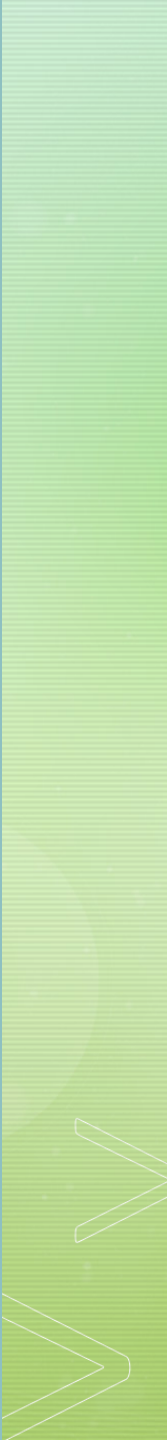Claire Parr

'How children's voices were heard whilst being home-schooled during the Covid-19 national lockdown.'

Aims

- How learning was completed at home.

- Communication between the children and their school.

- The children's views of home-school vs. 'normal' school.

- What the children think of Covid-19.

Rationale – Why?

- Article 12 UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989)

- There is a legal duty for adults to uphold these rights (Lundy, 2007)

- A never seen before event impacting all children.

- The suddenness of the school closure silenced children.

- An opportunity to learn for potential future events.

- To identify areas that children may need support.

Methodology

- A qualitative study (Denscombe, 2018)

- Empowerment – The children were treated as experts in their own lives (Gilson, 2013)

- Research was designed to meet ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018)

- Harts Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992)

- 4 step thematic approach to data analysis (Bryman, 2016)

Research Design

- The participants were 6 children in Year 4 (8-9 years old).

- 'Investigators' – not tokenistic (Lundy, 2018)

- Mosaic Approach (Clark & Statham, 2005; Clark & Moss, 2017)

Findings

- 4 main themes emerged;

  1. The use of digital technology and online learning platforms
  2. Emotional responses
  3. What was enjoyed
  4. Communication with school

- What they drew/wrote on their storyboards echoed what they had discussed in the focus group.

1. The use of digital technology and online learning platforms

- Child F – "stressful"

- Child A – "boring"

- Child B – "I absolutely hate SeeSaw." *(Note: SeeSaw is an online learning platform).*

  Researcher – "You hate SeeSaw?"
  Child B – "Yeah!"

- Child D – "Easier" and "I wouldn't change anything about it."

