

Raising Achievement of English as an Additional Language Pupils in Schools: Good Practice

Executive Summary



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Raising Achievement of English as an Additional Language Pupils in Schools: Good Practice

1. Introduction

Whilst the subject of pupils who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) attracts much interest among educationists, and policy makers, little is known about what works in raising their achievement in schools. This research aims to investigate how schools have helped pupils with EAL to achieve high standards and to identify significant common themes for success in narrowing the achievement gap.

A review of the literature suggests there is a wealth of research into the growth of the EAL population and attainment in schools. The number of pupils in England with English as an additional language has seen a dramatic increase over the years from 499,000 in 1997 to 1,171,101 in 2015 (Demie 2015:5; DfE 2015), an increase of 135%. The issue of EAL achievement is increasingly important given the growth in the EAL population in England over the last decade. There are now more than a million pupils between 5–18 years old in schools in England speaking in excess of 360 languages between them, and who are at varying stages in their learning of EAL, from newcomers to English to those that are fluent. About 17% of the school population in England and Wales now speak English as an additional language. (See Table 1)

Table 1. EAL population in primary, secondary and special schools in England, 1997-2015

	PRIMARY		SECONDARY		TOTAL	
	No. of pupils with EAL	% of pupils with EAL	No. of pupils with EAL	% of pupils with EAL	No. of pupils with EAL	% of pupils with EAL
1997	276,200	7.8	222,800	7.3	499,000	7.6
1998	303,635	8.5	238,532	7.8	542,167	8.2
1999	301,800	8.4	244,684	7.8	546,484	8.1
2000	311,512	8.7	255,256	8.0	566,768	8.4
2001	331,512	9.3	258,893	8.0	590,405	8.7
2002	350,483	10.0	282,235	8.6	632,718	9.3
2003	362,690	10.4	291,110	8.8	653,800	9.6
2004	376,600	11.0	292,890	8.8	669,490	9.9
2005	395,270	11.6	299,200	9.0	694,470	10.3
2006	419,600	12.5	314,950	9.5	734,550	11.0
2007	447,650	13.5	342,140	10.5	789,790	12.0
2008	470,080	14.4	354,300	10.8	824,380	12.6
2009	491,340	15.2	362,600	11.1	853,940	13.1
2010	518,020	16.0	378,210	11.6	896,230	13.8
2011	547,030	16.8	399,550	12.3	946,580	14.6
2012	577,555	17.5	417,765	12.9	995,320	15.2
2013	612,160	18.1	436,150	13.6	1,061,010	15.9
2014	654,405	18.7	455,205	14.3	1,123,195	16.6
2015	693,815	19.4	477,286	15.0	1,171,101	17.4

Source: DfE (2010). <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000925/index.shtml>

DfE (1997). <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000050/index.shtml>

Recently available data in England shows patterns of underachievement amongst EAL pupils compared to the national average. At Key Stage 2, pupils with English as an additional language achieved less well in Reading, Writing and Mathematics than those with English as their first language with 71% of EAL pupils achieving level 4 plus in Reading, Writing and Mathematics compared to 75% of their monolingual peers. The DfE 2015 GCSE data also suggest similar findings where 58% of White British pupils achieve 5+A*-C including English and maths compared to 55% of EAL pupils. The KS2 data also confirms 77% of EAL pupils achieved the expected standard compared with 81% of non-EAL pupils (DfE 2015).

Previous studies attribute the root of EAL pupils' underachievement to various factors including difficulties in speaking English, ethnic background and other factors such as recent entry to the country and poverty (Strand et al 2015). However, an important factor affecting EAL pupils' achievement is the language barrier. For EAL pupils to have full access to the curriculum, they need to be fluent in English. There are now considerable studies that have examined the way EAL pupils are assessed, their English proficiency and the relationship between stages of English fluency and attainment. In particular, there is research evidence from England showing that a pupil's fluency in English is a key predictor of their achievement in national tests at age 11 (e.g. Strand & Demie, 2005) and in public examinations at age 16 (e.g. Demie & Strand, 2006). These studies have examined the effect of stages of English fluency on attainment at Key Stage 2 tests (KS2) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). For example, the analyses of the national KS2 test results and GCSE examination results for pupils in an inner London LA by levels of English language acquisition show that pupils with EAL at the early stages of developing fluency had significantly lower KS2 test scores in all subjects than their monolingual peers (see Strand and Demie 2005; Demie and Strand 2006). However, pupils with EAL who were fully fluent in English achieved significantly higher scores in all KS2 tests and GCSE than their monolingual peers. The negative association with attainment for the early stages of fluency remained significant after controls for a range of other pupil characteristics, including age, gender, free school meal entitlement, stage of special educational need and ethnic group, although these factors effectively explained the higher attainment of the 'fully fluent' group.

Table 2. EAL GCSE Performance by levels of fluency in English in Lambeth LA (%)

EAL Stages of English Fluency	5+ A*-C Secondary 2015
EAL Stage 1 (<i>Beginners-New to English</i>)	0%
EAL Stage 2 (<i>Becoming familiar with English</i>)	13%
EAL Stage 3 (<i>Becoming confident as user of English</i>)	42%
EAL Stage 4 (<i>Fully Fluent in English</i>)	66%
English Only	54%
EAL Stage 1-3 (non-fluent in English)	39%
All Pupils- LA average	57%
All Pupils- National Average	53%

Source: School Research and Statistics Unit, Lambeth LA

Recent GCSE data from Lambeth LA also confirms similar evidence and shows that fluency in English continues to have a strong influence on the performance of pupils with EAL at the end of secondary education. Demie (2015) collected and analysed data by stage of fluency in English, where Stage 1 were classified as beginner, Stage 2 as becoming familiar with English, Stage 3 becoming confident as user of English and Stage 4 as fully fluent in English. The results of the GCSE analysis show that the

percentage of pupils attaining 5+A*-C at the end of secondary education increased as the stage of proficiency in English increased. Overall the data shows that no pupils on Stage 1 level of fluency in English achieved 5+A*-C compared to 11% on Stage 2, 40% on Stage 3 and 65% on stage 4 (fully fluent in English). EAL pupils who were fully fluent in English were also much more likely to get level 5+A*-C when compared with English-only speakers. The gap in achievement between monolingual English pupils and EAL pupils not fluent in English is 25 percentage points. (See Table 2)

In general the data shows that there is a strong relationship between the stages of fluency in English and educational attainment. Empirical evidence shows that the performance level of EAL pupils increases as fluency in English increases. Pupils in the early stages of fluency perform at low levels and EAL pupils not fluent in English achieve significantly below White British pupils who speak English only. The findings also confirm that the achievement of EAL pupils who were fully fluent in English far outstripped those of pupils for whom English was their only language.

