.35 (+0.04)	3.12 (No change)
SEND	3.37 (+0.09)	3.33 (+0.11)	3.22 (+0.01)
EAL	3.54 (-0.08)	3.63 (+0.02)	3.36 (-0.06)

As part of this research project, ImpactEd has launched a school returns diagnostic. This tool, which is free to use, will allow teachers and senior leaders to gain immediate insights on their pupils' learning and wellbeing as they return in greater numbers to the physical classroom. If you are interested in finding out more, please visit: <https://impactd.org.uk/covid-19>.

What impact has lockdown had on pupils' wellbeing?

Use of the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Score enables us to compare outcomes against two relevant pre-Covid datasets: population norms from large-scale health surveys, and ImpactEd's internal research dataset (20,000+ school-age pupils). The average converted SWEMBWS score for pupils in the latest sample was 24.1 compared to an average in our pre-lockdown benchmark of 23.6 and a score of 23.8 recorded in the first interim report.

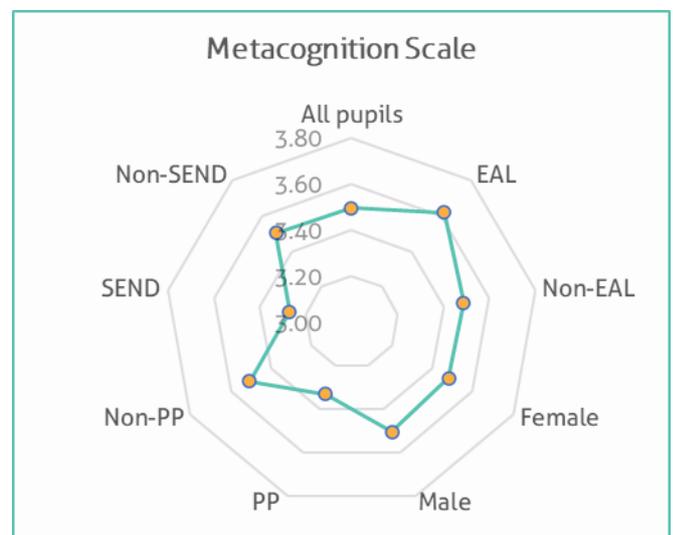
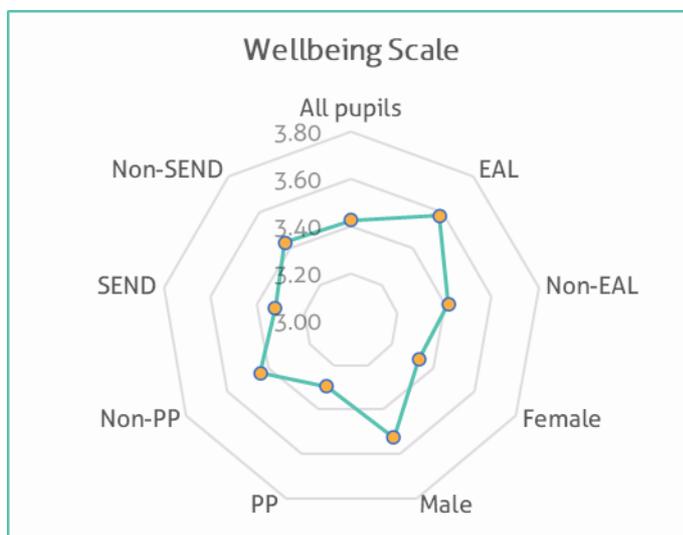
Wellbeing Scores

Pre-Lockdown	Time Point 1 (Apr-May)	Time Point 2 (June)
23.6	23.8	24.1

At both time points, however, wellbeing was lowest among Pupil Premium and SEND groups. When you combine the data from both periods there was a difference of 3.6% and 2.7% respectively. A gender difference was also noted, with a 4.9% gap between the responses of males and those of females.

Finally, there was a difference in pupils who have English as an Additional Language (EAL). Overall, pupils with EAL reported better wellbeing (despite a drop in this score in the most recent survey); 4.1% higher than those who spoke English as their first language.

In future research reports we will be aiming to look into the potential factors behind these demographic factors and any links that they may have to the home learning context experienced by these young people.



What impact has lockdown had on pupils' metacognition?

The validated scale that ImpactEd uses to measure metacognition assesses pupils' ability to 'think about thinking'. Pupils who score themselves highly on this scale report being more able to purposefully plan and self-regulate their learning; particularly important where learning is taking place more independently.

