The Impact of School Closures on Pupils with English as an Additional Language

Evidence from teaching staff, school leaders, pupils and parents

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Contents

Tables and Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Why EAL matters?

Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) attract a great deal of interest among policymakers, school leaders and teachers, yet there are relatively few studies that have examined EAL attainment and the impact of Covid 19. This issue is increasingly important for EAL policy development, given the growth in the EAL population in England since 1997 (see Table 1.1). EAL learners are an extremely diverse group, encompassing the full range of English language proficiency, from new to English to fluent. There are currently 1.6 million pupils with EAL in England (DfE 2021) speaking over 350 languages. The evidence from table 1.1 shows that the percentage of pupils recorded as speaking English as an additional language has more than trebled since 1997. This is about 19% of the school population (DfE, 2021).

Table 1.1. EAL population in state-funded primary and secondary schools in England 1997–2021

	PRIMARY		SECONDARY		TOTAL (Pri/Sec)	
	EAL No.	EAL %	EAL No.	EAL %	EAL No.	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	1,048,310	15.9
2014	654,405	18.7	455,205	14.3	1,109,610	16.6
2015	693,815	19.4	477,286	15.0	1,171,101	17.4
2016	734,355	20.1	499,061	15.7	1,233,416	18.0
2017	771,083	20.6	520,083	16.2	1,291,166	18.6
2018	998,829	21.2	539,895	16.6	1,538,724	19.3
2019	1,002,292	21.2	561,002	16.9	1,563,294	19.4
2020	1,002,387	21.3	584,565	17.1	1,586,952	19.5
2021	975,238	20.9	601,238	17.2	1,576,476	19.3

Source: DfE (2021)

The UK Government has recognised changes that have taken place in the EAL school population, including the trebling of EAL pupil numbers since 1997. In a policy statement, it spelled out its policy on EAL education and argued that: 'the aim of the Government policy is to promote rapid language acquisition and include children learning EAL in mainstream education as quickly as possible. We believe that English should be the medium of instruction in schools' (DfE 2012, 1). However, recent research suggests that the government does not have a clear educational policy to support pupils with EAL to access the national curriculum and introduce national EAL assessment systems (Demie 2018).

Another policy concern is that there is no assessment system in England that can be used to look at attainment by English proficiency at a national level. However, stages of English proficiency have been widely used to describe the different stages of English throughout the 1990s and 2000s (see Hester 1993; Demie 2019, 2013) and there are different local EAL assessment systems. Some schools and local authorities use stages and descriptors based on the "Centre for Learning Primary Education" (CLPE) or the previous DfE's five stages of English proficiency scale. Others use "The Northern Association of Support Services for Equality and Achievement" (NASSEA 2001) EAL assessment system descriptors or "The Bell Foundation (2017) Stages" descriptors. Although NASSEA and The Bell Foundation have descriptors linked to the five DfE stages of English proficiency, they are supplemented with additional descriptors. We would argue this could raise statistical noise and as far as we know, NASSEA and the Bell Foundation assessment systems have not yet produced baseline statistical information that may be used for research purposes at local authority and national level. Despite the growth of the EAL school population in England, little research has been done at national level in England to develop an EAL assessment system.

1.2 Literature review

However, a review of literature suggests that in the United States, particularly in New York State, California and Minnesota, schools use a well-developed assessment of English proficiency and standardised proficiency tests for the purposes of identifying children with EAL in need of additional support and progress monitoring (Hutchison 2018; Demie and Strand 2006). In other English-speaking education systems in New Zealand, New South Wales and Alberta, assessment is also conducted by teachers using frameworks which describe stages or levels of language development, differentiated by year group or phases (Hutchison 2018; Cummins 1992). In these countries, EAL learners are assessed with their English language proficiency needs when they first arrive at school to identify student needs and inform planning for teaching and then periodically throughout the year to determine how their language proficiency is developing. We would argue that English language proficiency scales that are used by the other English-speaking countries, show that it is a key factor in predicting attainment. Other research in the UK at a local level has also consistently shown that proficiency in English can provide essential information about an EAL learner's likelihood to succeed in school and potential need for support (Strand & Demie, 2005; Strand, Malmberg & Hall, 2015; Strand & Hessel, 2018).

Recent studies have also examined the effect of stages of English proficiency on attainment at Key Stage 2 (KS2) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) at the local authority level using the previous DfE stages of English proficiency scale. For example, the analyses of the national KS2 test results and GSCE examination results for pupils in an inner London LA by levels of English proficiency 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 Demie 2020, 2019, 2017; Strand and Demie 2005; Demie and Strand 2006). However, pupils with EAL who were fully fluent in English consistently achieved significantly higher scores in all KS2 tests and GCSE exams than their monolingual English speaking peers. The negative association with attainment at the early stages of English proficiency 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 were considered, although these factors effectively explained differences with the higher attainment of the 'fully fluent' group. The two studies concluded that there is a strong relationship between stage of proficiency in English and educational attainment, with the performance of bilingual pupils increasing as measured stage of proficiency in English increases. Pupils at the early stages of fluency in English perform at very low levels, while bilingual pupils who are fully fluent in English perform better, on average, than English only speakers (see Strand and Demie 2005; Demie and Strand 2006; Demie 2020).

There is also a wealth of research on how long it takes to acquire English fluency for pupils with English as an additional language, particularly in North America. For example, Collier (1989); Cummins (1992) research findings suggest that it takes five to seven years in education for bilingual pupils to become fully competent in a second language and to catch up with their native peers. These findings on *'how long does it take to acquire English proficiency'* are also supported by Demie (2013) UK research in a London local authority which suggests that *'It takes on average 'five to seven years to become fully competent in a second language.'* (Demie 2013:1).

There isn't much research into the impact of Covid on EAL learners, but there is growing evidence around the impact of school closures on the learning outcomes of pupils. Overall, previous studies show widespread concern about the impact of school closure due to Covid 19 on disadvantaged pupils (NFER 2021; RS assessment 2021; DfE, 2021; EPI 2021, 2020). The Education Endowment Foundation research (EEF, 2020a) suggests that the past decade's progress in closing the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils has stalled and is likely to be reversed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is further supported by the IFS evidence which confirms that school closures have increased educational inequalities.

However, we would argue that in addition to the challenges posed by the lockdown in relation to pupils being behind normal expectations of where they might be and on top of the learning loss experienced by disadvantaged children, EAL learners may be uniquely affected with many also experiencing a language learning delay/loss. This has compounded their struggles to access the curriculum and lessons provided during home-schooling. There is new evidence showing that during the lockdown, EAL learners had less exposure to the English language and had fewer opportunities to speak, read and write in English. Recent research (Scott, 2021:7) also reported that , among those teachers who were able to comment, 69 per cent reported a negative impact of school closures on the language skills of learners using EAL; 15 per cent of primary and 22 per cent of secondary teachers also reported that learners using EAL lost confidence to speak to their peers or in class. These teacher surveys also found that across all schools:

- *"54% saw a loss in writing skills*
- *50% saw a loss in speaking skills*
- *41% saw a loss in reading skills*
- *36% saw a loss in listening skills." (*Scott 2021:7)

The Department for Education recently published the findings of EPI (2021) research on the impact of Covid-19 and school closure on pupils with EAL. The report which is based on teacher surveys found that 74% of primary school staff and 59% of secondary staff reported a negative impact of school closures on pupils with English as an additional language in speaking and listening, reading and viewing, and writing. The study particularly found that in reading, they experienced a learning loss of approximately 2–3 months for secondary-aged pupils, compared to an average learning loss in secondary reading of around 1.7 months, reinforcing the challenges that schools face in supporting our EAL learners during catch-up.

A recent BERA blogpost by Demie (2021) based on an interim research report of the impact of Covid and school closure on EAL shows that pupils with EAL face both the subject learning loss experienced by disadvantaged children and a language learning loss. The results indicate that Covid has created the largest disruption to EAL learners' education and they are left substantially behind not only in developing English proficiency but in closing the attainment gap. Of concern, is that there is a large and worrying gap between the attainment of EAL children not fluent in English and White British and disadvantaged children. The study and literature reviews identified some of the main reasons for the widening achievement gap between pupils with EAL and their peers. These include:

- *"Less support in improving English proficiency during lockdown*
- *Missing access to small group lessons and one-to-one support in school*
- *Less access to technology for online learning*
- *Lack of parent English language skills to support learning at home*
- *Lack of targeted government funding to support pupils with EAL."* (Demie, 2021:2)

Overall, the evidence from previous research shows that school closures during the coronavirus pandemic have had a greater negative impact on learning for pupils with EAL, especially in the key language areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Demie 2021). There is now research evidence that school closures have meant that EAL learners may not have had access to models of good English language, EAL pedagogy and sufficient opportunities to rehearse and practise speaking in English, particularly academic English language. As a result, EAL learners are likely to have made limited progress in the four domains of language knowledge and use (listening, speaking, reading and viewing, and writing).

1.3   Research questions and methods

1.3.1   Research aims and questions

The aim of the research is to study the impact of Covid on EAL leaners in schools. Building on the past research on EAL attainment, this study looks to answer two research questions including:

1.   **What is the impact of Covid-19 and school closures on pupils with EAL ?**

2.   **What are the effective teaching and learning strategies (including intervention programmes) to support EAL learners?**

1.3.2   Methods

The methodological approach for this research comprises a range of surveys as follows:

- Teaching staff survey
- School leader survey
- Pupil survey
- Parent survey

Pupil, parent, teacher, and school leader views of the home learning experiences of pupils with EAL during school closures were gathered through questionnaires, including translations into the four main family languages in Lambeth. The sample size of survey respondents ranged from 149 teachers and school leaders to 50 non-fluent in English pupils and 250 parents. The majority of responses were from Lambeth schools, but also collected were responses to the teaching staff survey from Plymouth, Liverpool, Knowsley and Bristol. The survey was conducted in March 2021, shortly after schools re-opened. The responses draw on both observations during the first school closure in the autumn term and the second closure from March 2021.

1.3.3   Measures for assessing stages of English proficiency for pupils with EAL

The EAL learning needs of pupils vary greatly from beginners to advanced learners. Stages of English have been widely used to describe the different stages of English through which pupils commonly progress (see for an example widely used throughout the 1990s and 2000s; Demie 2029,2017, 2016, 2015, 2013; Demie and Strand 2006; Hester 1993). The local authority has adopted a five-stage EAL assessment and requires schools to report proficiency in stages of English language for all pupils with EAL. These five stages range from 'New to English' to 'Fluent' and include detailed descriptors but are summarised below (DfE 2017, 63–66). The schools assess the position of their EAL learners at reading, writing and speaking and listening against this detailed proficiency framework. They then make a 'best fit' judgement as to the proficiency stage that a pupil most closely corresponds to:

Table 1.2: Stages of English proficiency scale

Stage A **(New to English)**	May use first language for learning and other purposes. May remain completely silent in the classroom. May be copying/repeating some words or phrases. May understand some everyday expressions in English but may have minimal or no literacy in English. **Needs a considerable amount of EAL support.**
Stage B **(Early Acquisition)**	May follow day to day social communication in English and participate in learning activities with support. Beginning to use spoken English for social purposes. May understand simple instructions and can follow narrative/accounts with visual support. May have developed some skills in reading and writing. May have become familiar with some subject specific vocabulary. **Still needs a significant amount of EAL support to access the curriculum.**
Stage C **(Developing Competence)**	May participate in learning activities with increasing independence. Able to express self orally in English, but structural inaccuracies are still apparent. Literacy will require ongoing support, particularly for understanding text and writing. May be able to follow abstract concepts and more complex written English. **Requires ongoing EAL support to access the curriculum fully.**
Stage D **(Competent)**	Oral English will be developing well, enabling successful engagement in activities across the curriculum. Can read and understand a wide variety of texts. Written English may lack complexity and contain occasional evidence of errors in structure. Needs some support to access subtle nuances of meaning, to refine English usage, and to develop abstract vocabulary. **Needs some/occasional EAL support to access complex curriculum material and tasks.**
Stage E **(Fluent)**	Can operate across the curriculum to a level of competence equivalent to that of a pupil who uses English as his/her first language. **Operates without EAL support across the curriculum.**

(DfE 2017, 63–66)

For the purposes of this analysis, pupils at Stages A–E are classified as 'developing EAL'. Pupils at Stage A are classified as 'beginners' in English and those at Stage E are classed as 'fully fluent' with Stage A–C as 'not fluent.' Pupils who only speak English and have no access to any other language are not assigned a stage of English proficiency and are classed as 'English only'. The English proficiency stages used in this study have been used by schools, LAs and central government as a diagnostic tool to analyse needs for future teaching, tracking progress and to provide baseline information for statistical purposes.

Chapter 2: Teaching staff survey evidence on the impact of school closures

2.1 Introduction

The survey of teaching staff in schools aimed to collect the experiences of those involved with the direct and indirect teaching of EAL learners in schools and at home. To gather a comprehensive picture across the year of the pandemic, staff were asked about their experiences both during school closures, schools re-opening and returning to school, reflections and thoughts on implications for the future.