One common question which is raised by policy makers and classroom teachers in relation to the speed of English language acquisition is 'how long does it take to acquire academic English fluency for EAL pupils?' Research in the case study LA suggests that:

'It takes about 5–7 years, on average, for EAL pupils to acquire academic English fluency. However, the speed of English language acquisition varies between stages of levels of English. On average, pupils are classified at Stage 1 (beginner) for about a year and a half, before moving to becoming familiar with English (Stage 2), where they typically remain for about two years. It takes about another two-and-a-half years at Stage 3 (becoming confident in English) before they can then be classified as fully fluent.' (See Demie 2013:8)

Overall the body of available literature suggests that most of the previous studies have focused on the growth of the EAL population in England and the reasons why EAL pupils are underachieving. Yet there is a paucity of research on what works in raising the achievement of EAL pupils in schools. For example, Demie and Gay's (2013) and Demie and Bellsham-Revell's (2013) studies record encouraging signs of improvement in the way schools are addressing the underachievement of EAL pupils. The research identified the reasons behind schools' success, which included the quality of teaching and learning, effective leadership at all levels, effective use of an inclusive curriculum, diversity in the school workforce, strong values and high expectations and the effective use of assessment data to monitor and track EAL performance and targeted support and interventions (see Demie and Mclean 2015; Demie & Mclean 2014; Demie & Lewis 2010). The key challenge is therefore to find out which strategies schools can use to make a difference to the achievement of pupils with EAL.

2. Research aims and methods

Research aims

The main purpose of this research was to examine the success factors behind the increased achievement of pupils with EAL. It was similar to other studies that have looked at examples of schools which provide an environment where underachieving groups can flourish, but also reflects the perspective of pupils, using detailed case studies to illustrate how policy and practice help to raise the achievement of pupils, with a strong emphasis on what works (Demie and Mclean 2015; Demie and Lewis 2010). Two overarching research questions guided this research:

- What are the success factors in raising achievement?
- What are the implications for policy and practice?

Research methods

The methodological approach for this research comprised case studies of selected schools and focus group interviews. Details of the methodological framework are summarised below:

Focus groups: Parent, pupil, governor and Headteacher focus groups were carried out to ascertain their views on strategies that worked to raise achievement and to identify whether their views mirrored those of the participants in the case study interviews.

Case studies: Using an ethnographic approach, detailed case study research was carried out to study the school experiences of pupils with EAL. A structured questionnaire was used to interview headteachers, teachers, support staff, parents and pupils to gather evidence of factors which enhance learning, how well pupils with EAL are achieving, pupils' views about the school and its support systems. The aim was to triangulate the voices of the various stakeholders in their education. Six primary schools with significant EAL populations were selected for the case studies. The case study schools as a whole included a range of ethnic groups, community languages spoken, free school meals and pupils with EAL needs. Key criteria for the selection of schools were serving high proportion of pupils with EAL, exceptionally good KS2 and GCSE results and good or outstanding grade schools in Ofsted inspection criteria (see tables 3 and 4).

Terminology

English as an Additional Language (EAL): EAL refers to learners whose first language is not English. Pupils learning EAL are not a homogeneous group, coming from diverse linguistic, cultural, ethnic and educational backgrounds. They may also be at different stages of English language acquisition (from complete beginner to fully fluent) and may also already be fluent in several other languages or dialects.

Measures of pupil performance

In the English education system, pupils aged 10 to 11 years take the Key Stage 2 tests at the end of Year 6. Pupils aged 15 to 16 years also take General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams at the end of KS4. These are a series of tests and exams in the individual subjects the pupils have been studying. For the purpose of this paper underachievement is defined as low attainment which is attainment that is below national average or below age-related expectations.

3. Raising the achievement of pupils with EAL: Good practice in schools

This section explores the achievement in the case study schools and key strategies used to raise the achievement of pupils with EAL. The case study schools studied in this research defy the association of poverty and low outcomes, and they enable pupils to succeed against the odds. All case study schools have an EAL cohort much higher than the national average. Table 3 shows that the attainment of all pupils has been exceptionally high. Of the pupils in the case study schools, 85% achieved level 4 or above at KS2 in 2015. From 2013, the case study schools were consistently scoring above 80% at KS2. The improvement rate of pupils in the case study schools is similar to the national and LA average, however the starting position of the case study schools is much higher. Between 2013 and 2015 pupils in the case study schools improved from 75% to 85%. This is an improvement rate of 10 percentage points compared to 6 points in all schools at national level.

Table 3. KS2 attainment in the case study schools

Case Study Schools	% of Pupils with EAL	EAL Pupils		
		KS2 Level 4+ (RWM combined)		
	2015	2013	2015	Change
School A	68%	74%	86%	12
School B	50%	69%	72%	3
School C	82%	74%	82%	8
School D	63%	63%	95%	32
School F	61%	94%	92%	-2
Case Study	65%	75%	85%	10
LA	52%	82%	84%	2
National	19%	71%	77%	6

At Key Stage 4 the case study schools' achievement was higher than the LA and national average. GCSE achievement in 2015 rose in the case study schools and the gap with the LA is 13 percentage points compared to 14 percentage points with the national average. (See Table 4)

Table 4. GCSE attainment in the case study schools

Case Study Schools	% of Pupils with EAL	EAL Pupils		
		5+A*-C incl. English and Maths		
		2014	2015	Change
School F	28.1%	61%	70%	9
School G	58.3%	80%	82%	2
School H	65.1%	60%	58%	-2
Case Study	48.2%	68%	69%	1
LA	37.9%	59%	56%	-3
National	15.7%	55%	55%	0

In general pupils with EAL achieved better at KS2 and GCSE than the national average in the case study schools.