# 1. The use of digital technology and online learning platforms
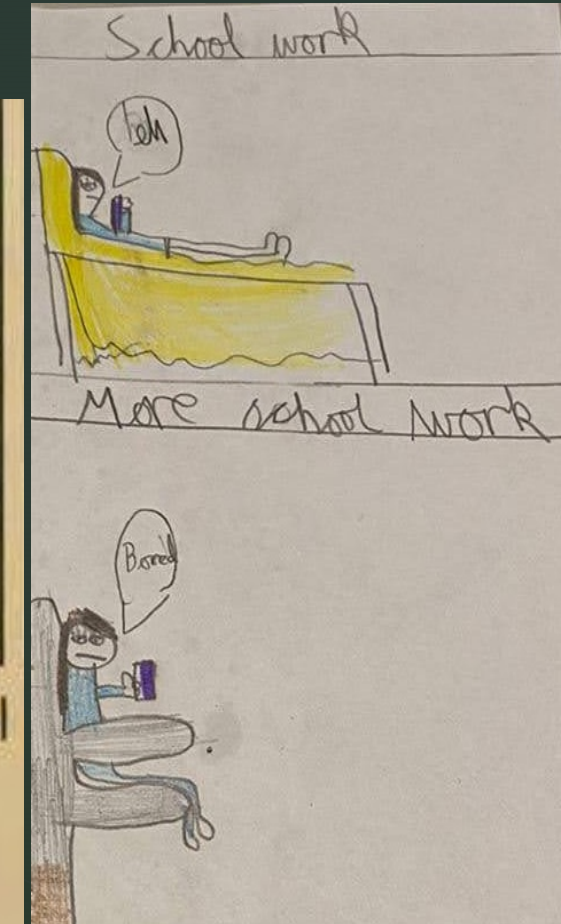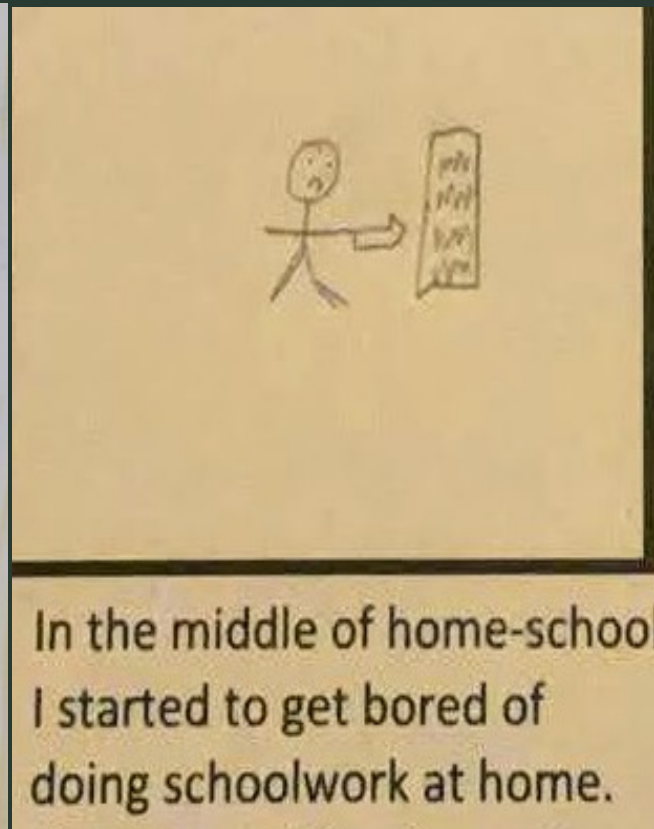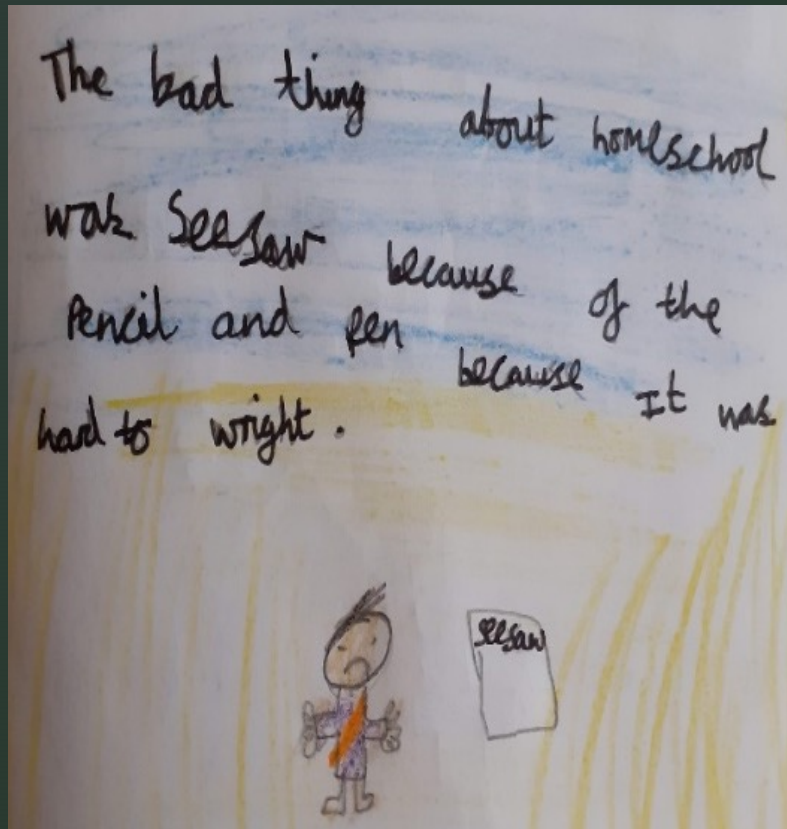
2. Emotional responses

- Child F - "Sad."

- Child A - "Uncomfortable."

- Child A - "Nervous because I didn't know how long it was going to go on for."

- Child B - "Happy and unhappy at the same time." Shows developing emotional maturity. (Fergusson et al., 2020)

- Participants B, C & E all talked about missing their friends. (Osher et al., 2014; Siraj et al., 2015; Vygotsky, 1978)