Respondents were asked a variety of questions on their perceived impact on pupils with EAL, particularly focussing on non-fluent English learners and what measures (if any) had been taken to facilitate continued development in both curriculum and language development. The following evidence presents the findings from a survey undertaken in Spring 2021, aimed at those involved with the teaching and learning of pupils with EAL.

2.2 Background characteristics

Survey reponses were received from 85 teachers and teaching staff from a range of different schools and phases. The majority of responses were from Lambeth state-funded schools, but also collected were responses from Liverpool, Plymouth, Knowsley and Bristol.

Table 2.1: Breakdown of teaching staff survey respondents

	No.	%
Role		
Classroom/subject teacher	61	72%
EAL Coordinator	14	16%
SENDCo	7	8%
TA/HLTA	3	4%
Phase		
Early Years	4	5%
Primary	64	75%
Secondary	15	18%
All through	2	2%
Total	**85**	**100%**

The role of EAL coordinator, includes those teachers who specialise in supporting EAL in their school. Teachers in primary and secondary are those who are involved in the day to day teaching of all pupils, both EAL and non-EAL. SENDCos are those for whom the role of EAL support sits within the Inclusion/SEND department in their school. TAs and HLTAs are specialist teaching assistants whose role is focussed on supporting pupils with EAL. However, these definitions are not precise, as the EAL coordinator role is often a secondary responsibility of a class teacher or SENDCo, especially in the primary schools.

The majority of respondents (72%) were teachers, followed by EAL coordinators (16%), SENDCos (8%) and then TAs/HLTAs (4%). 75% worked in the primary phase of education, with 18% working in the secondary phase, which is representative of the phase breakdown in the borough's schools. 78% of respondents from primary schools were classroom teachers, compared to 40% in secondary schools where the largest respondent group was EAL coordinator (46%). This is reflective of there being far fewer dedicated EAL teaching specialists in the primary phase, than in secondary schools where most of the borough's secondary schools employ a specialist teacher for EAL.

2.3   Teaching staff experiences during school closures

The survey asked for the personal experiences and challenges for teachers and teaching staff in supporting EAL learners in their class(es) during school closures (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: The experience of teaching EAL learners during school closures (% respondents)
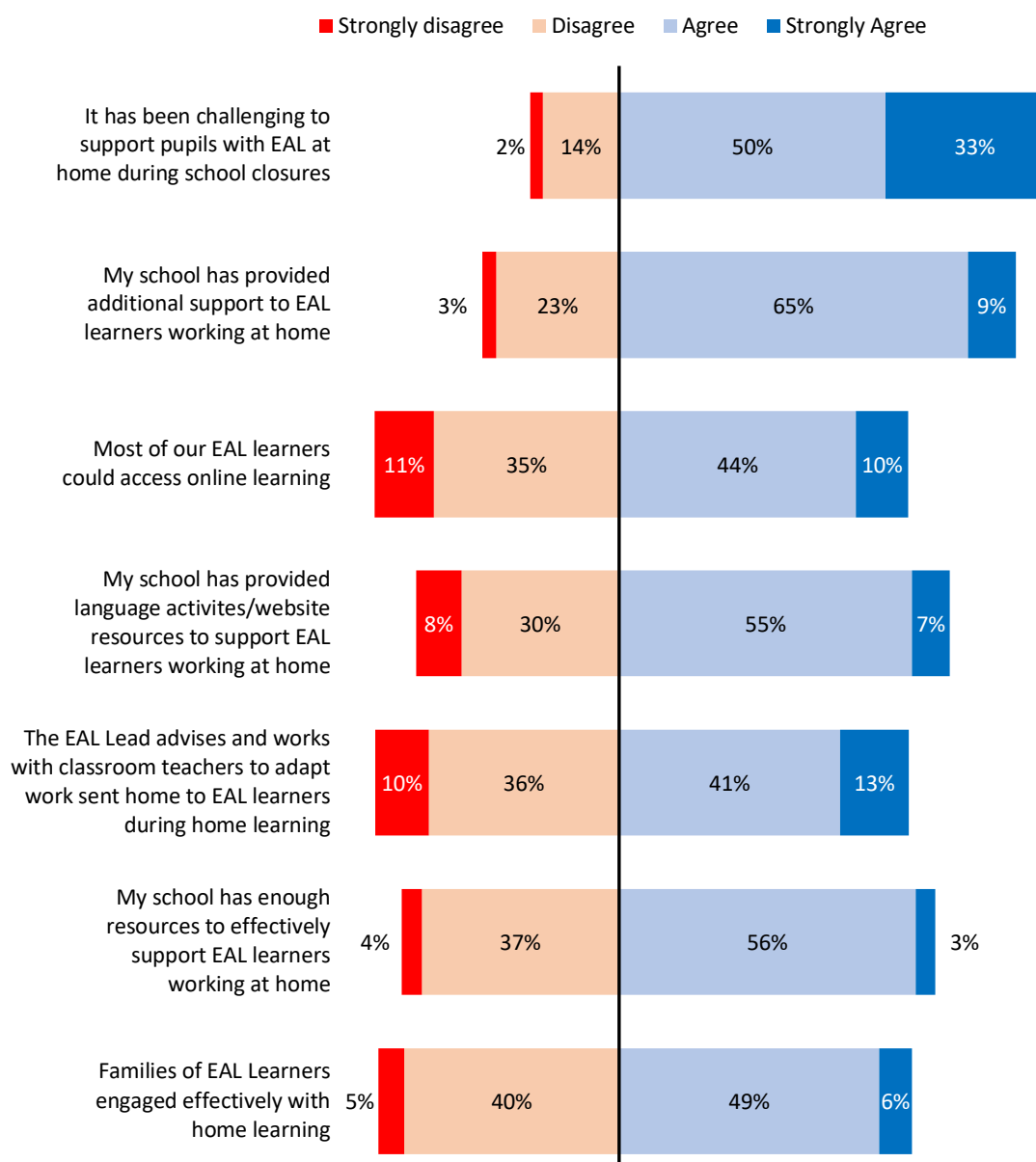
The following summarises the key findings on the experience of school closures:

2.3.1   Challenging for teachers to support pupils with EAL at home during school closures

The large majority of teaching staff respondents said that it has been a challenge to support their EAL learners in the classes they taught during school closures with 83% of respondents agreeing, including a third of all respondents strongly agreeing that this was the case. A breakdown by phase of education showed concordance, with 79% of primary and nursery respondents agreeing it has been challenging (30% strongly agreeing) and 100% of secondary respondents agreeing it has been challenging (47% strongly agreeing).

Respondents were invited to comment further, with teaching staff describing a range of difficulties in teaching and supporting pupils with EAL outside of a controlled classroom environment and into home-learning. Analysis of these comments, uncovered many themes, the principal ones being:

- Pupil engagement with online learning, particularly younger children
- Family engagement with supporting home learning
- Teacher interaction with EAL learners in need of support, especially face-to-face
- Communication and language barriers with EAL learners and families
- Effectively supporting development of English skills, particularly writing, and reading
- Availability of school resources including teaching time and staff to support EAL learners
- Funding to employ interpreters/translators
- Access to online learning, both in terms of IT, navigating new systems and also understanding online materials

Primary and nursery school respondents elaborated on some of these challenges:

"Early Years, especially nursery have their challenges of engaging in their learning online. I believe the biggest challenge was not having enough interactions with the children." (Classroom Teacher – Early Years)

"Challenges included communicating with parents about instructions or explanations about remote learning. It was also difficult to explain certain instructions for work for pupils with EAL if their reading skills weren't as fluent as their speaking and listening skills" (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

"Without having children directly in front of you, understanding whether or not they fully understand what you are discussing. Children are less likely to ask questions online." (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

Secondary schools also described the challenges faced when home-teaching EAL learners:

"Making sure all EAL parents were clear with any new Government messages and with school expectations during lock down. Tracking and tracing pupils engagement in lessons and work sent to teachers takes a long time. Dealing with any other issues such as free school meals vouchers, IT or any others. Having EAL as vulnerable group a success as used as an opportunity to work on Basic English and Maths development." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

"I sent emails translated (by google) into first language but no evidence they were read. Liaised through keyworker but they did not speak language. Evidence of pupil attempting MCQ quizzes but when it came to longer answers these seemed to be the result of googling key words in the questions and then lifting sentences from websites. These sentences contained the keyword but were irrelevant and did not answer the question. A lot of effort on part of pupil but not much progress! Not sure how to explain to pupil ways of coping that will be more successful than this." (Teacher – Secondary School)

2.3.2   My school has provided additional support to EAL learners working at home

The large majority of teaching staff respondents (74%) **agreed** that their school had delivered additional teaching support to EAL learners during school closures.

Respondents commented further on this, describing the efforts made to provide this support, with some key measures including:

- additional 1-to-1 support for non-fluent EAL learners and their families
- additional group lessons/classes for non-fluent EAL learners
- additional communication and support for home-teaching from home-language speaking staff
- providing a place in school for EAL learners most in need.

Comments from respondents which highlighted these measures included:

> *"Additional support was mainly limited to our children who have no or very little English, e.g. supportive phone calls from Portuguese speaking TA; additional recourses and work set for these children" (SENDCo – Primary School)*
>
> *"I have contacted parents individually; I have set meetings with them, and I have set up 1-2-1 support classes for pupils who used to be supported in school." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)*
>
> *"EAL learners who were normally withdrawn for EAL lessons come to school to have these sessions as normal as we consider them 'vulnerable'. We created 'EAL lockdown timetable'." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)*

2.3.3   Most of our EAL learners could access online learning

The survey asked respondents whether their EAL learners could access the online learning provided by the school. The view of respondents was split. 54% of teaching staff respondents **agreed** whilst 46% **disagreed** that this was the case.

Access to online learning refers not only to having the equipment and technology, but also EAL learner engagement and understanding the lessons hosted virtually. It's important to note that availability of equipment for virtual learning has been a widely publicised issue impacting many pupils, EAL and non-EAL, but especially impacting disadvantaged families and larger families with siblings possibly having to share equipment. Additionally, the various periods of school closures need to be considered as many have commented that there were greater difficulties in technology access during the first closure, but it slowly improved as government programmes of laptop and Wi-Fi dongle allocations were introduced.

Respondents who described the difficulties with access to online learning for EAL learners, cited issues around:

- Access to **appropriate** IT equipment
- Learners not engaging with the remote lessons provided, especially younger EAL learners.
- Difficulties communicating effectively with families who were not fluent in English, in trying to get their children online in the first instance

Respondents described these in further detail:

> *"I think our non fluent EAL families have found accessing online learning particularly difficult. Some parents phoned the school in the first few weeks to request places. Phone calls were helpful to support and address tech issues. Staff communicating with families in their first language was helpful" (EAL Coordinator – Primary School)*
>
> *"It was a lot harder to get the children online in the first place. Parents appeared to say ok but then were unable to get on line. Language barriers meant it was harder to explain. It took a while to gather all the key information needed. e.g. sometimes they were accessing google classroom only on a phone which was not practical for them in the long run. Sometimes a laptop was given but the parents found it hard to navigate there way around google classrooms. Extra phone calls home and visits to school were required with multilingual staff to support. Teachers found it harder to support EAL children at Stage A as it was hard to explain/show what was needed" (SENDCo/EAL Coordinator – Primary School)*
>
> *"The challenge is in terms of IT access. Contacting home to explain about initiatives or check on wellbeing. Pupils can use translate facility more easily with on line learning. Strong work of EAL co-ordinator in keeping EAL focus in place across the curriculum and providing EAL sessions online." (SENDCo – Secondary School)*
>
> *"Many did not access live lessons. Paper / Hard copies had to be compiled and provided. Many were not returned for learners in Science lessons" (Science Teacher – Secondary School)*

2.3.4   English language activities/website resources to support EAL learners at home

Most respondents (62%) **agreed** that their school provided language resources and/or activities on their school website to help EAL learners at home, but 38% of respondents suggested that their school did not provide or were not aware of any additional online language materials to support EAL learners.

Respondents whose school did provide language resources online, described using materials with symbols and pictures to help EAL learners and their families and also using language software and translation functions on online platforms. These will be covered in more detail in the next section.

2.3.5   EAL lead advises and works with classroom teachers

Under normal circumstances, classroom teachers and EAL staff in schools would work together to ensure appropriate support is available to EAL learners who require it. With schools adapting to remote learning and teaching practices changing, respondents were asked whether EAL leads were advising and working with teachers to ensure the needs of EAL learners were being met during school closures.