The above section covered the attainment in the case study schools. All schools achieved remarkable results for all their pupils, far exceeding national average benchmarks at the end of Key Stage 2 and GCSE. There are a number of reasons for the vast improvement in the achievement in the case study schools compared to the Local Authority and nationally in England. Therefore, the key question for research is, *'What is the reason for such successful achievement in the case study schools?'* As part of the interviews headteachers and teachers were asked, *'What strategies does your school use to raise achievement?'* The research identified a range of common strategies that supported pupils with EAL to achieve well at school. These included strong leadership on equality and diversity, an understanding of pedagogy that best supported pupils with EAL, targeted support towards their progress, an inclusive curriculum which recognised and celebrated children's cultural heritage, and the use of performance data for school improvement which included the tracking of individual pupils' progress and achievement. These good practices are discussed below.

Strong leadership on equality and diversity

One of the main reasons for the excellent performance of pupils for whom English is an additional language and the huge improvement in the schools as a whole, over time, is strong leadership on equality and diversity. The headteachers set high expectations for the senior team and the staff as a whole. There is a relentless focus on improvement, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning, effective use of data and higher achievement by students. The headteachers are very well supported by exceptionally effective senior teams in guiding, monitoring and evaluating the many aspects of the school's work. Staff are trusted and valued by the leadership team, expectations of all pupils' social and academic achievement are high and the school is deeply embedded in the life of the area it serves. There is an exceptional sense of teamwork across the school. This is reflected in the consistent and committed way managers at all levels work toward the schools' aims to raise achievement. The schools are proud of their efforts to maintain their inclusive ethos. This is seen in the very good progress made by all groups of students.

The headteachers were proud of their schools' foci in further developing the EAL department and one headteacher argued that such a service is *'critical for schools with large numbers of pupils with EAL.'* The schools employed qualified and able EAL professionals who ensured students with EAL got the support they needed. Our observations and interviews with the staff suggested that the level of expertise within the schools to support students with learning English as an additional language was outstanding. The EAL coordinators were well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable and very committed to the profession. Specialist staff, for example those who support students with EAL, provided effective support during lessons and elsewhere. There were comprehensive packages of support for pupils with EAL which were initiated by rigorous scrutiny and analyses of students' performance data in order to appropriately target resources towards specific individuals or groups. Outcomes of such interventions were evaluated candidly and informed future planning. Overall, in these schools there was a strong culture of self-evaluation pervading all areas. The views of pupils, parents and students were sought regularly, were much valued and used to inform worthwhile changes. This can be clearly seen from the headteachers' interviews about what works, which is summarised below:

'Whatever backgrounds the pupils come from, we want to ensure they succeed. All pupils are given the opportunity.'

'We aim to ensure the cultural and linguistic heritages of pupils are welcomed and valued within the school curriculum.'

'We are very good in using data and monitoring progress and this has been useful in identifying pupils with EAL who are underachieving.' **(School A)**

There was a high commitment to ensuring that pupils with EAL were included in all activities and the care and concern for all pupils was of a high priority. Successful strategies to raise the achievement of EAL learners were put in place. Teachers, parents and pupils valued this and saw it as an important feature of the school.

All members of staff interviewed felt they were well supported by senior managers and knew who to go to for support and help. Overall there was a clear emphasis on collective responsibility in the school which ensured that senior and middle leaders were fully accountable for their areas and pupil progress. There were regular meetings with staff to discuss particular pupils in order to put strategies in place to address any issues raised. Their

impact was apparent in the good performance of pupils with EAL and very high standards for all. The exemplary relationships within the staff teams enabled the schools' performances to be monitored in a positive, supportive and constructive way. The schools had an accurate view of their performances and were able to identify priorities for future development.

Most importantly, in the words of one headteacher, *'equality of opportunity is at the core of school life'*. The schools' systems ensured that all groups of pupils achieved equally well. Staff worked efficiently, sensitively, and successfully to remove barriers to learning faced by large numbers of pupils. The schools pride themselves on their diversity. The staff have high expectations of their pupils and understand the value of bilingualism in raising achievement.

Two teachers agreed to be interviewed and asked for their perspective on the achievement of pupils with EAL at their school and perception of the school as a community.

Teacher A: *Teacher A was impressed by the sense of community which pervades the school, to which she felt welcomed. She feels the headteacher is a community leader and has made a big improvement to this school. Teacher A enjoys the diversity of the school population and has blossomed in the aspiring culture of the school community. (EAL Teacher, School H)*

Teacher B: *Teacher B is one of the longest serving members of staff. She works as a teacher of EAL and English and has for the past seven years been head of EAL. She is well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable and her work was highly praised by Ofsted in previous inspections. She feels the headteacher in our school is a community leader, is inspirational and ensures that the school has high aspirations for all its pupils regardless of their ability or background. 'I enjoy the diversity of the population in the school. I am the first person to be seen by pupils with EAL because of my role as head of EAL. One of my main roles is helping their parents as they can have difficulty with the English language. I am the first point of contact for parents with EAL when they are new to the school. Parents see how having a diverse workforce has made a big difference for the children and they are confident that they get help they need. A lot of this changed with the current headteacher and the school is now an outstanding school. This is highly appreciated by parents and community. I enjoy teaching in the school and supporting all pupils.' (EAL Teacher, School H)*

Effective teaching and learning in the classroom

Although each school had specialist staff to support pupils with EAL needs, it was evident that all staff, including senior managers and the teaching assistants, were responsible for their achievement and understood how high quality teaching for all pupils was synonymous with high quality practice for EAL learners. In the words of one headteacher: *'Whatever we do, everything is done from the EAL perspective...the EAL strategies are a good starting point with any child.'*

On entry to school all pupils with EAL were assessed in English, using the Lambeth Stages of English and National Curriculum descriptors. Their literacy and numeracy skills were also assessed in their first language to ensure that teaching was pitched at the appropriate cognitive level. Assessments led to individual target setting and additional interventions which might include tailored EAL talk sessions, one to one support, booster sessions and mentoring. Such interventions ran alongside, rather than instead of high quality EAL provision in the classroom. All staff were aware of pupils' developing English and planned for and supported them accordingly.

