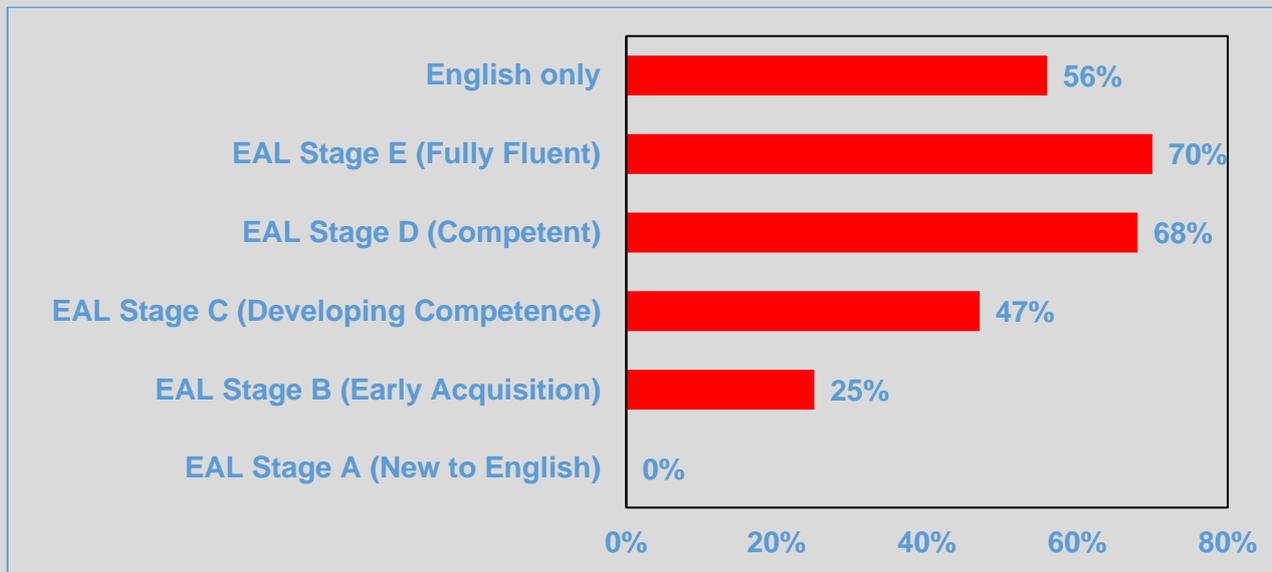


# ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ATTAINMENT OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE PUPILS IN SCHOOLS

## Research Brief

This research paper aims to examine the relationship between English Proficiency and attainment of English as An Additional Language pupils using new national proficiency scale. The study considers empirical evidence from an inner London Local Authority (LA). The data for EAL proficiency was collected from 17,571 EAL pupils. The sample for performance analysis consisted of 2,957 pupils who had completed Key Stage 2 (KS2) and 1,953 GCSE. The main findings of the empirical revealed that:

- 49% of pupils in primary schools and 47% in secondary schools were classed as English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils in the case study Local Authority.
- Of the 17,571 EAL pupils for whom English proficiency information was collected in all schools in the LA, about 8.3% were on Stage A (New to English), 16.2% Stage B (Early Acquisition), 23.3% Stage C (Developing Competence), 23.2% Stage D (Competent), and 29.0% fully fluent in English. Furthermore 52% pupils in all LA schools were English only speakers. The data also shows that about a third of EAL pupils were assessed as fully fluent in English and nearly 50% were assessed as stage D (competent) and Stage E (fluent) overall in the LA.
- There are more Key Stage 1 EAL pupils at low levels of English proficiency than for later key stages. During Key Stage 2, more EAL pupils are at proficiency stages D and E, and by the time they reach secondary school the majority of EAL pupils are fully fluent in English (stage E) and there are far fewer pupils at the early stages of English proficiency. This is further supported by the current study which suggests that the majority of EAL pupils are between stage C and E at KS2, and D and E at the end of secondary education.
- The KS2 attainment data using the new national EAL proficiency stages in England shows that no-one at stage A (New to English) achieved the expected standard of achievement compared to 12% at stage B (Early Acquisition), 56% at stage C (Developing Competency), 66% at stage D (Competent) and 85% at stage E (Fluent in English). Overall the results of the KS2 analysis show that the percentage of pupils attaining expected outcomes in each subject at the end of primary education increases as the stage of proficiency in English increases. Across Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM), those who were new to English or at early acquisition show very low attainment, but achievement improves as proficiency in English improves. The achievement of EAL pupils who are fully fluent in English (Stage E) continues to be high, with their 2017 RWM outcome being 14% above English only pupils and 16% above the overall test average for all pupils.
- Similar findings also emerged from the analysis of GCSE data at the end of secondary education. Overall the data shows that no-one at stage A (New to English) achieved 5+A\*-C including English and Maths, compared to 25% of pupils at stage B (Early Acquisition), 47% at stage C (Developing Competency), 68% at stage D (Competent) and 70% at stage E (Fluent in English). EAL pupils who are fully fluent in English performed better than English only speakers. About 76% of EAL pupils at stage E (fully fluent) achieved 5+A\*-C including English and maths compared with 56% of monolingual English only speakers. There is a 20 percent achievement gap between fully fluent EAL pupils and monolingual English speakers. The LA GCSE data also confirms that there is a strong relationship between stages of proficiency in English and attainment. The percentage of pupils attaining 5+A\*-C increased as stage of proficiency in English increased.



Overall the findings of the research confirm that English language proficiency is the major factor influencing the performance of pupils with English as an additional language. The results suggest that the percentage of pupils attaining expected outcomes or above at KS2 and GCSE increased as stage of proficiency in English increased. Pupils in the early stages of English proficiency performed at low levels, while the achievement of EAL pupils who were fully fluent in English far outstripped that of pupils for whom English was their only language. The overall conclusion from the study is that the national EAL pupils' English proficiency stages is useful as a diagnostic tool to analyse needs for future teaching focus, tracking progress and to provide baseline information for statistical purposes at national level.

Finally the study argues that the introduction of the national EAL proficiency stages for monitoring and tracking EAL performance in England by central government as a statutory requirement in the School Census in 2017 is a major step in the right direction in addressing the needs of EAL pupils. Our study represents a beginning into examining the relationship between English proficiency and attainment in England, and it is our hope that it is a springboard for further research. However, as with all new assessment systems, it has strengths and weaknesses and there is a need to be cautious. It may take a few years for the national EAL stages to become fully established in schools data returns. This study identified some limitations and questions for future research including: Who should assess EAL pupils? Why are learners sometimes remaining at one stage for a longer time? What are the right times to assess EAL pupils? What are the implications of EAL assessment for training and moderation? How long do pupils stay in each stage of English? To what extent a variety of scales used by some organisations and linked to the DfE Proficiency Scale to assess EAL pupils raise statistical noise in the national data? The implications of these research questions for policy and practice are discussed critically in the paper.

#### Notes for editors

1. The findings are published in a research report entitled '**English Language Proficiency and Attainment of English as an Additional Languages Pupils in England.**'
2. The research was carried out by Dr Feyisa Demie, Head of Research and Adviser for school self-evaluation at Lambeth LA.
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