The view of respondents was split. 54% of teaching staff **agreed** that the EAL Lead advised on home-teaching EAL learners whilst 46% **disagreed** that this was the case. Comments from respondents who disagreed included:

> *"I am not aware of all the support that was available to pupils except through me as their class teacher. It may be that they had access that I am unaware of? But it did seem to me to be a pattern of pupils with EAL found it harder to engage in school learning at home." (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)*

> *"I haven't had any news from the EAL department on what they are doing/how I can help."*
> *(Teacher – Secondary School)*
>
> *"I haven't looked at EAL provision on school website so not sure what is there" (Teacher –*
> *Secondary School)*

2.3.6   Availability of resources to support EAL learners

The survey asked whether teaching staff felt that their school had sufficient resources to effectively support the needs of their EAL learners during school closures. The slight majority (59%) of respondents **agreed** that their school had enough resources to support pupils with EAL learning at home, but a further 41% **disagreed** that this was the case**.**

Thematic analysis of the open comments highlighted areas where provision for EAL learners was made more challenging, including:

- staff availability
- time constraints of hybrid-teaching limiting support and bespoke interventions
- limits in available language resources and ability to translate across multiple languages
- EAL coordinator roles being less specialised for targeted support and intervention

Comments describing these challenges included:

> *"We have very few EAL learners who are new to English - three in the whole school in different*
> *classes with different languages, it has been a challenge to support them." (SENDCo –*
> *Primary School)*
>
> *"Some colleagues on other <federation> school sites have been able to invite some of the*
> *newer to English pupils in for face to face teaching under 'vulnerable' status, but it depends*
> *on staff availability and key worker provision. I think that it is a little easier this time round*
> *as we are on Microsoft Teams rather than another VLE. However, it's still a work in progress.*
> *We are still learning ourselves and are slowly trying to think creatively of ways to provide*
> *interventions and additional support. Class teachers are under pressure to provide live online*
> *learning to their whole class while support staff are in school enabling keyworker provision.*
> *This leaves little capacity for bespoke intervention." (SENDCo – Primary School)*
>
> *"Regular weekly or twice weekly phone calls. Key vocabulary sent home. It was a challenge as*
> *time restraints were a factor but I tried to address needs." (Classroom Teacher – Early Years)*
>
> *"Due to limited staffing it was difficult to allocate specific resources to support some*
> *EAL learners - we have had less new to English learners in recent years and the role of*
> *EAL coordinator has become more data collection than support and intervention." (EAL*
> *Coordinator – All through School)*
>
> *"Number of EAL lessons has decreased due to EAL teacher/lead taking up curriculum lessons*
> *(as directed by Headteacher)" (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)*

2.3.7 Family engagement with home learning

With the introduction of home-learning, the role of the family became important in providing a supportive home environment for educating pupils. Particularly for EAL learners, parents and in some cases older siblings played a crucial role in motivating, supporting and in the case of non-fluent in English pupils, ensuring they could access and understand the curriculum and lessons. In addition, family involvement is crucial for language development, by supporting their child's English language learning, but also importantly, development of their home language which has been shown to improve English acquisition.

The survey asked whether the families of EAL learners engaged with home learning and the view of respondents was split. 55% of teaching staff respondents **agreed** that families of EAL learners were effectively engaging with home learning, whilst 45% of respondents **disagreed**, suggesting that family engagement was an issue affecting a number of schools as highlighted by respondents:

> *"It was very challenging - my parents of EAL have all refused translated information and work as they believe they need to speak English because they are in England." (Classroom Teacher- Early Years)*
>
> *"Parents of EAL children who are invested in their child's education engaged online. Also, children with older siblings engaged less." (Classroom Teacher – Early Years)*
>
> *"Generally, very positive, although if families do not want support it can be difficult to provide it." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)*

To uncover the reasons why this could be the case, respondents were asked to comment further. Key themes emerging, included:

- Issues with parents becoming accustomed to online learning
- Difficulties for schools to meet the increased need for liaising directly with parents
- Parents' own language barriers in understanding and supporting home-learning
- Struggles with the parents' understanding of tasks and development of English skills
- Engaging families of new arrivals who had not had time to build a relationship with the school
- Lack of internet or sufficient equipment

As described by respondents:

> *"We have had a few new arrivals where it had been difficult to engage parents as they don't already have the relationship with the school and staff as yet." (EAL Coordinator – Primary School)*
>
> *"I think the problem is when EAL combines with low computer literacy and parents who aren't able to offer support with RL because they are working or not familiar with school work/ computers themselves." (Teacher – Secondary School)*
>
> *"Parents unable to support because of their own language barriers. Some families have older siblings who can help which has been really beneficial to them." (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)*
>
> *"It is difficult in terms of engagement. We have an excellent EAL department in our school, who do extensive work with pupils with minimal grasp of the English language, yet we have*

many pupils with EAL and many families who speak less English than their children, which means engaging families can be challenging" (Teacher – Secondary School)

"Parents and children were extremely frustrated especially with the English tasks. New information was not accessed easily especially through wordy newsletters." (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

Schools who successfully engaged with families of EAL learners, commented on the extra measures taken to ensure their involvement in home-learning. Commonly mentioned measures included:

- Regular communication with families
- Liaising with parents through bilingual staff
- Inviting new to English pupils to attend school
- Setting up EAL parent support groups and establishing networks
- Regular contact with EAL families to identify any struggles

"I involved parental WhatsApp group to support EAL parents. Some parents helped the other parents" (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

"It's easier when we are able to call families and engage, in particular when children haven't handed in work we can target those families and provide extra support." (HLTA – Primary School)

"Some bilingual staff have been supporting families with accessing online learning and also making pastoral calls on behalf of teachers. We also have a system of making sure no family is left uncontacted." (SENDCo – Primary School)

"We have held a staff briefing and put some resources and links that parents/carers could access to support EAL learners." (Support Teacher – Primary School)

"The school blog converts to home language to support families at home." (Classroom Teacher – Early Years)

"Having previously built great support networks with Pastoral/Parents/ Subject Teachers has helped to ride the wave of the Covid 19 upheaval" (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

"We have also supported parents during parents evening by gathering information from the class teachers and having parents evening online with the EAL team in first language instead of meetings with teachers. This is also the case with current Y9 meetings for Y10 options." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

2.3.8 Strategies and interventions

In a difficult year, schools were required to adapt their teaching practices, often at very short notice. As well as providing for the educational needs of all pupils working at home remotely, the added challenge of supporting the more vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils during this period so that no child was overlooked, required schools to adopt a new way of working and employ innovative methods. The extra challenge of supporting EAL learners is two-fold, supporting their curriculum learning and also developing their English acquisition and skills.

Respondents were asked what measures schools used to engage and support their EAL learners during school closures and home learning and the level of impact they thought each had made, from a list of the most widely known strategies. (There was an option of choosing more than one).

Table 2.2: Home-learning practices for EAL learners used during school closures

Home learning practice	Total %	Primary %	Secondary %
Online English language materials/activities	66%	65%	71%
Television Lessons	64%	62%	71%
Telephone support with a bilingual staff member	59%	56%	71%
Paper lesson resources untranslated	52%	50%	59%
Extra teaching support on an individual basis	50%	46%	71%
Extra teaching support on a group basis	48%	44%	65%
Online translator e.g. google translate	45%	35%	82%
Online software from 3rd party provider	35%	31%	53%
Online lessons translated into different languages	26%	22%	41%
Paper lesson resources translated	25%	18%	53%

A number of schools reported putting their least fluent pupils into the vulnerable group who were asked to attend school. Of those who were home-taught, the most used practices were **"Online English language materials"**, **"Television lessons"** and **"Telephone support with a bilingual staff member"**.

The survey asked respondents to assess the level of impact (positive) that each of the practices have had on EAL learners, from those who had used them (Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2: Impact of home-learning practices for EAL Learners used during school closures
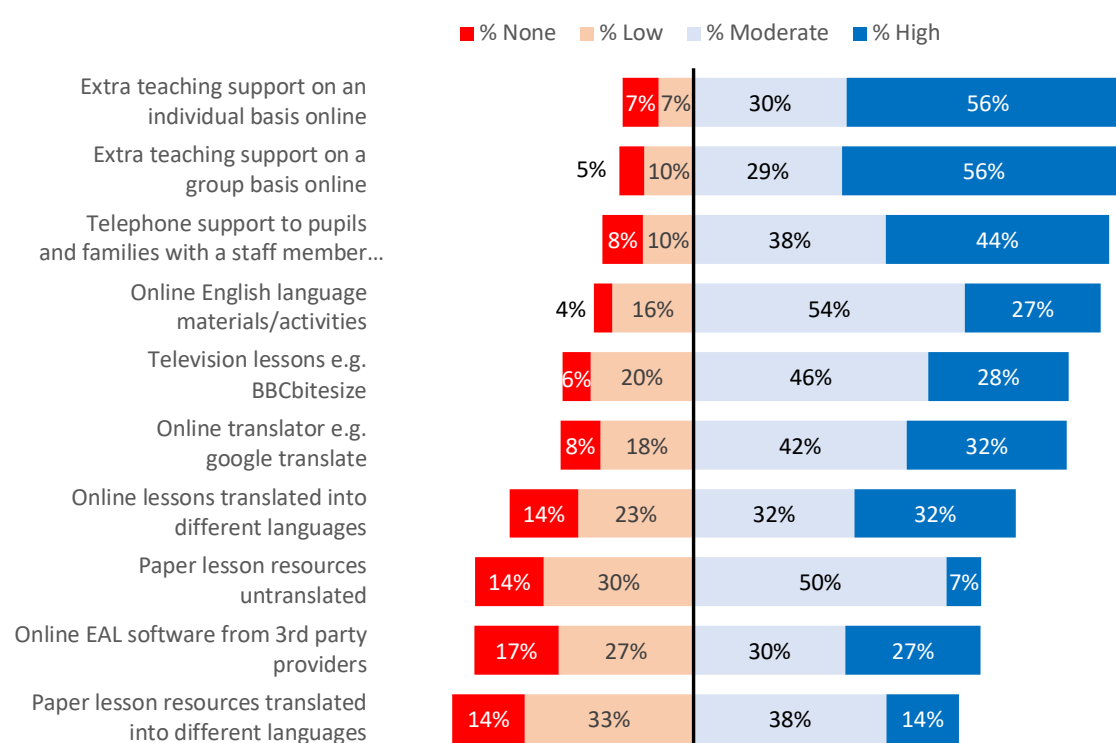
The practice reported as having the highest impact on EAL learners was **"Extra teaching support on an individual basis"** and **"extra teaching support on a group basis"**. **"Telephone support with a bilingual staff member"** also had a high success rate.

In contrast, the practices with the lowest level of impact as reported by the survey were paper lesson resources, both **"Translated paper resources"** and **"Untranslated paper lesson resources"** where just under half of schools who used them said they had a low or no impact on their EAL learners, even though the latter was a strategy that was used by 52% of survey respondents. Also highlighted by the survey as having a comparatively lower success rate was **"Online software from 3rd party providers"** where 44% rated it as having a low or no impact, although 27% also reported it as having a high impact. Teaching staff commented further on the practices they had found to be successful.

Primary schools:

- Use of visual aids, symbols and videos
- Teacher made videos of themselves teaching
- Modelling of tasks and language and use of sentence starters
- Explicit grammar teaching in literacy lessons
- Pre-teaching, especially vocabulary
- Differentiation of tasks
- Extra sessions for online reading and talking
- Regular live teaching lessons, small group intervention
- Online learning platforms, including Flash Academy, Seesaw, Languagenut and Learning Village

"In the EYFS we use lots of visual aids, makaton, picture and objects along with 'my turn your turn' (repetition)…we posted at least 2 videos of us teaching using these resources like we would normally do" (Classroom Teacher – Early Years)

"It was tricky to begin with as teacher acclimatised to a new method of delivering lessons. As time went on our skill at differentiating for abilities including use of Google Translate, more visual based lessons, more visual slides and different methods of completing work (tick boxes, lines joining answers and scribble tool) helped to engage EAL learners with classroom tasks and activities (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

"I find that I have to simplify explanations and check that the children have an understanding of tasks. I have checked in with families and provided support through extra online reading and talking time. To begin with EAL learners found it hard to engage but with support this second lockdown has been better for EAL learners." (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

"Pre-teaching of key vocabulary" (Inclusion Coordinator – Primary School)

"Allowing parents to communicate in their language. Modelling to children what was expected from them - doing videos." (Classroom Teacher – Early Years)

"Pupils with EAL engaged well when the remote learning offer included daily live check-ins and weekly live teaching lessons, as well as asynchronous teaching and learning. Teachers made extensive use of video and audio clips added to Powerpoint and ShowMe videos, which supported children to access learning. Immersive Reader on Microsoft Teams is supportive in helping children to translate work where needed. Teachers have included explicit grammar teaching via literacy lessons and explicit vocabulary teaching (e.g. through Word of the Day, topic lessons) - this has supported pupils with EAL to continue to develop their understanding and use of English grammar and academic / topic specific vocabulary.