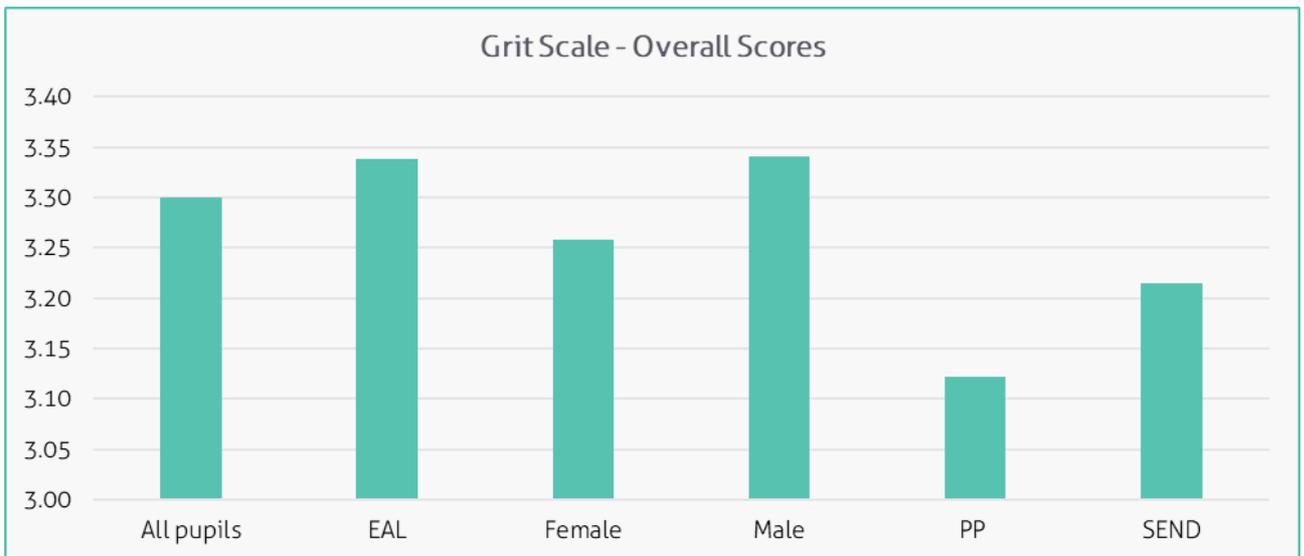
Metacognition followed a similar trend with self-reports for Pupil Premium and SEND groups showing variance from the total for those without those characteristics. For pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium there was a difference of 4.5%. For SEND pupils the difference was 5.8%.

No observable gender difference was noted.

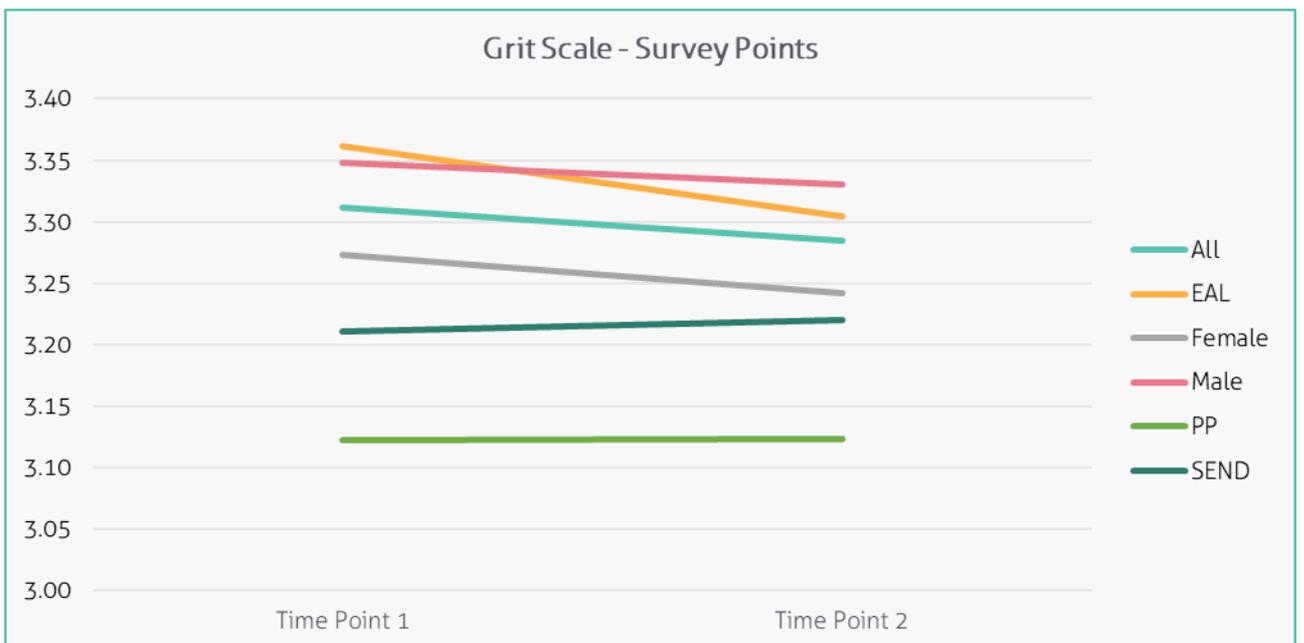
What impact has lockdown had on pupils' persistence?

This part of the survey used a validated scale designed to assess pupils' perseverance and passion for long-term goals, referred to as grit.

The trends for self-reported grit were consistent with the findings for metacognition and wellbeing, with differences being more notable for Pupil Premium pupils (4.9% from total for all pupils) than SEND (2.2%). There was also a difference between male and female participants of 2%.



Unlike the scores for both metacognition and wellbeing, the self-report scores for grit are trending downwards (albeit with relatively small shifts). The sharpest decline was noted in pupils who had EAL, who reported an average fall of 0.06 points between the survey points.



.....

To request further information on the results or progress of the study, please get in touch with the research team directly at www.impactd.org.uk or via email at hello@impactd.org.uk