

[Date]

## The Impact of COVID-19 on School Starters in 2020/21

Dear colleague,

We would like to invite you and your school to take part in an educational research study. This study is being conducted by researchers at the University of York, Education Policy Institute and National Institute of Economic and Social Research. The study is being carried out to look at whether the recent closure of early years settings had an impact on children who have started reception this year. The study starts in Sept 2020 and runs until the end of the academic year 2020/2021

This document explains what your school participation in this study would entail. Having read the information sheet if you have any questions or would like to sign up please contact Dr Louise Tracey at [education-schoolstarters-cv19@york.ac.uk](mailto:education-schoolstarters-cv19@york.ac.uk).

### **What is the aim of this study?**

This project seeks to understand the experiences of children starting school in the wake of a national lockdown, amid uncertainty regarding the possibility of new national or local lockdowns, and with changes to the way schools operate in order to account for COVID-19 e.g. social distancing and bubbles. Importantly, the study will focus on children's socioemotional well-being as well as educational outcomes.

### **Who is eligible to take part in the study?**

We are inviting all infant and primary schools to take part in the study with the following exceptions:

Schools who are currently enrolled on an EEF Early Years trial.

Schools who are early adopters of the new EYFS

### **What does taking part in the research involve?**

The study will be carried out in three phases.

**Phase one** will take place in the Autumn Term 2020. We will ask all schools to email all parents of Reception pupils with an invitation to take part in the study by completing an initial questionnaire. The invitation to take part in the study will include a parent information sheet, where it will be clear that the participation involves both the questionnaire and the possibility of their child being selected for the assessment (see below). The questionnaire will ask for demographic data, experiences of lockdown, home learning environment, children's attendance at early years settings prior to Reception (e.g. setting type and average number of hours) and parental socio-emotional wellbeing. These questionnaires will be collected online, with data coming directly to us, and the first 20 parents to complete the questionnaire will receive a £10 voucher. The questionnaire will then be closed to parents.

We will then randomly select 10-12 children from the group of parents who have completed the questionnaire. We will ask you to collect language, numeracy and socio-emotional wellbeing data using quick tasks completed on an iPad. All of the apps are designed for use with children aged 3-8 years. All pupils will be eligible to take part with the exception of children who have been in the UK less than 12 months, which we will confirm using parent questionnaire data.

We are using the Early Years Toolbox to collect data for this study (<http://www.eytoolbox.com.au/about-team>). The data will be automatically uploaded to a database once you have completed each assessment so you do not have to worry about this. We will tell you the date by which we need the data and the tests can then be given by a teacher or teaching assistant at your convenience.

Early Years Toolbox Numeracy is an iPad based game-like task that asks children about different age-appropriate aspects of numerical skill. The app performs like a game and takes approximately 10 mins to deliver with each child.

Early Years Toolbox Vocabulary is an iPad based game-like task that asks children to name pictures. The app performs like a game and takes approximately 10 mins to deliver with each child.

Early Years Toolbox Child Self-Regulation and Behaviour Questionnaire (CSBQ) is an iPad-based rating scale which teachers will complete to assess the socioemotional well-being of participating children. This is completed on the app but not directly with the child and should take no more than 10 mins per child.

Finally, we will ask schools to complete a survey outlining the school context e.g. size of class, timing and arrangements for transition to YR, approaches due to Covid-19 e.g. curriculum or operational changes, any on-entry assessments used. You will be given the option to choose who is best suited to complete this questionnaire e.g. Headteacher, Head of Early Years, Reception class teacher). All measures are designed to minimise burden on schools and parents, as we appreciate what a difficult time this is right now, but we hope that through this data collection we will be able to inform future strategies and policy-making.

**Phase two** will take place in the Summer term. We will ask schools to repeat the language, numeracy and socioemotional well-being measures with the participating children. We will ask parents of those children to complete a follow-up survey detailing any changes in their

circumstances, changes in well-being and perspectives on their child's school experience. Parents will receive a £10 voucher for completing the survey. In addition we will ask schools to complete a follow-up survey reporting, for example, disruption to, or absences during the academic year, their approach to the recovery period e.g. curriculum changes or remote learning, and parental engagement.