> We are lucky enough to have members of staff that speak fluently the languages represented in our school. This has been invaluable." (EAL Coordinator – Primary School)
>
> "Making regular contact with the children. Asking them if everything is okay for them, is anything too hard for them? If the answer has been yes, I will then make contact with class teacher. All positive." (HLTA – Primary School)
>
> "Additional resources placed online for EAL learners via Google Classroom (in English but with pictures to support)" (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

Secondary schools described other measures to ensure that their EAL learners were effectively supported during the period of school closures, including:

- EAL team added to Google Classrooms
- 1-2-1 student support for language learning
- Mother tongue classes
- On-site English lessons
- Use of English learning websites e.g. uk.ixl.com

> "EAL department has tried to support pupils by joining them on the calls. Also working with those who attend school to provide the support even more to assist the pupils." (Maths Teacher – Secondary School)
>
> "The EAL dpt was able to set classes on TEAMS for pupils 1-2-1 to support with language learning as well as support with completing work in other subjects. The Portuguese, Spanish, Italian etc (mother tongue classes/clubs) have carried on online and this has been very useful for pupils to keep learning their target mother tongue." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)
>
> "We invited EAL withdrawal pupils to have EAL/English GCSE lessons on site. They all agreed to come. The challenge is to support them in other subjects in online lessons." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)
>
> "Translated resources. Subtitles in live lesson. Drop in one-on-one sessions" (Science Teacher – Secondary School)
>
> "Clear steps and working out for pupils to follow mathematically. Work set at an accessible level. Taught lessons by speaking slowly and repeated instructions / steps to assist further. It was really difficult virtually but was able to use a number of resources to support them further." (Maths Teacher – Secondary School)
>
> "Clear explanation. Use of visualiser to explain and consistent assessment of progress" (Teacher – Secondary School)

2.4 Teaching staff experience after returning to school

There have been two periods of school closures during the lockdown period of 2020–21, during the Autumn term 2020 and then the Spring term 2021.

Whilst pupils with EAL were working at home, tracking and assessing their curriculum and language development presented many difficulties. It wasn't until pupils returned to school that accurate assessments could be made on their progress.

Figure 2.3: Impact on EAL learners on motivation, curriculum learning and development in English

Legend: ■ Highly Negative ■ Negative ■ No Impact ■ Positive ■ Highly Positive

Motivation and engagement: 11% | 54% | 33% | 2%

Curriculum/subject learning: 2% | 47% | 31% | 18% | 1%

Development in English: 7% | 52% | 22% | 18% | 1%
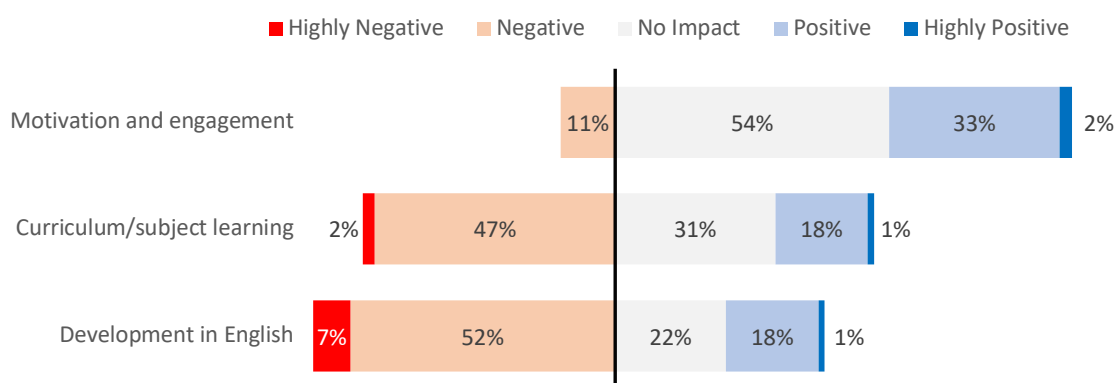
2.4.1 Motivation, curriculum learning and English development

The survey asked for the perspectives of teaching staff on the progress of EAL learners after the mainstream return to school and what impact there had been on their motivation, curriculum learning and English acquisition.

In terms of motivation and engagement in lessons, 89% of respondents said that there was no negative impact for EAL learners, but almost half believed their curriculum and subject learning had been **negatively** impacted.

With regard to EAL learners' progress in English, the picture was more negative. 59% of respondents said that their EAL learners' development in English had been **negatively impacted** including 7% who indicated that the impact was **highly negative**.

Survey respondents commented on their observations:

> *"All children have regressed both in education and in their ability to speak English."*
> *(Classroom Teacher – Early Years)*
>
> *"Children's language development has deteriorated but enthusiasm for school is as positive as before." (Classroom Teacher – Early Years)*
>
> *"One Portuguese student burst into tears as he had forgotten all the English language he had been taught." (HLTA – Primary School)*
>
> *"Pupils were keen to learn but had made little to no progress during lockdown 1 and over the summer." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)*

2.4.2 Proficiency in English

Proficiency in English for EAL learners is a key indicator. It is proficiency in the English language that is the major factor influencing the degree of support an individual student will require, to enable them to access the curriculum effectively.
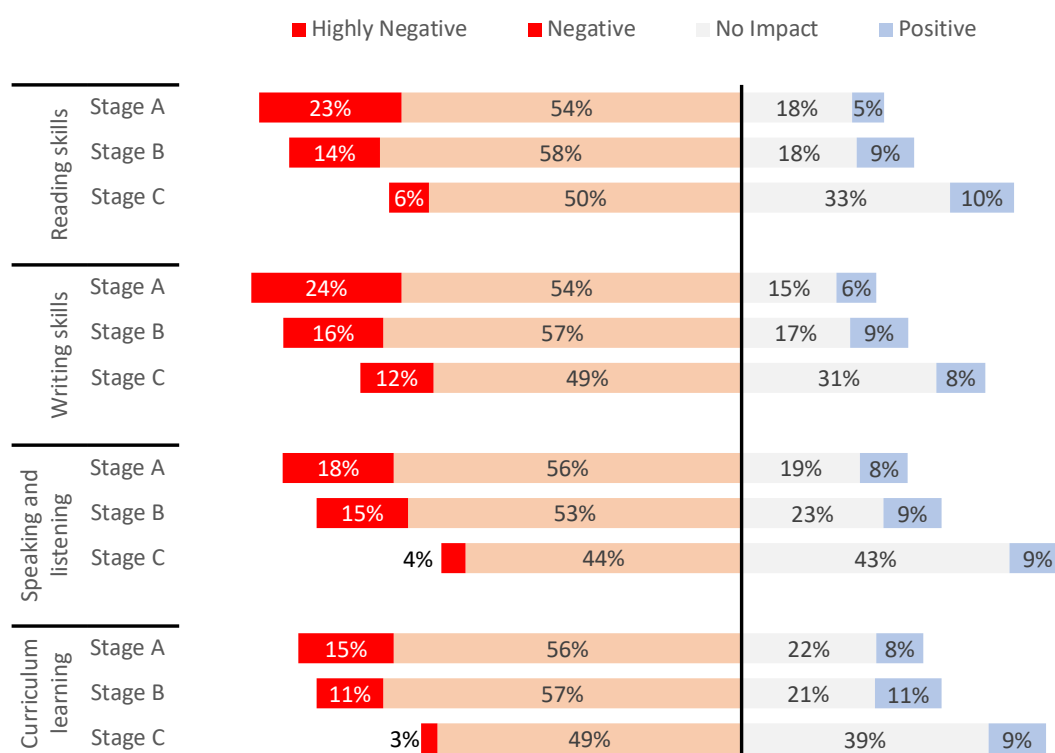
At the time of completing the survey, 70% of respondents indicated that they have or currently are assessing proficiency in English of their EAL learners on their return to school.

Since the period of school closures, respondents to the survey reported overall, a negative impact across all of the English language skills of reading, writing, and speaking and listening for their pupils with EAL who were not fluent in English (Stage A, B, C).

Most negatively affected were Stage A pupils where 75–80% of respondents reported a **negative** or **highly negative** impact on their English skills across all three measures, particularly in reading and writing, where approximately one in four respondents said that the impact on these English skills was **highly negative**.

Negative impact diminished as proficiency in English increased, although there was a more mixed response for pupils at Stage C (% can be seen in figure 2.4)

Figure 2.4: Impact of school closures on English skills of non-fluent EAL learners

	Highly Negative	Negative	No Impact	Positive
Reading skills Stage A	23%	54%	18%	5%
Stage B	14%	58%	18%	9%
Stage C	6%	50%	33%	10%
Writing skills Stage A	24%	54%	15%	6%
Stage B	16%	57%	17%	9%
Stage C	12%	49%	31%	8%
Speaking and listening Stage A	18%	56%	19%	8%
Stage B	15%	53%	23%	9%
Stage C	4%	44%	43%	9%
Curriculum learning Stage A	15%	56%	22%	8%
Stage B	11%	57%	21%	11%
Stage C	3%	49%	39%	9%

Comments from respondents highlighted some key areas of concern:

• New to English and Early Acquisition pupils (Stages A & B) have been most impacted
• Younger EAL learners, especially in the Early Years may be very negatively affected
• Writing skills may be more likely to be behind age-related expectations
• Delayed development in speaking and listening due to lack of exposure to and opportunities to speak English

Schools elaborated on some of these concerns:

"I think we will need to carefully re-assess EYFS moving into Year 1 and 2 and will notice a much higher number of pupils who will stay at stage A and B for longer." (SENDCo – Primary School)

"Some of our children at early acquisition stage returned to school with less confidence in their use of English and needing support to ensure they have a secure understanding of key classroom and topic or subject terminology." (Inclusion Manager – Primary School)

"This is something which will have to be addressed once schools reopen, particularly in EYFS, where so much of a child's language acquired through play and interaction between adults and peers." (SENDCo and EAL Coordinator – Primary School)

"This is generalised as some children there hasn't been a negative impact. The New to English pupils have had the most negative impact as they haven't had the opportunity to progress as quickly as they should have had the school not been closed" (HLTA – Primary School)

"Most of my pupils were engaging and participating but have found writing particularly challenging. It has been more challenging to provide them with support and guide them to the right places. It has been more difficult to give them word banks etc as they can become overwhelmed with too many attachments/are not reading their daily email." (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

"Children have been supported in their learning primarily by caregivers whose own proficiency in English isn't necessarily strong. This means children have often missed the opportunity for daily English speaking and listening, apart from their daily online contact with their classes." (SENDCo – Primary School)

"Y11 pupils especially non- fluent ones have been affected the most because they are under pressure to pass/get a good grade for GCSE exams." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

2.4.3 Covid-safe arrangements in the classroom

Figure 2.5: Impact of Covid-safe arrangements in the classroom on EAL leaners
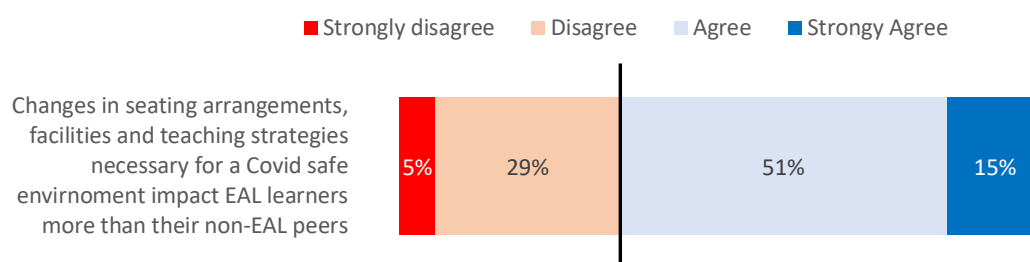
The majority of respondents (66%) agreed that covid safe arrangements in school, had a greater impact on EAL learners' development than their non-EAL peers. Asked to elaborate further:

"I worry about the lack of talk in the classroom due to C19 restrictions i.e., having all children facing the front, not so much group work, no mixing with other year groups at play etc. This lack of spoken language, I can see will and is having a negative impact." (EAL Coordinator – Primary School)

"Covid restrictions means year groups can't mix so beginner intervention lessons have decreased from 6 lessons a week (mixed year groups) to 2 lessons a week (single year group)." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

2.5 Reflections

Having returned to school in 2021, teaching staff respondents were given the opportunity to reflect and comment on their overall thoughts and looking ahead, particularly:

- Long-term educational impact
- Catch-up
- Recommendations for any future school closures

Figure 2.6: Reflections from teaching staff survey on long term impact and catch up
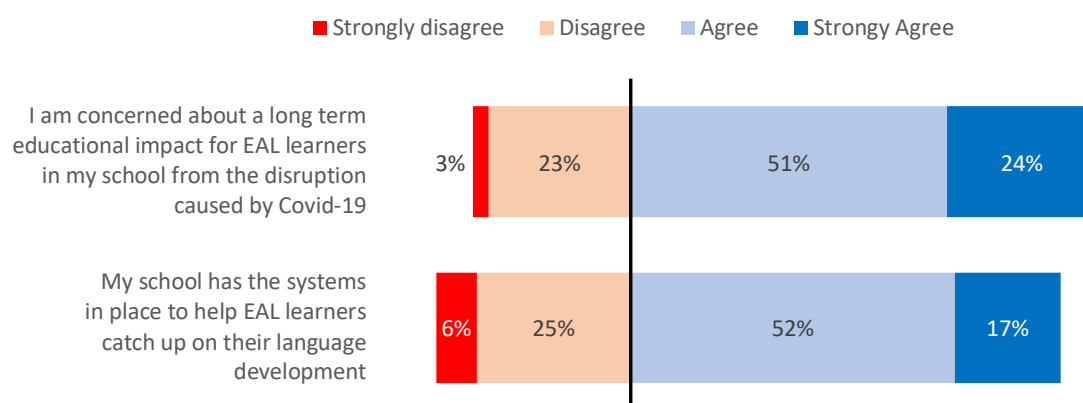
2.5.1 Long-term educational impact