All staff adopted a holistic approach which incorporated a range of strategies known to be effective for learners with EAL. These included collaborative learning, a focus on talk and vocabulary development throughout the curriculum, an experiential curriculum and promotion of pupils' first languages in the classroom as a tool for learning. Pupils had many opportunities through planned talk and drama to use their home languages but also to develop and rehearse their English in a non-threatening environment before contributing to a larger audience or writing. Teachers created supportive learning environments in which learners felt safe to take risks when speaking both their first language and English. As one teacher, speaking as an EAL learner, suggested, *'If I don't feel safe, its putting me off speaking. I need to be able to make mistakes.'*

All schools had also reviewed their curriculums to ensure that they were appropriate, accessible and engaging for the diverse school communities. Pupils' learning was contextualised through experiences and visuals and was closely linked to a thematic approach to learning. Meticulously planned topics were introduced through stimulating experiences for example the superimposition of the dragon on the school roof or the discovery of a message in a bottle in a sand and shell strewn classroom. This not only made learning exciting but enabled children from all backgrounds to enjoy learning. This approach also make links between different subject areas so that children were learning in context and could apply their learning across different curriculum contexts. One teacher claimed, *'we wouldn't even consider starting something without visual support.'* There was attention paid to, *'how is it presented? What does it look like?'* (class teacher) Furthermore, prior to a new topic, vocabulary was identified and explored, displayed, modelled and added to, so that children would hear and use the target vocabulary within the different contexts across the curriculum. Learning sequences were then exemplified through working walls used as a tool for prompts during lessons, key vocabulary was evident throughout the schools and there was a focus on oral sentence structure.

In each school, there was a focus on talk throughout the curriculum, with language development promoted through adult modelling, talk partners, talk frames and the general expectation that pupils respond in full sentences. The role of collaborative learning in both cognitive and language development, was emphasised by all teachers as was their awareness of their own roles in providing good role models of English language. Pupils themselves were aware of the value of collaborative work for supporting their English development. One pupil suggested *'your partner has words and knows the language and you put your ideas together and learn the language and become better.'* Teachers identified that pairings and groupings were not only good to encourage use of pupils' home languages but also to provide good English language models and scaffolding for the EAL learners. One pupil concurred, suggesting, *'When I say a word wrong he corrects me and says try again and every day I learn a couple more words.'*

Talk frames were used to scaffold pupils' language to move them towards the written form and talk partners were used extensively to enable pupils to discuss and rehearse language. One school developed a focus on drama and oral rehearsal after modelling, supported by experience, visuals and objects. Planned talk, rather than opportunities for talk, underpinned all learning, to the point where one pupil commented on arrival, *'Everyone was talking so I could learn the word from them.'*

Teachers recognised the importance of supporting pupils with sentence structures orally, requiring pupils to respond in full sentences and recasting when grammatically incorrect. Issues in grammar were identified and addressed. One EAL co-ordinator stated:

'I encourage teaching of language structures through talk partners, with a focus on response. They must respond in the correct way in whole sentence answers. We rehearse the question together- I model first-they repeat, say it to their talk partner and then we focus on the

response. In the planets work for example we rehearsed the request, tell me a name for your planet and explain why it is a good name for it. The response was scaffolded for them but they needed to use the structure and conjunction 'because'- My planet is called- because -.' (Demie et al. 2008: 72)

This practice began in the Nursery where there was a recent project, 'Responding to Talk' which supported adults to refine children's responses into academic language and whole sentences during class discussion, or in small groups. In the Early Years, children learnt English through carefully planned opportunities to both hear and use English in meaningful activities and experiences. Adults scaffolded their learning through role play, songs and rhymes and circle activities, developing contextual understanding and providing essential repetition of the language focus. A teacher was observed reading the story, Dear Zoo to the children, in preparation for a visit to the Zoo. The teacher and children told the story together, exploring each page through questioning and modelling, focusing on the names and the body parts of the different animals. The chorus story telling was supported through toy animals in a story sack, gestures, actions and pictures on a board to which the teacher referred. A song also required pupils to use their newly required vocabulary independently; this gave the children opportunities to rehearse new vocabulary in meaningful contexts and become part of their language repertoire (Demie and Bellsham-Revell 2013).

KS1 and KS2 teachers also described how they focused on vocabulary development, especially when teaching reading, modelling it in context, repeating it throughout the day and through deliberate choices of texts so that pupils met academic language in texts, not just 'everyday language'. Prior to a new text, vocabulary is identified, displayed, modelled, referred to and added to. Pupils themselves referred to teacher modelling and contextualising as a strategy which helped them to do well. One child explained, *'she (the teacher) does it first on the board, on a different subject so we don't copy it and then do our own'* and another, *'the teacher explains clearly to us and we don't understand they draw it and give us examples.'* The teacher meanwhile explained how *'you have to constantly read faces for understanding; repeat, pair and group pupils so they can listen and understand.'*

Home languages were given priority in classrooms and used as a tool for learning. Pupils with the same languages were encouraged to support each other in class, and encouraged to use their first language through talk partners, drama and the Talk for Writing, an approach where they might develop and rehearse their English before contributing to a wider audience or writing. Pupils were encouraged to maintain and develop their home languages so that the skills learnt in their first languages were transferred to English. One example of this was one school's class prayer books. Children were encouraged to write a prayer in their home language with their families and to share these at school. As the teacher said, this encouraged children to *'hear the melodies in the languages. We are helping them to transfer their skills in their first language into English.'* The role that developing their first language played in developing English was clearly shown in the words of one child who was reflecting on the comparative grammatical systems: *'In English there is one way- how are you? But in Tigrinya there is one way for boys and one way for girls.'* (Demie and Bellsham-Revell 2013) It was evident in all the schools that children were happy to use their first languages in the classroom in a range of learning and social contexts.

Effective targeted support for EAL Pupils

Teamwork underpinned support for pupils with EAL needs in the schools. At termly learning assessment meetings, the needs of individual children and their EAL targets, drawn from the Stages of English assessments, were discussed with headteachers, deputy headteachers/ Inclusion managers and EAL staff, and interventions put into place and monitored regularly for effectiveness. In the schools designated EAL teachers, together with EAL support staff, many of whom were bilingual, supported teaching and learning. One school explained a clear rationale for the targets of support to pupils with EAL needs, advocating long term year group focused targeted, with sufficiently flexible timetables to meet the changing needs of the school. For example, in one school the bilingual teaching assistants were placed in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1, in order to help pupils build their confidence, encourage them to develop their first language in order to support their English and to build sustainable partnerships with parents. Schools emphasised the importance of distinguishing between EAL and SEN needs and described how progress through the stages of English is carefully monitored and unpicked to identify any learning difficulty. Where there is concern, an assessment of and through the first language using the mother tongue materials is carried out and interpreters are employed for meetings and assessments with outside agencies, demonstrating that there are clear protocols to differentiate between needs arising from learning EAL and those related to SEN and how this informs choice of provision.

