

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE AND ATTAINMENT IN SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND

Research Brief

English as an Additional Language (EAL) attracts much interest among policy makers and educationists and yet little is known about the performance of EAL pupils who are not fluent in English and who speak different languages at home. The findings of the analysis of 544,220 pupils' KS2 results and 558,432 pupils' KS4 results in England by language spoken at home and levels of fluency in English suggest that:-

- EAL pupils not fluent in English achieve significantly below the national average compared to monolingual English speakers in English schools.
- There is a wide variation in performance between regions in England with large attainment gaps in the Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands, South West and the North West regions.
- A further analysis of the EAL data by languages spoken at home suggests over 208 languages are spoken in English schools. Of the Black African language groups, Lingala, Somali, Shona, Ndebele and Krio speakers were the lowest achieving groups while the Igbo, Yoruba, Luganda, Twi-Fante, Tigrinya and English speaking Black African pupils achieved better than White British and the national average. Within the Asian EAL groups the highest performing language groups were the Indian languages Telugu and Marathi speakers followed by Korean, Chinese, Hindi, Malayalam, Sinhala and Japanese speakers. Within the White Other category, there is a large variation in performance depending on the language that is spoken. The highest achieving groups were west European language speakers of German, Dutch, French and Swedish, who all outperformed pupils who had English as a first language. The lowest achieving groups were from Eastern Europe including Russian, Polish, Albanian, Czech, Slovak and Romy speaking pupils, with very few in these groups achieving expected outcomes. Also low-performing were Romanian, Latvian, Hungarian and Lithuanian speaking pupils with barely half of their pupils achieving expected levels. Of the larger European language groups in English schools, Polish, Portuguese, Turkish and Kurdish speakers were achieving below the national average.
- An examination of level of fluency in English on pupil performance also confirms that there is a strong relationship between the stage of fluency in English and educational attainment. The results suggest that the percentage of pupils attaining level 4 or above at KS2 or 5 or more A*-C at KS4 increased as stage of proficiency in English increased. Pupils in the early stages of fluency performed at low levels, while EAL pupils who were fully fluent in English far outstripped those of pupils for whom English was their only language.

Overall the conclusion from this study suggests that language barriers remain the key factor affecting the performance of EAL pupils in English schools. We would argue that the worryingly low achievement of EAL pupils who are not fluent in English has been masked by failure of government statistics to distinguish EAL pupils by stages of fluency in English and languages spoken at home.

The recommendations from our findings are that if England is serious about tackling pupil underachievement in schools, policy makers need to recognise the importance of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Such data is fundamental in identifying which ethnic and linguistic groups are most at risk of underachievement and to design specific interventions that will be effective in raising achievement, whatever their background.

Notes for editors

1. The research was carried out by Dr Feyisa Demie, Head of Research and Adviser for school self-evaluation at Lambeth LA.
2. The findings are published in a research report entitled 'English as an Additional Language and Attainment in Schools in England.'
3. The findings will be shared at the following national EAL conference (see below)

English as an Additional Language: Barriers and Good Practice in Narrowing the Achievement Gap

NATIONAL EAL CONFERENCE— 23 February 2017 (9.00am-3.30pm)
Jeffery Hall, UCL Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

This conference aims to improve teaching and learning for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in the classroom. It looks in detail at the attainment, the barriers to learning and school strategies to raise the achievement of pupils with EAL in schools. Specialist primary and secondary workshops will also explore the conference themes and EAL assessment practice.

CHAIR & INTRODUCTION

Cathy Twist, Director of Education, Lambeth LA
Professor Becky Francis, Director of UCL Institute of Education

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

English as an Additional Language and Education Achievement in England
Professor Steve Strand, Department of Education, University of Oxford
Assessing EAL: Effective School Strategies and Practice
Manny Vazquez, EAL Consultant, Hounslow Language Service

HEADTEACHERS' PANEL:

Tackling the Barriers to Learning of EAL Learners - What Works?

Edison David, Headteacher,
Vauxhall Primary School, Lambeth LA
Kate Atkins, Headteacher,
Rosendale Primary School, Lambeth LA
Elizabeth Rymer, Headteacher,
Whitefield Secondary School, Barnet LA

EAL PROFESSIONALS' PANEL:

EAL - Where Are We Now?

Diana Sutton,
Director of The Bell Foundation
Diane Leedham, EAL Consultant
Feyisa Demie, Head of Research
and Adviser for School Self-Evaluation,
Lambeth LA

WORKSHOPS:

What Works in Assessing and Raising Achievement of EAL Pupils

Catharine Driver, Language and Literacy
Consultant and Trainer and Ann Horton, EAL
Leader, Lambeth Academy
Amanda Bellsham-Revell, EAL Consultant
and Ana Banks, EAL Leader, St Anne's Primary
School, Lambeth LA

For a booking form, please visit:

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/rsu/raising-achievement-conferences>

For further information, please call 020 7926 9448 or email fdemie@lambeth.gov.uk