**Phase three** will involve analysis of EYFSP data obtained from the National Pupil Database. We will carry out analysis of national data but we will also link child level data collected from schools using the Unique Pupil Number (UPN).

### **What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

Through participation, your school will receive:

#### Equipment

To support with taking part in the study and as a thank you for your participation we will provide each school with a voucher to purchase one Apple iPad (necessary for completing the assessments) or an equivalent sum of money for schools that may not require an additional iPad. This iPad will be the property of the school in perpetuity. We will also cover the costs of the Early Years Toolbox app which can then be used with all children in perpetuity, not just those in the study.

#### Training

All staff delivering the numeracy, language and socioemotional well-being assessments will be trained by a member of the research team. The training will take place online and an email address provided for any queries. Training should take no more than 2 hours and will be carried out prior to data collection once the MoU has been received.

#### Parent Incentives

We will provide parents with a £10 voucher for questionnaires completed at each timepoint. At time one this will be the first 20 parents who complete the questionnaire. At time two this will be the parents of the children who were randomly selected to follow up. We will send the vouchers directly to schools to pass on to families.

### **What will happen to the data?**

All data used for the Project will be treated with the strictest confidence and will be used and stored in accordance with all applicable data protection laws including the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (the GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (the Data Protection Legislation).

The parties agree that a data sharing agreement will be put in place between the University of York, NIESR, EPI and each school which will include the details of the types of personal data being shared, the purpose and duration of that sharing and the responsibilities each party has in relation to that information.

The University of York and EPI will be deemed as Data Controllers (as defined by the Data Protection Legislation) with regard to the personal data used for this Project. Accordingly, the

University of York and EPI will, in the form of an information sheet, provide information to individuals about the use of their personal data which we may hold and use for this Project. Individual participants will also be provided with the option of withdrawal from the research and details of the process to do so.

The University's privacy notice/information sheet is compliant with the requirements of the GDPR. Our legal basis for processing personal data for this research will be Article 6 (1)(e) of the GDPR: *Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried in the public interest*. If any special category data is processed we will do so under Article 9 (2)(j): *Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes*.

This is in line with the University's charter which states learning and knowledge will be advanced through teaching and research.

For the purpose of the research, named data will be linked with information about participants provided by the National Pupil Database (NPD). Confidentiality will be maintained and no one outside the Research Team will have access to the study database. This will be stored until completion of the study in 2024. It will then be shared with the EEF's archive manager, Fisher Family Trust (FFT). At this point, the EEF will become the Data Controller. The central database held by the Research Team will then be deleted. Further matching to NPD and other administrative data may take place during subsequent research.

The University of York is committed to the principle of data protection by design and default and will collect the minimum amount of data necessary for the project. In addition, we will anonymise or pseudonymise data wherever possible. All results will be anonymised so that no individual schools, families or children will be identifiable in the report or dissemination of any results. Results may also be used in presentations and for teaching purposes. Reports will be published on the EEF website, via blogs and articles in appropriate publications (e.g. TES, Nursery World), shared via social media, and in peer reviewed journals.

If you have any questions about the participant information sheet or concerns about how the data is being processed, please feel free to contact Dr Louise Tracey by email ([education-schoolstarters-cv19@york.ac.uk](mailto:education-schoolstarters-cv19@york.ac.uk)) or by telephone on +44 (0)1904 323460, or the Chair of Ethics Committee via email [education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk](mailto:education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk). If you are still dissatisfied, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at [dataprotection@york.ac.uk](mailto:dataprotection@york.ac.uk)

### **How do we sign up for the study?**

We hope you consider taking part in this research. To sign up please email Dr Louise Tracey at [education-schoolstarters-cv19@york.ac.uk](mailto:education-schoolstarters-cv19@york.ac.uk).