Targeted support from EAL co-ordinators and EAL teachers: Many schools had a dedicated EAL co-ordinator, who was also a class teacher or assistant head, who had oversight for EAL provision throughout the school. In one school, where 20% of its school population was Portuguese speaking, the co-ordinator herself was of Portuguese origin and had come to the school originally as a Portuguese support teacher. Her promotion to a senior manager enabled Portuguese parents and pupils to see how their culture and heritage were valued at the school. She was also able to raise their profile at a strategic level and brought to the school a detailed understanding of the needs of the Portuguese community, the political climate in Portugal, the legacy of dictatorship, the changing nature of the community surrounding the school and how all these issues affect the pupils and their parents. This enabled her to devise a detailed action plan to empower Portuguese pupils, parents and staff to raise the achievement of the Portuguese pupils at the school (Demie et al. 2008).

She and other co-ordinators regularly observed class teachers with an EAL focus and discussed targets with teachers and teaching assistants to improve their future practice, as well as updating EAL registers and overseeing target setting for individual pupils. Many co-ordinators managed teaching assistants who worked under the EAL co-ordinators' and class teachers' direction. They trained assistants in specific strategies for EAL learners and were accountable for their ability to enhance the learning of pupils with EAL.

Thorough data analysis informed the EAL teachers' work across the schools. When allocated to a year group the EAL teacher attended planning meetings and identified new vocabulary and areas of challenge for pupils with EAL in the focus classes. One co-ordinator, *'Identified unfamiliar vocabulary for the new story 'Traction Man' and sourced objects for the teacher to use, when introducing the story.'* Furthermore, she identified language demands of the lesson and set language targets to move pupils from stage 2 to stage 3 fluency. These language targets were additional to their class targets and were shared with all members of staff. EAL teachers ensured that these aspects of language were modelled by the class teachers and were used by the pupils throughout the lessons. If there was any withdrawal work it was linked closely to the class work. This way of working had become ingrained across the schools. In the afternoons EAL teachers often worked with new arrivals, especially those at an early stage of learning English.

Targeted support from EAL Support staff: Highly skilled supporting adults had a unique role in the achievement of pupils with EAL in schools. Like the teachers, all had received specific training related to EAL pedagogy and teaching strategies. They had wide a range of roles including running induction programmes for newly arrived pupils, supporting pupils using their first language, teaching a modern foreign language and supporting learning in the classrooms. Many were also involved in both contributing to and planning partnership teaching with teachers through modelling language and such activities as hot seating, scaffolding and supporting pupils' learning. One teaching assistant explained, *'It is now an automatic process- we know what is needed, so we embed it automatically.'*

In one school support staff carried out work on special science projects with pupils with EAL needs which were experiential in nature. One example was the growing of seeds where there was plenty of opportunity for adult child interaction as there were 2 adults and 8 children. The teaching assistants taught the children age related academic vocabulary relating to the growth of seeds (Demie et al. 2008).

Whilst pupils might move quite quickly from fluency Stage 1 to secure Stage 2 they often then needed additional support to develop more demanding language for learning. Much group/1:1 work was done to this aim. One example involved a teaching assistant and teacher discussing how Stage 1 learners were 'chatty' in the playground but lacked confidence in classroom talk. Together they planned a series of short regular slots centred on group work which developed talk around a picture trigger, supported by adult modelling, sentence starters and then followed by supported writing. The pupils were then encouraged to use this learning in the classroom context. Similarly teaching assistants led a 'Talking Maths' programme, which developed use and understanding of language in Mathematics and was closely linked to class work when pupils were supported to use their learning in a whole class setting. Teaching assistants, many of whom were trained in grammar for EAL learners gave support to EAL learners with grammatical issues within EAL guided writing groups. They tailored the input of sessions to what children might need in their whole class sessions. Many of these teaching assistants also evaluated, monitored and recorded children's progress and reflected on how group work developed children's oral confidence.

Key adults and buddies, often teaching assistants, were also assigned to newly arrived pupils who had no knowledge of English, especially when they shared the same language. In one school these pupils were often given a set of key visual prompt keys to aid communication within their first days. In the words of one child, these included, *'the magic words, please, thank you, hello, I am sorry.'* Many teaching assistants also ran language clubs, taught mother tongue as a foreign language and provided interpreting when needed. One Spanish speaking assistant, for example, ran after school clubs in Spanish twice a week, taught Spanish as a Modern Foreign Language to year 3 during the day and supported new arrivals with EAL needs. Often the content of these language clubs mirrored the content of the curriculum, enabling the children to learn both in English and in their home language.

Targeted support from Learning Mentors: Learning Mentors also played a key role in breaking down barriers to learning for pupils with EAL needs across the schools. Mentors were aware of the need to gather full information about the pupils to inform their intervention and support. This sometimes involved researching the systems and practices of their home countries to ease transition into the English systems. Mentors also played a valuable role in supporting children who might be a bit slower to settle in school. Mentors were aware that working with the whole family was the key to success, ensuring that parents and school worked as a team to support the child. Many worked with the whole family, using trusted interpreters, to develop the resilience and motivation of pupils. In this vein they also supported parents to settle and develop their own skills through helping them to enrol in English classes.