2. Emotional responses
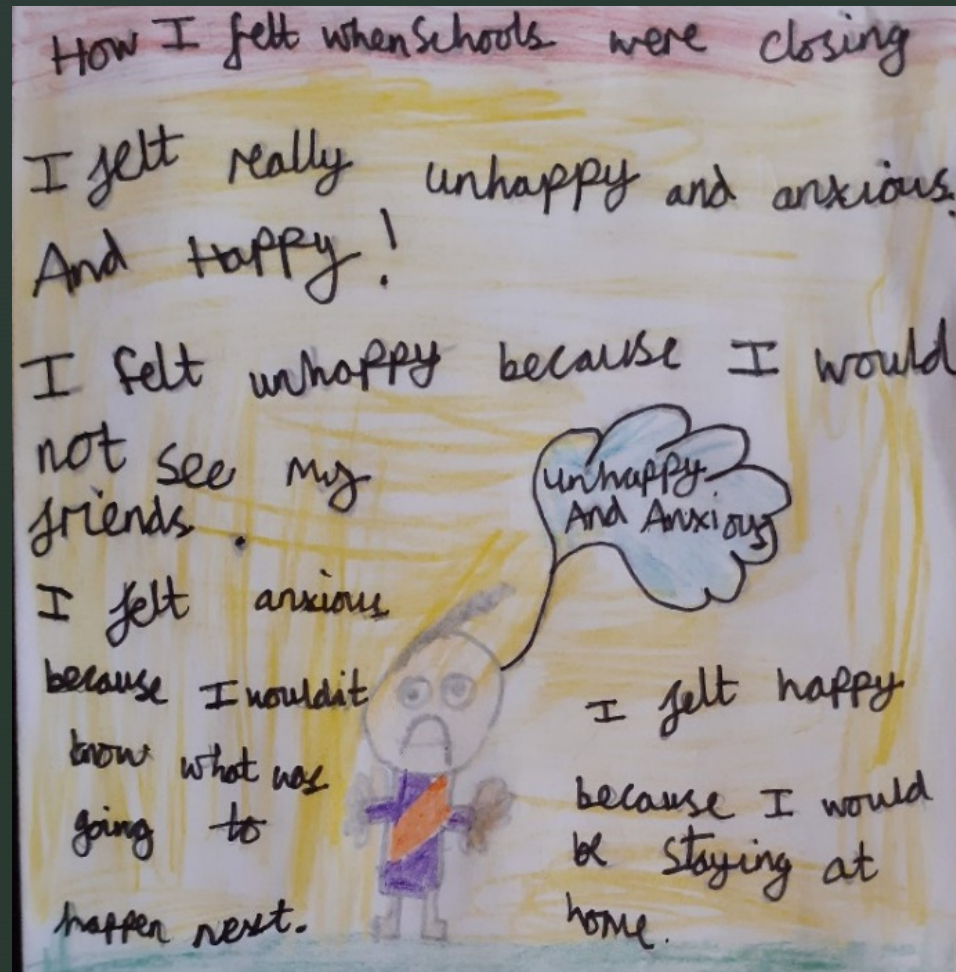
3. What was enjoyed

- The children had positive experiences too. Almost all examples included physical activity and/or being outside.

- Child B – "The things I liked in the garden were football and going on the trampoline…oh, and going to the rec!"

- Child C – "Going on my bike and playing football a lot."

- Child D – "I went cycling while lockdown was happening for like three hours!"

- Time outdoors is shown to improve mental well-being and subsequently academic attainment. (Trask-Hall, 2019; Jenkin, 2016)

- Many argue that children do not get enough outdoor play. School and playground closures, and social restrictions exacerbated this. (Wallis & Mansfield, 2020)

3. What was enjoyed

I loved been at home because I could spend lots of time in my garden doing things like picnics, playing football and taking ***** for walks on the drive!

4. Communication with school

- Less enthusiastic tone and silence suggested the children felt negatively about this topic during the discussion. (Mazzei, 2003)

- They could only have conversations in written messages.

- They did not get to share their thoughts or opinions. (UNICEF, 1989)

- Child B – "Wrote the comments below and we sent them"

- Child C – "Just the SeeSaw comments."

- Researcher – "Do you think you got the chance to say what you liked and didn't like?"
  Child E – "Nah."
  Child C – "No."

So what now?

- Overall the children preferred being in school to home learning.

- The children experienced a variety of emotions during the period highlighting their ongoing emotional development. (Fergusson et al., 2020)

- They missed their friends and collaborative play/learning. (Jones, 2020)

- They enjoyed playing and exploring outdoors. More needs to be done to encourage play and learning outside. (Wickett & Selbie, 2015)

- The children felt silenced during the lockdown. This needs to be addressed for any future school closures in order that Article 12 of the UNCRC is met (UNICEF, 1989; Lundy, 2007).

What would I do differently?

- Give the children an opportunity to speak to me 1:1 after reflecting on the focus group.

- Allow them to talk me through their story-boards if they wanted to.

- Consider seeking permission from the participants and their parents to share the findings with the school.

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Any questions?