The majority (75%) expressed concerns about a long term educational impact for EAL learners in their school, caused by the disruption of Covid and school closures. Nearly a quarter strongly agreed that this was the case, explaining further:

> *"Not for those that have maintained engagement, but for those that have not consistently engaged or are non-fluent a long term impact is highly possible." (Inclusion Manager – Primary School)*
>
> *"Taking longer to make progress" (SENDCo – Primary School)*
>
> *"Large gaps in learning, slowed down progression" (Science Teacher – Secondary School)*

Some respondents were optimistic, commenting:

> *"Even though there will be an impact for EAL learners due to Covid-19, children are extremely adaptable and flexible. If schools provide a safe and positive learning environment when children return to school and resources are put in place for them, the impact on their learning should be short term." (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)*
>
> *"There is an obvious concern for the long term impact of COVID on EAL learners but also on other groups of learners so intervention may be positive across a wide range cohort" (EAL Coordinator – All through School)*

2.5.2 Catch-up

The majority of respondents (69%) thought that their school had the systems to support EAL learners catch-up on their language development and learning. These included:

- Staff training on EAL
- Interventions
- Pre-teaching
- Small group support work, with focus on grammar, vocabulary, confidence and conceptual understanding
- Scaffolded lessons and greater use of visuals
- A focus on talk, both adult modelling and pupil talk
- Active exploratory learning, with support from adults to scaffold language acquisition
- Additional lessons to focus on English (secondary)
- Use of home language
- Working with families
- Building on the use of technology, especially for homework

Primary schools described the measures they have in place:

"We have found small group sessions to be effective in supporting children to build confidence, to ensure they understand key language around instructions / classroom vocabulary / topic specific vocabulary and to develop children's understanding of grammar. To some extent, class TAs remaining with a consistent 'bubble' throughout the day and across the week has helped to ensure class teams have a very good level of awareness of children's language skills and where they need support. Focus on 'recovery curriculum' and opportunities for active / exploratory learning have been supportive for our EAL learners." (SENDCo – Primary School)

"In school, once we are back: Continuation of Lead meetings. EAL strategies for all staff via webinar half termly. Lambeth EAL Club for support and resources after school e.g. The Great Big EAL Bake in Lambeth. Library online with stories shared in different languages. Everyday conversation from different locations and communities to demonstrate how to access local facilities" (SENDCo – Primary School)

"We are reading stories, and promoting the free online books (In English and other languages) but still feel that the biggest challenge is modelling good examples of English language and enriching conversation and vocabulary learning. This is something which will have to be addressed once schools reopen, particularly in EYFS, where so much of a child's language acquired through play and interaction between adults and peers." (SENDCo and EAL Coordinator – Primary School)

"Access to materials that are more visual especially the texts and scaffolded the lesson for their learning." (HLTA – Primary School)

"Lots of opportunity for them to talk, some groups at first so, they can regain their confidence with talking English. Not to dismiss things they have been told about Covid. Ask the children about their learning and how can we help them. Share information. Follow up with support." (HLTA – Primary School)

"More staff employed to aid in catch-up interventions." (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

"More access to resources in a range of languages" (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

> *"Have more money to spend on translators, offer culture support, personalised and targeted booster sessions"* (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)
>
> *"50% of our children are EAL therefore all that we have been doing to support the children generally with 'catch-up' has firmly had these learners in mind."* (EAL Coordinator – Primary School)

Secondary schools conveyed ideas on how to implement an effective catch-up programme:

> *"Catch-up classes are helpful if they fit the pupils' needs and are not ad-hoc. Most pupils ask me to help them with catching up work that they have missed or fallen behind rather than what I believe they need. If pupils are up to date with work done in subject classes, then they are more open to accept more specific work that they need help with such as language work."* (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)
>
> *"Apps like Duolingo for English learners could help."* (Teacher – Secondary School)
>
> *"Use catches up fund to provide tutors for disadvantaged Pupils with EAL , investing in external programmes (e.g., Flash Academy), laptops/iPads to loan"* (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)
>
> *"Schools must continue to monitor and support EAL learners on return to school and put in place additional opportunities for catch-up support where possible - this can be in opposition to many school risk assessments and dependent on staffing and money."* (EAL Coordinator – All through school)

2.5.3   Recommendations for future school closures

The survey asked for recommendations or suggestions to effectively support EAL learners, particularly those non-fluent in English, in the event of further school closures.

This is an important question as unlike the past year, we can draw lessons from the experiences of teachers and teaching staff. In addition to the successful practice mentioned previously in this report, primary school respondents mentioned the following:

> *"More access to translation services."* (Classroom Teacher – Early Years)
>
> *"More access to resources in a range of languages"* (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)
>
> *"Differentiate work, keep in regular contact with families"* (HLTA – Primary School)
>
> *"Find out from families what they really need in order for them to access home learning. Encourage families to keep learning in their home language if they are new to English and enable access to texts in a home language so that reading might be able to take place. Send home some fun activities/craft and art to stimulate conversation at home as learning doesn't always have to be about core subjects"* (SENDCo/EAL Coordinator – Primary School)
>
> *"I've made my literacy and foundation subject provision as open ended as possible so that pupils are able to respond as creatively as possible - hopefully giving all pupils a blank canvas with which to work"* (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

"I think there needs to be a real focus on supporting vocabulary and language with adults providing really good models for language." (EAL Coordinator – Primary School)

"As good practice we always pre teach key vocabulary and we have widget and print to support children (words and pictures)." (Inclusion Coordinator – Primary School)

"Making regular phone/video calls. Listen to what they are telling you and share information regarding learning with class teachers." (HLTA – Primary School)

"Having specific picture related work for the EAL children such as a book that is very picture related and the story is easy to follow that all the EAL children in the school could do as text. Plan lessons on that book that will cater for all the different stages of EAL children. Labelling, sequencing, making sentences and describing the settings." (EAL Coordinator – Primary School)

"Parents need to be taught how to use the laptops to go to online lessons" (EAL Coordinator – Primary School)

"Parent support groups needed, especially of those bilingual parents." (Classroom Teacher – Primary School)

Secondary school teaching staff also offered a range of ideas and recommendations:

"1-2-1 classes where the pupils can have tailor made classes catering for different pupils' needs have been having a positive impact. However, these classes are not very frequent and therefore the impact could have been greater if the pupils would have attended more than once a week. In addition, being part of the classes where pupils with EAL struggles and to see what the pupils need help within English/Maths/Science etc has been very helpful." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

"Effective EAL departments are really supportive in engaging families, taking away the burden of this from teachers and guaranteeing attendance to lessons. This has been effective in our school." (Teacher – Secondary School)

"Ensuring dedicated small group time which allows for clear explanations of learning." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

"Share online resources and online teaching. Children can be in touch with the class teachers via online learning" (SENDCo – Secondary School)

"We have also supported parents during parents evening by gathering information from the class teachers and having parents evening online with the EAL team in first language instead of meetings with teachers. This is also the case with current Y9 meetings for Y10 options." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

"Having previously built great support networks with Pastoral/ Parents/ Subject teachers has helped to ride the wave of the COVID-19 upheaval." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

"Early stage EAL learners in school every day as part of Vulnerable group to work with EAL team on Maths and English basic skills as well as to be supported on Maths and English Online lessons." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

"Create an EAL Programme" (Teacher – Secondary School)

The survey asked teachers to comment on any groups, or language/ethnic groups that they thought were particularly impacted by school closures. The language/ethnic groups mentioned specifically by respondents were:

- Spanish-speaking pupils
- Portuguese-speaking pupils
- Arabic-speaking pupils
- Eritrean pupils
- Kurdish pupils
- Afghani pupils

Previous analyses undertaken locally, have shown that many pupils in these language/ethnic groups tend to be in the early stages of English fluency.

Also highlighted were pupils with EAL from any language/ethnic group who were new to English or were at an early stage of English acquisition and those who were disadvantaged, through economic reasons, looked after child status, asylum seekers or refugees.

"This again depends on the engagement and confidence of the families themselves, but we have a number of Spanish and Portuguese speaking families who will need extra support with learning and English acquisition once we return to school" (SENDCo – Primary School)

"I think some of our Eritrean families have struggled more due to parents' fluency in English and their confidence with supporting their children to access learning." (SENDCo – Primary School)

"Kurdish community have been affected with the lack of resources but then in some homes there have been many children that have had to share resources. Which impacted on their learning." (EAL Coordinator – Primary School)

"New to English pupils, especially those Looked After and/or asylum seekers and refugees." (Teacher – All through school)

"It's more disadvantaged pupils with EAL who are impacted particularly. We have high numbers who are FSM and PP. Compare to those who aren't, they seem to not be as impacted." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

"This year we have had an influx of LAC pupils from Afghanistan with very little schooling in Y9 and 10. School closures would have affected them more if we had not invited them to come to school as part of our vulnerable group as they would have not been able to access the online lessons due to their level of English." (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)

2.6   Summary of teaching staff survey

The majority of respondents believed that both the language and subject learning of pupils with EAL had suffered a greater impact than that of their non-EAL peers. This was for a range of reasons, but primarily because of the language barriers which affected communication, technological access and the understanding of learning and tasks in a remote situation. However, pupils' motivation remained high and this alongside careful catch-up planning, led staff to be optimistic about closing the gaps once back in school.

Chapter 3: School leadership survey evidence on the impact of school closures

3.1 Introduction

The survey of school leaders aimed to collect the experiences of those involved with the strategic decisions on a whole school basis. To gather a holistic picture across the year, respondents were again asked questions about their experiences both during school closures, schools re-opening and returning to school and reflections.

3.2 Background characteristics

Survey responses were received from 64 staff involved with school leadership, across phases and all from Lambeth state-funded schools.

Table 3.1: Breakdown of school leadership survey respondents

	No.	%
Role		
Headteacher/Principal	21	33%
Assistant Headteacher/Principal	12	19%
Deputy Headteacher/Principal	4	6%
Head of Faculty	5	8%
Other	22	34%
Phase		
Nursery	2	3%
Primary	35	55%
Secondary	23	36%
All-through	3	5%
Special	1	2%
% EAL in school		
less than 20%	3	5%
20–40%	14	22%
40–60%	37	58%
more than 60%	10	16%
Total	**64**	**100%**

A third of respondents were headteachers/principals and a further quarter were assistant/deputy headteachers. The remainder were made up of leads including heads of faculty (secondaries) and school inclusion managers. However, these roles may also include coordinating EAL, especially in the primary schools.

Of the respondents to the survey, 55% represented the primary phase and 36% represented the secondary phase. Nearly three quarters of all respondents represented schools with an over 40% EAL population

The main findings of the school leaders' survey are reported as follows.

3.3 School leadership experiences during school closures

Respondents were asked about their whole school experiences of supporting and engaging EAL learners and their families during school closures and home learning (Figure 3.1)

Figure 3.1: Supporting the education of EAL learners during school closures (% of respondents)
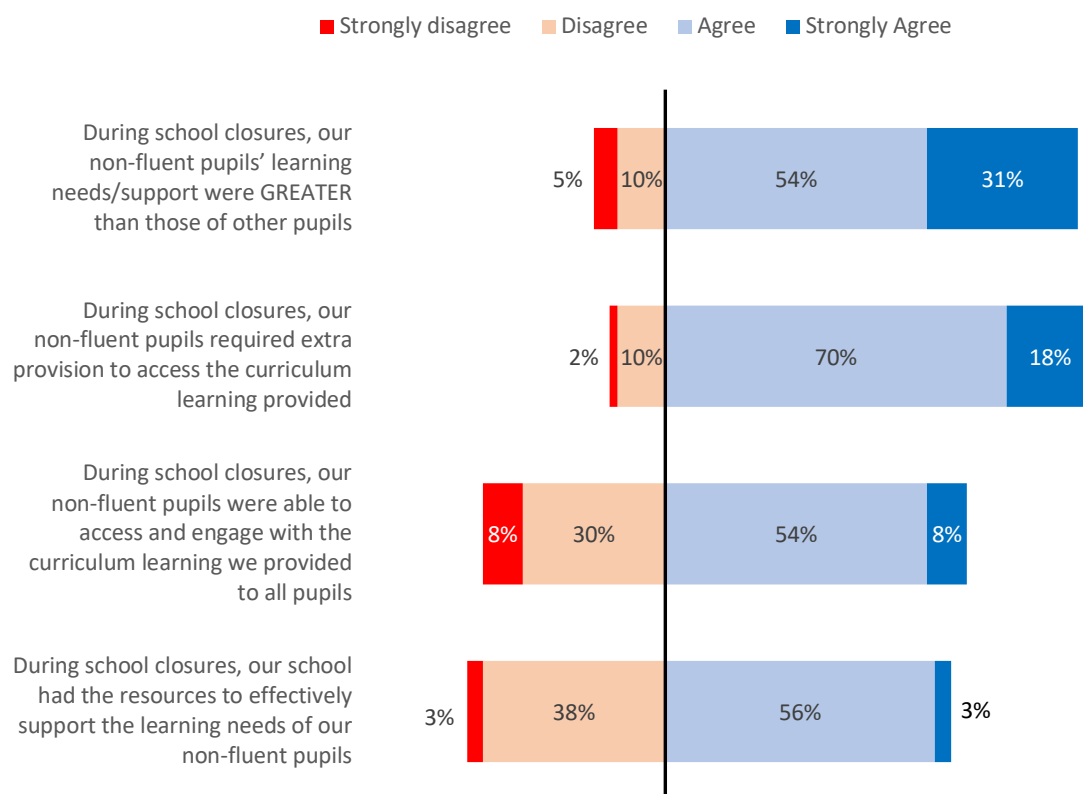
The key findings suggest that:

- From a whole school perspective, the large majority of school leadership respondents (85%) **agreed** that the educational needs of non-fluent EAL learners in their school were greater than those of their fluent or non-EAL peers, including 31% who **strongly agreed** that this was the case. This resonates with the experiences of teaching staff who completed the teaching survey.

