

## English language proficiency and attainment of EAL children in England

### What this study was about

[The study](#) analysed data from primary and secondary schools in Inner London to find out how the English proficiency levels of children with English as an additional language (EAL) impacted on their educational results at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2, ages 10 to 11) and after the GCSE examinations at age 16, the school leaving age.

### What the researchers did

The researcher analysed data returned by primary and secondary schools in the Inner London area on children's educational attainments, and their levels of English. Each child was matched to socio-economic data. In January 2017 the area included 87% children from an ethnic minority, 150 different languages were spoken, and 48% children had EAL.

The study included 2, 957 children who had completed KS2, and 1, 953 children who had taken their GCSE examinations. Schools used the national levels recently introduced by the Department for Education to identify the stage reached by an EAL child acquiring English. Teachers assessed children in reading, writing, speaking and listening and made a 'best-fit' judgement to identify the most appropriate overall stage, namely: A (new to English), B (early acquisition), C (developing competency), D (competent), and E (fluent in English).

### What they found

No-one new to English (stage A) achieved the expected levels of proficiency in English and Maths at the end of KS2. Of the other levels, 12% at stage B, 56% at stage C, 66% at stage D and 85% at stage E achieved the expected standard.

The majority of EAL children in KS2 are at stages C to E (developing competency and fluent in English). EAL children at stage E (fluent English) outperformed English only children by 14%.

At GCSE level (age 16), analyses revealed the same pattern, that is to say, as EAL children's level of English increased, their level of achievement also increased. The majority of EAL children at GCSE level are at stages D to E (competent and fluent in English).

The graph (right) shows achievement at GCSE according to level of English, compared to achievement of English only children (56%)

At secondary school, most EAL children have achieved stage E level of English, fluent.

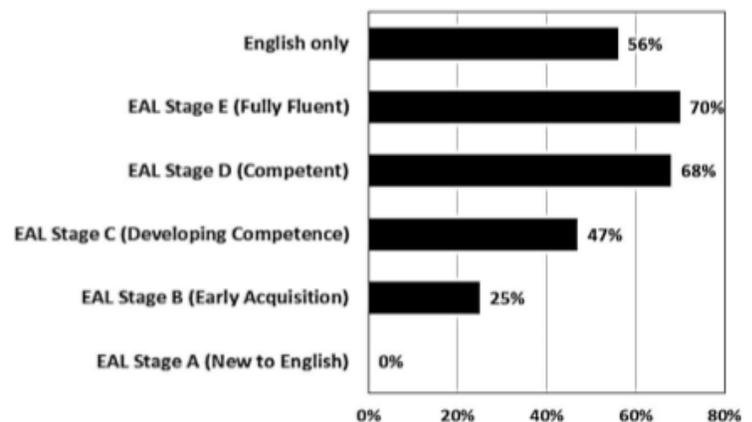


Figure 3. GCSE 5+A\*-C including English and maths performance by EAL proficiency in English.

There is a strong relationship between stage of proficiency in English and level of educational attainment.

*The government is underfunding schools by supporting only EAL pupils who have entered state education during the last three years. p. 9.*

EAL children at stages A to D tend to underachieve, but by the time they have reached stage E, fluency in English, EAL children tend to outperform children for whom English is their only language.

There is a difference of 20% in favour of EAL children (76% EAL stage E children achieved 5+ A\* to C GCSEs, including English and Maths; 56% English only children achieved 5+ A\* to C GCSEs, including English and Maths).

EAL children take between 5 and 7 years on average to acquire academic proficiency in English; this has implications for government funding.

### Things to bear in mind

Data were collected from just one local authority area, which is not representative of the whole of England.