Effective use of assessment data for monitoring and tracking EAL pupils

The use and analysis of EAL data was one of the most significant drivers for raising achievement and narrowing the gaps in the case study schools. There is evidence that individual teachers within the classroom used data for informing teaching and learning including lesson planning; to inform accurate targets for individual students, gender and ethnic groups; arranging groupings for teaching and learning; tracking progress of pupils and setting high expectations. As part of the case study we asked a question 'how effective is the school in using EAL data for improving the quality of teaching and learning?' To what extent the English proficiency assessment data is used for tracking progress of pupils with EAL to identify *support needs* and target interventions? The following response was given to the question posed by a number of teachers we interviewed:

'The school has a good system for assessing and mapping the progress of pupils with EAL at individual and group level. A wide range of data on English levels of fluency and National Curriculum levels are analysed by ethnicity, levels of fluency in English and gender, enabling the school to identify support needs and organise the deployment of resources appropriately, whether for pupils with EAL or underachieving groups.' (Deputy Headteacher, School C)

'The school assessment tracking spreadsheet 'strongly supports the school's main business of teaching and learning. The system can identify 'threshold' pupils and so trigger targeted interventions. Teachers' record progress as points linked to National Curriculum levels or predicted GCSE grades. Using red, amber and green to indicate 'actual' against 'expected' levels of progress and attainment is clear and easy to grasp, which is useful in discussions with parents.' (Data Manager, School H)

'There is a strong focus on learning in the school to make sure no student with EAL falls behind. Through detailed monitoring and tracking, students with EAL who fall below the expected level or are at risk of falling behind, are quickly identified and individual needs are targeted. All students are assessed carefully using LA stages of fluency in English to ensure that they receive the appropriate provision and are making the required progress.' (Head of EAL Department, School H)

This research also confirmed similar findings in other case study schools and indicated that the schools have a well-developed effective pupil tracking and monitoring management information systems. All teachers had tracking sheets for pupils, identifying types of support, previous school and favourite subjects. In particular the EAL Department's sheet included detailed background information data such as date of birth, place of birth, date of arrival in UK, ethnic background, home language, stage of fluency in English, date of admission, attendance rate, eligibility for free school meals, SEN stage, mobility rate and years in school to track the progress of groups and individuals, and to ensure that no pupil became 'invisible'. Data can be retrieved in many combinations and at any time, which makes the assessment database a valuable management tool, for example, in reviewing the impact of provision those with English as an additional language.

Overall our observation, interviews and evidence during the case studies suggested that in these schools, teachers make effective use of data to evaluate the quality of provision and to identify and provide targeted support for differentiated groups of students. The schools are particularly 'forensic' in monitoring the progress of particular groups for example boys, those receiving free school meals (FSM), those with special educational needs (SEN), or students with English as an additional language. The interventions employed in the school where data analysis had highlighted issues to be addressed included providing additional provision including one-to-one support and making changes to the teaching programme, such as, more personalised or differentiated teaching to meet the needs

of pupils with EAL. As a result, pupils with EAL make rapid progress and achieved outstanding results at GCSE, the extent to which is illustrated below:

Case Study A: *'Pupil A speaks Urdu as a mother tongue and came from India. He was at beginner (Stage 1) level of fluency in English when he started his primary education at in Lambeth. Through targeted support which included one to one support and booster classes, his language fluency improved fast. At GCSE he achieved A* in Chemistry, English Language, English Literature, Spanish and D&T Textiles Tech; with A grades in Biology, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Religious Studies, Citizenship. He also achieved C in Applied ICT and Study Skills.'* *The secondary school has made a big impact on Pupil A. He is one of the high flying students with EAL. In addition to excellent performance in threshold results and his value-added progression between KS2 and GCSE, was also excellent and top of the national league table.'* **(School F)**

Case Study B: *'Pupil B is Black African of Somali heritage and arrived in the UK. She attended primary school in Lambeth and was assessed as stage 2 when she took the KS2 tests, that is, she required considerable English support to access the National Curriculum. As a result of her English language barrier, her results at KS2 showed that she achieved no level in English, L2 in mathematics and L4 in science. However, with well-targeted support at secondary school this has changed considerably. Through one to one, booster classes and in class support, her level of English fluency improved to stage 4 (fully fluent) by the time she took GCSE examinations. The school's support was considerable and this helped her to achieve B in History, Mathematics, Religious Studies, Science; C in English language, English Literature, French, Citizenship and Sociology.'* *This is a remarkable achievement for a child who had only six years in the English Education system.'* **(School F)**

Case Study C: *'Pupil C came from Portugal and attended primary school in Kensington and Chelsea. She speaks Portuguese at home and was fluent in English by the time she completed Key Stage 2, gaining Level 4+ in English, maths and science. Through targeted support which included booster classes, one to one tuition, and in class intervention, she achieved 'A's at GCSE in French, mathematics and Portuguese, 'B' in English literature, 'C' in English language, business studies, economics, religious studies and science; 'D' in arts and design (textiles). What is particularly special about Pupil A is that her value added score tops national expectations and she has shown excellent progress between KS2 and GCSE.'* **(School G)**

Case Study D: *'Pupil D speaks Spanish and Portuguese. On arrival in the school during Year 10 she was assessed as a stage 2 speaker of English and needed considerable English language support to access the National Curriculum. Her target for GCSE was 'A' in Portuguese and Spanish, 'CC' in science, 'C' in English. Having been able to choose literacy and numeracy as options in Year 10 allowed her to consolidate her maths and English skills and boost her confidence. The EAL department worked in partnership with English, maths and science liaising closely with her teachers. As a result, she performed better than her targets and achieved A* in Spanish, 'A' in Portuguese, 'BB' in science and 'C' in English.'* *This is an outstanding achievement for someone who needed considerable support in English when she joined the school. It also confirms that additional targeted support has been effective in improving the achievement of pupil D.'* **(School G)**

Case Study E: *'Pupil E is Black African and of Somali heritage. She attended a primary school in Lambeth. She speaks Somali at home and was completely new to English on arrival. Her English fluency improved rapidly and she achieved level 5+ in English, maths and science at the end of KS2. Through effective targeted support at school, she achieved A* in English language,*

English literature, French, biology, chemistry, history, mathematics, physics, religious studies; A grades in additional maths, citizenship, statistics, and B in study skills. The school has made a big impact on her learning and academic progress and her value added score topped national expectations.’ (School H)

Case Study F: *‘Child F is a pupil with EAL who speaks Portuguese at home. She came from Portugal with no English on arrival in the school. In year 5 she was assessed as stage 3 level of fluency suggesting that she needed some support to develop more academic English. The school targeted her language development in maths, English and science and provided additional support through interventions. As a result she got level 5 in both reading and writing. She was very pleased with her performance and she went to thank all the teachers and teaching assistants for their support. This was indeed a great achievement for EAL pupils with no English when joined the school.’ (School C)*