- The large majority of respondents (88%) **agreed** that their non-fluent pupils EAL learners required extra provision/support in order to access the curriculum learning during school closures.

- The requirement for extra provision to access the curriculum and the ability to deliver it is a key area. The responses from the survey presented a mixed picture. 62% of school leadership respondents **agreed** that their non-fluent EAL learners were able to access and engage with the home-learning offers. However, more than a third (38%) disagreed/strongly disagreed that this was the case. This again was in concordance with the responses in the teaching survey.

School leaders who expressed concerns around EAL learner engagement, described further:

"Uptake of online learning has been slightly lower for pupils with EAL with those new to English finding it hardest to access. Some of these pupils have now been invited into school but not all attending." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"They and their parents were less confident accessing the online work" (Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)

"Some of the children in the earlier stages of English acquisition have found the virtual learning difficult to access which has led to misconceptions which are hard to address when not in the classroom. If children have struggled and also have limited or no support at home, then this will have impacted on their progress, especially if you compare them to their non-EAL peers." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Some pupils did not have access, so it was hard to keep track/ communicate with those particular pupils." (Head of Faculty – Secondary School)

"Attendance has been poor. Remote learning has been an issue" (Headteacher/Principal – Special School)

3.3.1 Our school had the resources to effectively support the learning needs of our non-fluent EAL learners during school closures

The survey asked whether school leadership felt that their school had sufficient resources to effectively support the needs of their non-fluent EAL learners during school closures and the response was split, with 59% of respondents **agreeing** and 41% **disagreeing.**

Concerns were particularly expressed about the availability of staff to provide for EAL learners:

"Lack of interventions due to lack of staff available - either shielding or having to work in one class only." (Deputy Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Teachers' ability to support children with EAL restricted. Other supportive learning opportunities restricted due to limits on staff cross over and lockdowns" (Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)

"Very little extra provision unfortunately - we had such a large number of children in school (30% of roll) that providing in school and home learning concurrently was a constant challenge. Extra provision on top for SEN took even more resources." (Deputy Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)

The outcomes from both the teaching staff and school leadership surveys suggest that the experiences of teaching staff from a classroom perspective in supporting EAL learners during lockdown, echoed those of school leadership staff from a whole school perspective. In particular:

- The educational needs of EAL learners were greater during school closures
- Extra provision was required for EAL learners during school closures

- Many EAL learners were not able to engage/access the curriculum learning provided during school closures
- Availability of resources, especially in terms of staffing, was a challenge for many schools to effectively support EAL learners during school closure

3.3.2 School strategies and provision

Respondents to the school leadership survey were asked to comment on what school strategies they had used to support EAL learners during the period of home-learning. Many schools identified their new to English pupils as vulnerable and invited them to attend school. Analysis of the feedback demonstrated a variety of measures being used by schools.

Primary schools described a range of extra provision, which included:

- Identifying new to English learners as vulnerable and attending school
- Staff briefings
- Phone calls home
- Small group and 1:1 interventions, including some as follow-up after live lessons
- Bespoke, personalised lessons posted
- Dedicated member of staff
- Supplementary learning packs to live lessons
- Visual tutorials posted on Google Classroom
- Differentiated work set
- Activity sheets/materials sent home
- Pre-teaching of key vocabulary
- English language resources and activities on school website
- Online resources with verbal and visual supports
- Use of EAL digital learning platforms/software such as Seesaw and Flash Academy
- Use of translators and translation tools
- Bilingual teachers/teaching assistants to support learning/families

"We were sending home activity sheets weekly. We were also uploading information to the website." (Head of School – Nursery School)

"We translated into as many languages as we could, but this was limited to what staff/ parents could support with." (Headteacher – Nursery School)

"Dual language resources. Pictorial cues. Sentence starters." (Deputy Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Small group and 1:1 intervention with our EAL HLTA" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Pupils received 1:1 or small group support online after the live sessions to further demonstrate/explain the learning. For those pupils new to English, they were invited to attend school during lockdown." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Support through general lessons through differentiation and supportive resources. Additional support following live sessions with teachers. Additional support one to one or in small groups with teaching assistants" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Portuguese teacher supporting Spanish and Portuguese speaking pupils." (Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)

"Telephone calls to talk children/ parents through tasks. Bilingual teachers/TA. Emails and Google meet" (Assistant Headteacher – Primary School)

"Translated pages and visual tutorials posted on Google Classroom. Chrome books provided if needed. Bespoke, personalised lessons were posted. Ongoing support from native speakers as well as class teachers. Paper packs and resources provided if need identified. Portuguese lessons posted online by our Portuguese tutor." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"EAL children who were identified as finding it difficult to engage in remote learning were invited into school to support their learning." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

Secondary schools described a range of extra provision, which included:

- Staff CPD
- Phone calls
- Small group and 1:1 interventions/tuition, extra lessons
- Differentiation
- Videos with closed captions, subtitles
- Modelling examples
- Paper copies
- Bilingual staff support
- Translation, including on TEAMS
- Learning platforms ie Linguascope

"EAL lead has been giving small group intervention lessons. EAL lead has come to parent forum meetings to translate and explain to parents how to access remote learning. She has also contacted pupils with EAL who are not attending live lessons." (Headteacher Secondary)

"Differentiation, closed captions on Google Meet etc." (Teacher – Secondary School)

"Examples of how to differentiate for EAL learners. Online support" (Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)

"Extra 1 2 1 support, provided online and differentiated work, provided online" (Headteacher/ Principal – Secondary School)

"Translated resources" (Associate Assistant Headteacher – Secondary School)

"Use of TEAMS Translation, some direct work with families, translating resources, staff CPD for additional guidance" (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – All through school)

"Key workers in place - with native language where possible. Increased staff CPD on provision for EAL during lockdown periods. Opportunities to attend school where barriers were considered to challenging remotely." (Headteacher – All through school)

"Keeping pupils on the call and modelling examples. Getting the pupils to share their screen to offer support, all exercises had worked examples clearly shown. Videos allowed you to turn captions on this was modelled to pupils." (Head of Faculty – Secondary School)

"Development of dialogue with these pupils that enabled them to feel more confident in asking questions about their learning." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)

"Intervention - English as an additional language classes weekly for one hour. Subscription to lingua scope for individual practice. Translated resources/support resources for all lessons. Weekly phone call from EAL coordinator." (Head of Faculty – Secondary School)

3.3.3   Parental and family engagement

The adjustment to home-schooling placed more responsibility on parents and families in collaboration with schools to provide support, teaching and an environment conducive to learning. With a constantly changing situation, regular and clear communication between schools and home became an increasingly important factor, especially with pupils who required more support than their peers. In the case of EAL learners, this presented an extra challenge where families were non-fluent in English.

The survey asked school leadership about the whole-school methods used to communicate with parents and families of EAL learners, with the option of selecting more than one from a list of the widely known strategies.

Figure 3.2 Engagement with parents and families of EAL learners during lockdown/school closures
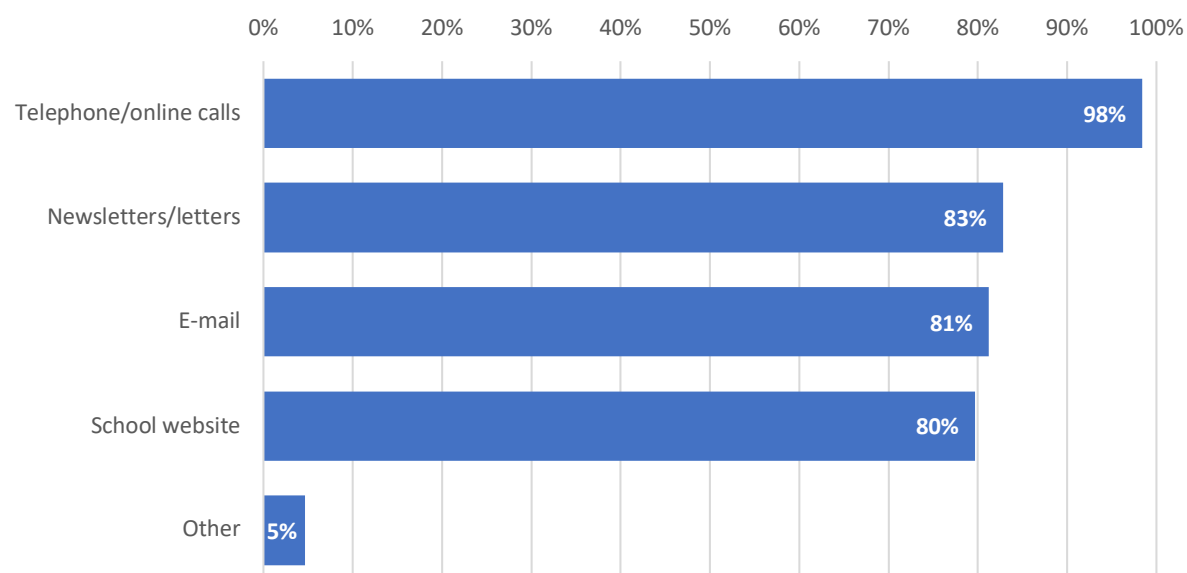
Respondents revealed multiple methods of communication, with almost all making direct telephone/online calls to the parents and families of EAL learners. Only slightly fewer also provided newsletters and letters.

> *"The main issue for us is to do with parents' fluency in English and their ability to access the information in English. We were also calling the families weekly, and again if we didn't have a common language this would prove challenging. Often parents would rely on older siblings for these conversations." (Head of School – Nursery School)*
>
> *"Parental support via phone/e-mail. Instructions for parents of how to access various resources - Google Translate. Parent letters and messages translated" (Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"Teaching Assistants with Spanish/Portuguese have telephoned families to support with remote learning. Use of Seesaw portal" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"Translation of key documents for parents into multiple languages." (Assistant Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)*

Additional to the list above, other methods of communicating with parents were also identified. These included:

- School Twitter and social media platforms
- Regular text messages to parents
- Parental virtual meetings e.g. on MS Teams
- Staff making telephone calls in the home language where possible
- Translation of messages/documents where possible
- Use of the learning portals to communicate with parents e.g. seesaw
- In person meetings with parents, including doorstep visits at a safe social distance

A secondary school also outlined the measures they put into place to engage families via their parents forum:

> *"EAL lead has come to parent forum meetings to translate and explain to parents how to access remote learning. She has also contacted pupils with EAL who are not attending live lessons." (Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)*

Engagement with families nevertheless was highlighted as a major challenge for some schools:

> *"Difficulties communicating in the wide range of languages spoken by families - European families returning home" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"My main concern here is for hard to reach EAL families where the routine of engaging with online learning and the school community has diminished substantially or indeed never even existed. Even with phone calls and contact and helping with devices, some families still don't engage, and I wonder whether this is more of around not appreciating that engaging with school is compulsory or not placing value in the remote offer. In saying that, the majority of our EAL families are engaging (this has improved hugely this time around) and are more than willing to support their children in remote learning." (Headteacher – Primary School)*

3.4 School leadership experiences after returning to school

The survey asked for the perspectives of school leadership on the impact and progress of their EAL learners in their school after the mainstream return of pupils.

Figure 3.3: Impact on EAL learners since returning to school

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The impact of school closure on CURRICULUM LEARNING has been seen to be greater for non-fluent pupils than for their classmates	3%	28%	55%	14%
Our non-fluent pupils' ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT has not progressed during lockdown	3%	25%	61%	10%
The covid-safe alterations to teaching are impacting the learning of non-fluent pupils	9%	29%	48%	14%

3.4.1 The impact of school closures on curriculum learning of EAL learners

The majority of respondents believed that both the curriculum and language learning of non-fluent learners had been impacted by school closures and continued to be affected by covid-safe arrangements on their return to school.

Feedback mainly corroborated the overall picture that pupils with EAL, particularly those who are not fluent in English, have experienced a learning delay due to school closures:

"The learning and attainment of pupils with EAL has been delayed and slowed." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"There has not been a significant impact on EAL learners in comparison to non-EAL learners, but the EAL learners that are non-fluent have been greatly impacted - little or no progress." (Inclusion Manager – Primary School)

"Widened the gap in their knowledge. Impacted friendships" (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)

"We have not been able to support directly learners who would best develop from direct support. Learners by the very nature of circumstances are more isolated - EAL learners need to hear and use English to progress so there are obvious implications for their development." (Teacher – Primary School)

3.4.2 The impact of school closures on English language development of EAL learners

Respondents were particularly vocal on the impact of school closures on the English development of EAL learners. Comments cited a negative impact on English skills and particularly writing and literacy skills:

> *"The lack of consistent reading at home with a parent has disadvantaged our families with poor literacy skills, especially, but not always, where English is not the home language." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"Attainment lower than usual. Standard of writing across the school for EAL children low." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"Limited pupil progress in terms of language development for some pupils" (Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"Some impact on learning - e.g. subject vocabulary development/understanding" (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*

Respondents also described how the absence of in-school exposure to English, particularly with peers and teachers in class and lost opportunities for speaking English has had a negative impact on EAL learners' speaking and listening skills.

> *"Spoken language in particular has been noticeably affected - leading to poorer written work and comprehension" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"For those pupils who are working towards understanding the subtleties and nuances of the language, there were less opportunities for discussion (only 2 live sessions a day), recapping of information to further develop pupil understanding across the curriculum and the experiences necessary for the acquisition of new language (engaging with peers/shared talk etc) especially in the Early Years." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*

In contrast, the increased use and development of the home language, rather than English, was commented on, with some recognising this as a positive:

> *"Yes and no - there have been gains in first language learning, which we recognise supports literacy development in general - but the downside has been challenges in gaining subject specific vocabulary in specific curriculum areas e.g. Science." (Deputy Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"Some children have lost their ability to communicate in English and reverted back to speaking their own language solely (Maths has not been impacted to the same degree as English)" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"Pupils who were learning English revert to the starting point of speaking home language as they were not in an environment to improve their English language" (Assistant Headteacher/ Principal – Secondary School)*

3.4.3 Concerns about the availability of resources

A common theme from analysis of the comments, cited the reduction or inability to deliver 1:1 face to face support as a key factor that has impacted non-fluent EAL learners:

> *"Reduction of face to face learning and interaction - reduced hands-on experience with new ideas/concepts" (Headteacher – Nursery School)*
>
> *"Access to resources and materials, unable to access direct support from adults, drop in confidence due to limited and inconsistent access to routine" (Assistant Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)*
>
> *"It did prevent them to have the very valuable Face to Face time" (Head of Year – Secondary School)*
>
> *"Communication has been more challenging as it hasn't been in person and occasionally compounded by IT issues and challenges." (Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)*

3.5 Reflections

The survey asked respondents to comment on their overall reflections and the implications of school closures on EAL learners . It also asked about their plans and recommendations for addressing the impact of the lost teaching time on pupils with EAL, for both their curriculum learning and English development.

3.5.1 Long term educational impact

Do you anticipate any long term impact for pupils with EAL in your school from the disruption to education caused by Covid 19?

Respondents who were optimistic that any long-term impact could be mitigated, cited the following reasons:

- Resilience of pupils
- Return to hearing and using English
- Use of interventions and a recovery programme to help catch-up
- Younger pupils not fluent in English having more time to progress
- First language development during lockdown, supporting English language acquisition

> *"Children have been very resilient and are enjoying being back at school. Children will need further intervention and support to develop English vocabulary." (Headteacher/Principal – Nursery School)*
>
> *"I feel spoken language and the ability to articulate ideas will be challenging at the start, but children are mainly resilient, and I anticipate them catching up with carefully planned sessions and through our Philosophy for Children curriculum that encourages discussions." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*

A key factor which resonated from those who gave a positive response, was the importance of having **planning and interventions** in place, including assessment on pupil return, catch-up and recovery programmes and careful pupil progress tracking.

"We are ensuring that provision is matched to pupil needs in order to pre-empt issues arising. Careful pupil progress tracking over time enables provision to be carefully targeted" *(Assistant Headteacher – Primary School)*

"Yes, as with, all pupils but targeted interventions should mitigate the impact" *(Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*

"Academically, I will be looking closely to see where our pupils with EAL are when they return to school and track their progress over time - starting with their baselines before covid began and see if there is any pattern there." *(Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*

"No, in a similar way to all other pupils, we anticipate that catch-up provision will help to close gaps and ensure that our pupils are in a strong place to make the progression to the next step, be it University, Apprenticeships, Training or employment." *(Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)*

"Difficult to assess. Like most schools, we will be conducting assessments following the return of all year groups." *(Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)*

Positive comments also alluded to a learning loss in the short term, but **having enough time to progress** was key:

"I am optimistic as most stage A and B learners are in the early years setting so there is time to progress. As we are not receiving new arrivals there is hope that EAL learners can develop their English with minimal support and boosted support on return with lowered restrictions" *(Support Teacher – Primary School).*

"I think they should be able to catch up but will have gone backwards in the short term." *(Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*

There was also cause for optimism from EAL learners' **development of home language**, helping to bolster their English acquisition over time:

"yes and no - we hope that first language development will support longer term literacy development - but we also recognise, that initially, there may be a great need for intervention for current curriculum areas." *(Deputy Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)*

Concerns

However, the majority of respondents expressed concerns and identified the challenges that lay ahead, citing a range of issues including:

- Pupil confidence, motivation, social and emotional wellbeing and feelings of isolation
- English language regression, thus requiring more time to develop English proficiency
- Gaps in learning and delay in progress
- Number of pupils requiring extra support and catch-up groups and pupils with individual needs requiring personalised support

Respondents who expressed concern highlighted the additional impact on EAL learners, suggesting **younger pupils and those who were not-fluent in English** would be more impacted than their peers:

"For some pupils, Covid disruption will have some long term impact, especially for those in younger year groups and where parents/ family only speak in own language, not English." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"With appropriate intervention the gap should be narrowed, however our EAL learners may be more impacted than the rest of the school." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)

"Yes - they will be farther behind for longer" (Headteacher/Principal – Special School)

EAL learners' **social and emotional wellbeing** was expressed as a concern, both in affecting their motivation to learn and their confidence and their ability to socially interact:

"Initially, children's English had regressed, and they spent more time in the family home, this isn't necessarily a big issue as we recognise that children needed us to engage with their memory of English. I think my concern lies with their social interactions more so than learning - at this stage. We know social connection and loneliness is an issue for all our children, but I wonder whether there is another added layer of social isolation and barrier in maintaining friendships for our pupils with EAL ." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"There will be long term impact for all pupils, including those with EAL, in our school - emotional, social, behavioural as well as academic development." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Yes- the impact on their confidence." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – All through school)

"Yes, lack of effort without being in school, if pupils don't understand they will be less motivated to continue." (Maths Teacher – Secondary School)

English language regression was cited as a concern, particularly in speaking, with respondents describing how their EAL learners' development in this key area had slowed, which may lead to delays in their curriculum learning and overall language acquisition:

"Depth of vocabulary" (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Yes, as the amount of time children will have spent in non-oral play etc (e.g., computer/ devices) will far exceed the amount of time talking with peers etc." (Deputy Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)

"Yes, for those at earlier stages. More time to develop proficiency due to reduced exposure to English or even home language. Family members may be working." (SENDCo – Primary School)

"Slower development of their speaking in English" (Head of Faculty – Secondary School)

"Yes, if we are unable to provide social opportunities where they are able to practise English" (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)

Respondents expressed concern about the **curriculum learning delay** of their EAL learners, with the current gaps in learning slowing their progress, thus requiring a longer catch-up period with possible consequences.

"Catching up will take longer for most children and progress will be slower. Targeted interventions in place will ensure that basics are covered, and progress is made" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"A few might not be able to follow their chosen career paths straight away" (Head of Faculty – Secondary)

The challenge of catch-up learning was highlighted by some respondents, especially related to the numbers of affected EAL learners and the type of **catch-up support** they will be needing:

"I can see that we will have to do catchup groups with a significant number of children." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Yes, which is why we are implementing a new EAL support approach across the school." (SENDCo – Primary School)
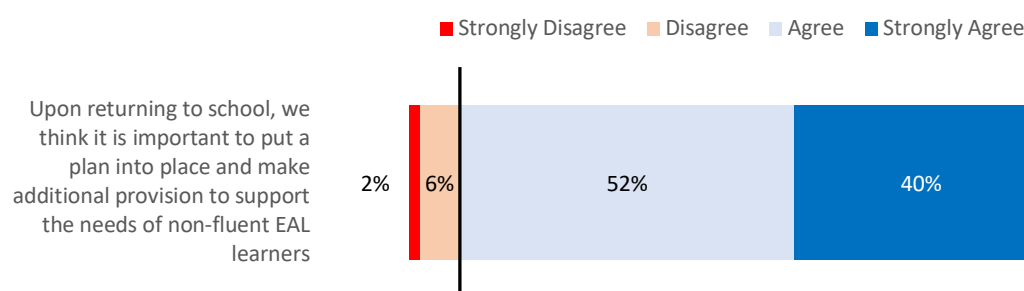
"This is difficult to quantify. Each individual student will have their own needs. School's will need to take a personalised approach to this." (Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)

This was further highlighted by one respondent, who expressed caution about how catch-up is delivered across the school and the risk of EAL learners' being left behind:

"My worry is that in the rush to catch up, our EAL might be 'left behind' with a 'oh. they'll catch up' if I throw a couple of translated worksheets." (School Leader – Secondary School)

3.5.2   Planning and catch-up

Respondents were asked how important they thought it was to plan and make extra provision available to support EAL learners on their return to school.

Figure 3.4: Planning and catch-up

Upon returning to school, we think it is important to put a plan into place and make additional provision to support the needs of non-fluent EAL learners

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2%	6%	52%	40%

Nearly all (92%) agreed that it was important to put a plan into place to support the additional needs of non-fluent EAL learners upon returning to school, including 40% who strongly agreed that this needed to be done.

The survey asked the key question **"Are you adapting your curriculum to ensure that pupils with EAL catch up by Summer 2021? If so, how?"**

Some leaders of primary schools with large numbers of pupils with EAL, stated that their pre-Covid provision was tailored to their needs, so they would be re-establishing that. Few respondents made direct reference to adapting the curriculum for EAL learners, but many described the measures they have or are putting into place for catch-up which included:

- Whole school strategic approaches
- EAL strategies for all staff via webinar half termly
- 1:1 support
- Small group support and additional EAL sessions
- Differentiated teaching
- Supporting English acquisition and developing fluency
- Focus on core skills and scaling back the breadth of the curriculum
- More opportunities for collaborative learning
- Pre-teaching of vocabulary
- EAL catchup plan specific to individual needs
- Use of English skills programmes
- Initial baseline assessments and careful monitoring of progress
- Visible learning to understand pupil needs

Primary school leaders listed:

"1:1 Support" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"We will look to increase small group support and additional sessions with our EAL teacher" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Continued support with language acquisition and fluency" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"We have set up channels in our online platform where children are engaged with reading groups / 1:1 engagement if needed / EAL interventions with our EAL HLTA." (Headteacher/ Principal – Primary School)

"Small group video interventions to support early language development. daily reading session to access by video to ensure consistent and high quality language modelling for young pupils" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Speaking and Listening Tasks, through P4C as well as PSHCE lessons. Clear signage in classroom and common areas. Differentiated planning, focusing on smaller steps to recap learning" (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"We are ensuring that appropriate online resources are accessible to EAL learners, so they can access it from home and school" (Inclusion Manager – Primary School)

"More opportunities for collaborative learning and drama; precision teaching; pre-teaching of vocabulary" (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Daily pre teach sessions to equip pupils with key vocabulary and concepts" (Deputy Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"No, returning to what we usually offer, which is EAL suitable" (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"We will be focusing on reading throughout the subjects throughout the day. We have recently introduced 'The Write Stuff' writing approach which has had significant impact on poor literacy skilled families." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"We are using the program flash academy with a small group of children and will be monitoring their progress across the rest of the academic year. As a school we are using visible learning as a way of understanding all learners needs, and this will benefit our EAL learners massively." (Assistant Headteacher – Primary School)

Secondary school leaders conveyed their plans on how to implement an effective catch-up programme:

"Withdrawal from MFL lessons to support with English acquisition" (Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)

"Targeted intervention for selected pupils" (Headteacher/Principal – Secondary School)

"Ensuring that we include more modelled steps for pupils to follow/ using translating apps/ visual aids" (Head of Faculty – Secondary School)

"Through individualised teaching" (Head of Faculty – Secondary School)

"Simplification of work" (Support Teacher – Secondary School)

"They need one to one time or specific EAL groups to get their English learning a priority" (Head of Year – Secondary School)

3.5.3 Recommendations and innovative ideas for supporting EAL learners in the future

The respondents were asked for their recommendations and ideas for what could be done to effectively support EAL learners, particularly those non-fluent in English, in the future and what could help or prepare them for the challenges which lie or may lie ahead.