Case Study G: *‘Child G came from Poland and speaks Polish at home. He had no English on arrival in the school and was assessed as a stage 1 beginner. His records for KS1 suggest that he was assessed as W for reading and writing and 2C in maths. At the beginning of Year 6, his level of fluency in English was 3, suggesting that he needed some support to develop more academic language. With additional EAL support from the teachers and TAs he achieved level 4 in English and level 5 in maths in the KS2 test results. This is indeed an excellent achievement for a pupil who arrived with no English.’ (Deputy Headteacher, School C)*

Case Study H: *‘Pupil H started school in 2003 in the Nursery with no previous experience in English. He speaks Tigrinya, a language that is spoken in Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia. However, following 1:1 and additional support in the school, he was assessed as stage 4 fully fluent in English in Year 6. He was a high achiever at KS1 and KS2. His KS1 data shows that he achieved Level 3 in reading, 2A in writing and maths. At KS2 his performance was as predicted and he achieved level 5 in both English and maths. This is an excellent achievement for a child with no English at the time of starting in school.’ (School C)*

Case Study I: *‘Pupil I is a pupil with EAL and speaks Yoruba at home. She came from Nigeria and was assessed at a beginner stage when she joined the school nursery in 2004. In Year 6 she was further assessed as stage 3 level of fluency suggesting that she needed some additional support to develop more academic English. The school targeted her language development in maths, English and science and provided additional support through interventions, booster classes, one to one tuition, in-class intervention and support from a teaching assistant. Her records for KS1 suggest that she was assessed as 1 in reading and writing and 2B in maths. However, as a result of EAL support she achieved level 5 in maths and level 4 in English at end of Year 6. This was indeed a good achievement for someone with stage 3 level of fluency in English to achieve level 4 in the English test.’ (School C)*

Case Study J: *Pupil J, a beginner stage 1 in English, having no knowledge of English when he joined primary. Initial assessments through Portuguese indicated that he had a well-developed first language and was working at a level appropriate for his age. In conjunction with his class teacher an action plan was developed and he was encouraged to attend the Portuguese club, where teaching linked with the content of the classroom. He continued to write in Portuguese, with the Portuguese speaking teacher marking and discussing next steps with him and also how to transfer his learning into English. By the end of Year 6, he achieved Level 5 in English and Maths.’ (School D)*

In conclusion, we would argue that supporting teachers to raise the achievement of pupils with EAL through effective use of data is a strong focus of the schools. The extent to which the schools used data for monitoring and tracking EAL pupils' progress was evident not only in the data shown above, but also in the discussions held with pupils, teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors, Inclusion managers, EMA coordinators and EAL teachers. The case study schools were highly effective at analysing data in order to identify EAL pupils who were at risk of underachieving. The excellent range of support provided has had a positive impact on the achievement of pupils with EAL and those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable.

Effective use of pupil voice

The case study schools have established a culture where all children and young people have a voice and have the opportunity to play an active role in the decisions that affect their learning and wellbeing. We interviewed twenty five EAL pupils in secondary case study schools from each of years 8, 9, 10 and 11 during the research regarding their attitude to and views about their school and education. As part of pupil voice we explored the following questions with them:

- *Do you enjoy coming to school?*
- *What do you like about your school and*
- *What has helped you to do well at school?*

The overwhelmingly positive response from pupils in all the case study schools was that they enjoy coming to schools, they like their teachers and appreciate their kindness, the exciting activities they take part in and how teachers are helping them with their work, as expressed in the following quotes:

'Do you enjoy coming to school?'

- 'Yes, because you get to socialise and learn things'*
- 'Each day we learn something new'*
- 'You learn useful stuff for the future'*
- 'People are more friendly – I get a lot of help'*
- 'You make friends easily'*
- 'I like this school because it is a very good school'*
- 'The school is a mixture of adults, teenagers and younger pupils – I really like coming'*
- 'There's lots of clubs after school.'*

'What has helped you do well at school?'

- 'I have good help for speak English'*
- 'In the beginning in this school I didn't know how to speak in English but Miss helps me a lot'*
- 'Other teachers put keywords on the board'*
- 'In this school we celebrate every country's National Day. It really shows the school respects where they come from – that they care.'*
- 'Because you have your friends here'*
- 'We can get education from school and good qualifications.'*
- 'Because the school has helped me learn English'*
- 'There's good schools here so you get a good education.'*

Overall as can be seen from the comments above, the EAL pupils in secondary schools felt they received a good education and considered the school to be a happy and harmonious place. It was also noticeable that pupils, some of whom had been in the UK for a year or less were already speaking English with a fair degree of accuracy. All had attended school prior to coming to England and some had studied English in the past. All recent arrivals were literate in another language.

We asked similar questions to forty five EAL pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 in primary schools as part of the focus group, from a wide range of heritage groups. They commented during the focus group discussion that:

'I enjoy school'

'I like going to school'

I like my teachers and teaching assistants'

'I like my teachers. They help in this school and also give you good examples to understand'

'There are different teachers who speak other language in addition of English and they help you'

'It is a fun place to study. The teachers explain to you well and they help you to get it'

'I learn lots of things about other cultures' and 'things I didn't know about my own culture.'

'Everybody gets the same opportunity. It doesn't matter what background or colour.'

'This school pushes all of us hard and makes us achieve high grades'

'Teachers encourage us to do our best'

'Teachers helped us with booster class and prepare us for our secondary transfer.'

'I like the school because you get caring teachers. They help us and they are kind.'

'You can go to the teachers if you have a problem'

'I like teachers in our school'

'I like this school because children respect teachers.'

Overall the pupil voice evidence suggests that the children in the case study schools were clearly very happy with their school experience and the schools they attend are a happy and harmonious place. EAL pupils have an overwhelmingly positive attitude to learning and they contribute to excellent progress. They felt valued and treated equally. The pupils rated the care, guidance and support the school provided as good during the focus group discussion. They were proud of the school and the staff, and were happy and enthusiastic and felt secure at school. They are confident, articulate and accomplished learners.

We would also argue that there are a lot of pupil voice surveys and consultations in the case study schools. In these schools the views are sought through school council meetings with SMT, pupil questionnaires, parent questionnaires, target setting days and consultations. They are much valued and used to inform a worthwhile change in the schools. Headteachers are keen for the children to have a greater say on the way the school is seen and greater involvement in their learning right. The following comments by a Headteacher captures the way pupil voice is used in the case study schools and offers support of the conclusions raised in this paper:

'Every pupil is expected and encouraged to achieve their full potential by teachers. We use pupil voice to inform the school self-review and to provide an additional targeted support.'
(Headteacher, School G)

4. Conclusions and implications for practice and research

This study looks at schools that serve EAL pupils and examines the success factors behind their successful achievement. Two overarching research questions guided this research: Why do some schools succeed against the odds? What are the factors contributing to this success?

A complementary methodological approach was used to explore performance and the views of teachers, parents and their children about schooling. Firstly, using an ethnographic approach to research, case studies were carried out to observe lessons and to hold discussions with headteachers, staff, governors and pupils to evaluate and gather evidence on how well all pupils were achieving and the factors contributing to this. The main method of data collection was open ended semi-structured interviews with senior management, teachers, administrative staff and support staff as well as pupils. Secondly, pupil and parent focus groups were undertaken to ascertain the views of pupils and parents regarding their experiences and on what worked to raise their achievement in school. The main findings of the research identified the following factors and key areas of good practices.

One of the key factors noted where schools were successful in raising achievement of pupils with EAL, is the strong leadership with a focus on equality and diversity. At all the case study schools, the ethos of the Headteacher and senior managers was effectively communicated to the school community, including support staff, governors, parents and students. A strong culture of self-evaluation pervaded all areas of the schools. At senior level it was particularly incisive. It was underpinned by a drive to get the best possible outcomes for each pupil. All school leaders challenged negative attitudes and refused to accept educational failure. Vision and ethos was communicated by senior managers in both overt and more implicit ways in the schools. The physical environment, with positive images and an orderly structure, contributed to this communication. A more tangible quality was the respect shown by staff to students and parents that enabled pupils to express high aspirations for themselves and regard for staff at the schools. For EAL pupils, this was communicated in terms of valuing their own cultural identity which was fostered through the general ethos and particular structures at the schools, including diverse staff, sensitive use of learning mentors and making links with community organisations. All the schools were in the process of developing positive relationships with stakeholders and the wider community.

What is more in these schools there was an attention to the needs of each individual pupil that created trust and respect amongst parents and a sense of belonging amongst pupils. At all schools the leadership *'has developed a sense of family which includes a diverse community of people, under a common vision of learning for all'* (Headteacher). The schools supported and celebrated the diversity of their pupils and an environment where there is mutual respect and strong, trusting relationships, and where pupils now achieved very highly.

There are also other success factors that helped in raising the achievement of pupils with EAL. The findings of our study suggested that the case study schools were effective in providing targeted support to improving EAL pupils' language skills to access the national curriculum. In these schools teaching and learning was also of high quality and informed by assessment of performance. The schools recognised that proficiency in English was the key to educational success for their bilingual learners and were effective in supporting this. All schools took strong action to help children acquire fluency in English as soon as possible, recognising that this was the first barrier to achievement that must be overcome. All schools chose their staff with care from a wide diversity of ethnic minority backgrounds, so that teachers and teaching assistants, as well as other school staff, provided good role models and showed understanding of their pupils' difficulties. The level of expertise within the school to support pupils with was good. The EAL Co-ordinators were well

qualified, experienced and knowledgeable. Staff were also well-aware of the needs of those learners who speak English as an additional language. Consequently, the EAL pupils' needs were met in lessons and targets for their literacy needs set regularly. These learners made very good progress during their time in school.

The use of performance data for school improvement was also a strength of the case study schools. All the schools had effective pupil assessment procedures which were detailed, relevant and constantly updated to reflect staff feedback. Each school also focused on tracking and monitoring EAL pupils' progress and achievement throughout their school life and collected test and assessment data followed by background data such as ethnic background, language spoken, level of fluency in English, data of admission, attendance rate, eligibility for free school meals, EAL stage of fluency, SEN stage, mobility rate, years in school, which teacher's classes have been attended, attendance rate, types of support, and postcode data. This data was used to set challenging targets for attainment. Early intervention and a wide range of support mechanisms were in place to help pupils achieve them including booster groups, one to one, tailoring teaching levels, mentoring.

Overall, the evidence presented here enables the conclusion to be drawn that the schools in this study demonstrate the many ways in which they work to support pupils, from all EAL backgrounds through a wide range of imaginative and inclusive strategies. The most effective practice was evident where EAL teachers conducted robust assessments with pupils and kept a register with detailed information concerning pupils' first language, level of fluency in English and other relevant data. This data was regularly updated so that pupils' progress could be tracked. Additionally, the communication of these assessments to teachers and support staff enabled pupils to be supported more effectively in their learning.

It was very clear from our research that EAL was at the heart of each schools' culture, as one Headteacher stated:

The key thing about EAL is that it permeates everything that we do. It is not an add-on. It has to be part of the school culture.... The provision for pupils with EAL is the responsibility of everyone. As a staff we don't see it as a challenge we see it as an opportunity. We have all these children with EAL, what a wonderful opportunity to share our languages and our cultures.' **(School G)**

There are however, some limitations to this study. While we do not aim to make generalisations from these case studies, we would argue learning from their good practice can make a difference to other schools. Each school had its own character and emphasis but it is clear, from the evidence of the study, that they have common characteristics which underpin their success, including:

- Strong leadership on equality and diversity;
- Effective support to pupils for whom English is an additional language, by trained and experienced teachers;
- Detailed, rigorous examination of performance undertaken regularly and followed by action that leads to improvement;
- Teaching and learning of high quality informed by assessment of performance;
- A broad curriculum which incorporates aspects of pupils' own culture and adds relevance and self-esteem to pupils' views of themselves;
- Teachers and staff from ethnic minority and EAL backgrounds who provide role models for pupils and who understand their needs.

We would argue this needs to be treated as emerging evidence for further research as our study is based on a small number of case study schools. Extending and developing more research into good practice research in raising achievement of specific groups of pupils would be welcomed. The recommendation from this study is that there is a need for additional longitudinal studies using ethnographic approach in different schools, Local Authorities and regions in England to get wider picture. Such research is useful for policy makers and schools to provide more evidence on 'what works' which are relevant to teachers' practical concerns.

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