This is an important question as lessons can be drawn from the experiences of schools in the past year. In addition to the catch-up measures and planning in place, respondents suggested the following as a way of improving the provision for EAL learners to effectively support them to achieve their potential:

- Access to resources in a range of different languages
- Scaling back the breadth of the curriculum, focusing on key subjects
- First language teaching
- Further development of family engagement and building relationships
- Educating families about school practices
- Designated EAL lead for local authority and schools
- Introducing new approaches for EAL support, assessments, and inductions
- Managing pupil wellbeing
- Support from home language teachers
- Training for staff
- Re-establish learning routines
- Making use of technology for differentiation of work specific to EAL learner's needs

"Providing ideas for resources in many languages may support parents who have limited English." (Headteacher – Nursery School)

"The impact of Covid on learning will be different over the short-term depending on the support children have had. I believe the government in the short-term should remove the demands of the wider curriculum in primary school so teachers and school leaders can concentrate on English and maths and provide other catch-up programmes whilst still prioritising some curriculum areas like PE and music for example." (Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"First language teaching; use of ICT and other technologies; support with parental engagement" (Deputy Headteacher – Primary School)

"Schools or the local authority needs to be willing to designate a member of staff/team depending on school size and EAL numbers to support learners as many schools now do not have specific EAL support staff" (Teacher – Primary School)

"Introducing new approach to providing EAL support, including new rigorous EAL assessments, support for developing vocabulary, new school inductions for Pupils with EAL " (SENDCo – Primary School)

"We would like to do some direct work with families for a period of time to educate them about school practices and curriculum with the aim that families will be able to engage more in their children's learning. This will provide a longterm benefit for when schools return fully or if were ever to go into a similar situation." (Assistant Headteacher/Principal – Primary School)

"Support from 'Home Language' teacher. Focus on delivering a rich language learning environment. Focus on reading for enjoyment through a range of activities. Future training for staff and support for parents" (Headteacher/Principal (Primary School)

"I believe that we need to re-establish learning routines, manage well-being and assess gaps/ misconceptions and progress - at this point we will understand how much impact there has been and what needs to take priority in terms of focus and catch-up." (Headteacher/Principal – All through)

"Making the most of technology to differentiate homework that includes English proficiency related training tasks e.g. dictation, speaking presentations, gamification of English learning" (Head of Faculty – Secondary School)

3.6   Summary of school leadership survey

An overwhelming majority of school leaders stated that the learning needs of their non-fluent EAL learners were greater than other pupils during school closures and that they required extra provision. However, many also expressed concerns over staff availability to provide this support and were concerned that this may remain an issue after the return to school. These challenges resulted in a negative impact both on progression in English and curriculum learning. Almost all agreed they would need to establish a catch-up plan for non-fluent EAL learners and some intended reviewing their whole school approach.

Chapter 4: Parent survey evidence on the impact of school closures

4.1 Introduction

The following presents the findings from a survey undertaken during spring 2021, aimed at parents and families. The purpose of the parent survey was to collect the opinions of parents/families of pupils with EAL, in order to view the home perspective of school closures and remote learning. Respondents were asked a variety of questions, focusing on their own experiences and the perceived impact on their children (particularly those non-fluent in English).

4.2 Background characteristics

In total, 250 parent survey responses were received from families of pupils attending Lambeth state-funded schools across all phases of education. These responses represent parents and families declaring their home language as something other than English.

Table 4.1: Breakdown of parent survey respondent

Phase	No.	%
Primary	174	70%
Secondary	76	30%
No. of children in family		
1	79	32%
2	106	42%
3 or more	65	26%
Ethnicity		
Latin/South/Central American	93	37%
Other White (including White European)	86	34%
Black African	20	8%
Black Caribbean	11	4%
White British	9	4%
Asian	8	3%
Black British	6	2%
Any other ethnic background	5	2%
Mixed Heritage	4	2%
Prefer not to say	4	2%
Arabic	3	1%
Other Black (including Black	1	<1%
Language		
Spanish	102	41%
Portuguese	65	26%
Polish	21	8%
Other than English	14	6%
Somali	10	4%
Akan Twi/Fante	5	2%
Italian	5	2%
Others (<5 speakers)	28	11%
English Proficiency of Family		
Low proficiency	98	39%
Moderate proficiency	90	36%
High proficiency	62	25%
Total	**250**	**100%**

4.3   Language use at home

A major factor in the development of English proficiency is immersion in the new language, along with appropriately targeted lessons. Under normal circumstances, a large part of this is achieved through social and spoken interactions in school, which were absent during the periods of school closures. Development of a learner's first language is equally important as it supports cognitive growth, English language acquisition and general literacy.

Figure 4.1: Family language use at home (%)
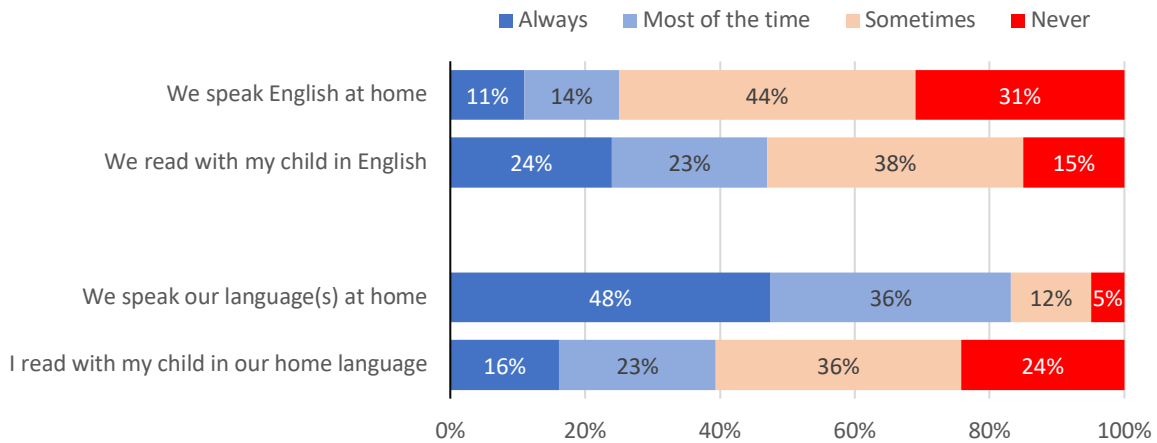

First language use at home

The majority of survey respondents (84%) reported that they predominantly spoke their home language (non-English), including 48% always and 36% most of the time.

Respondents reported that they read with their child in their home language (non-English) always/ most of the time 39%, sometimes 36% and 24% rarely/never.

4.4   Experience with digital access

As highlighted in the previous surveys from teaching staff and school leadership, digital access was a factor that impacted many pupils. This was not exclusive to EAL learners, but does compound other challenges faced by this cohort. With access to the internet and appropriate technology being fundamental to most schools' ability to deliver remote learning, respondents to the parent survey were asked about their digital access at home.

Figure 4.2: Digital access at home (%)
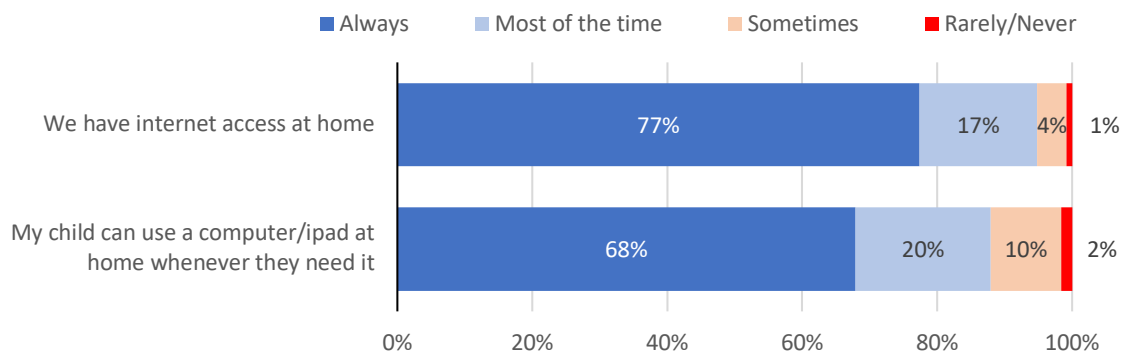
The overall consensus from the parent survey was that the majority of families of EAL learners had digital access. 77% of respondents to the parent survey said that they **always** had internet access. Just 5% indicated that they only sometimes or rarely had internet access at home.

In terms of access to a computer or device, 68% of respondents to the parent survey said that their child could **always** use a computer at home when required. However, 12% (approximately one in eight) respondents to the parent survey said that their child could only **sometimes** or **rarely/never** use a computer whenever they needed it.

**Figure 4.3: Digital access by number of children in family (%)**
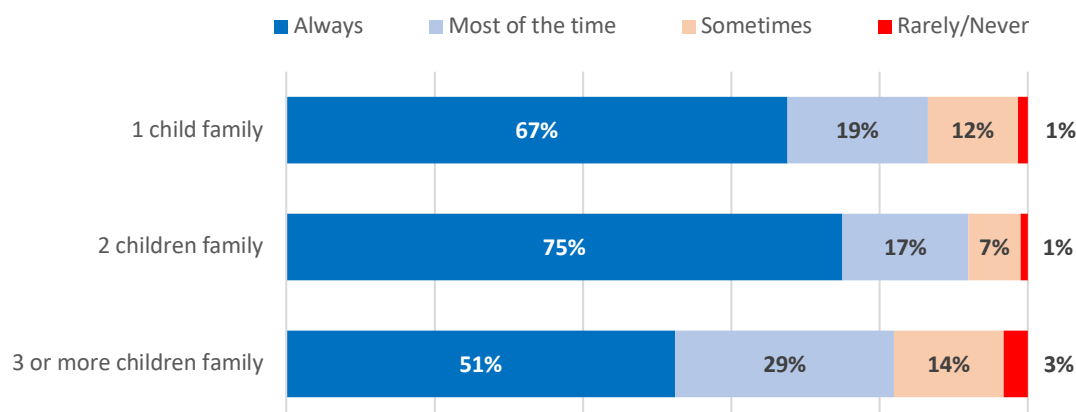
Examining this further, families with three or more children appeared to be slightly more impacted by digital access than families with one or two children. 17% (approximately one in six) of EAL families with three or more children said that their child could access a computer only **sometimes** or **rarely/ never**, with only half of respondents saying that their child always had access.

4.5 Experience with pupil support and home during school closure

With the commencement of home learning, support to EAL learners both within the mainstream and for English acquisition needed to be delivered in a different manner. The survey asked parents to reflect on how much support was needed and how this was delivered.

Figure 4.4: Parent feedback on support to EAL learners during school closures (%)
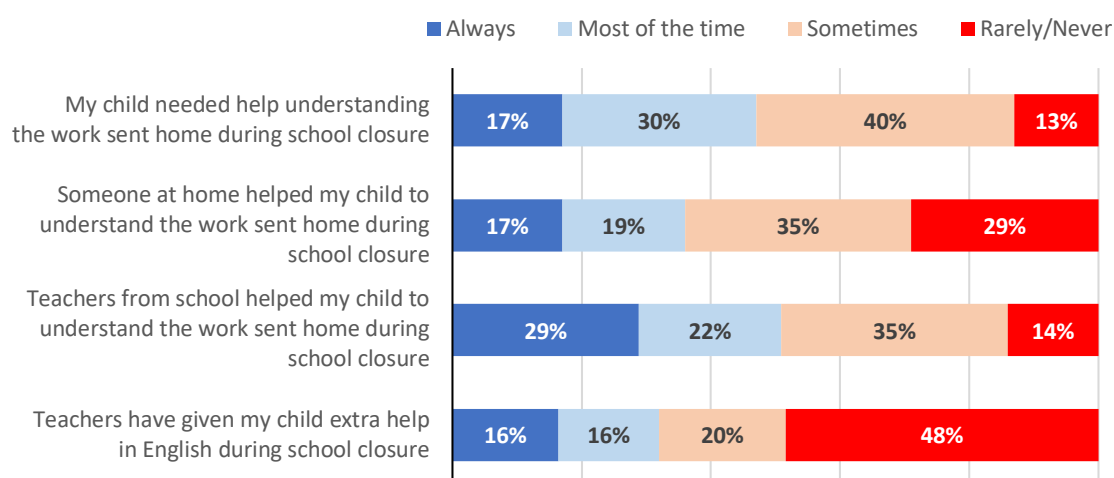
4.5.1   My child needed help understanding the work sent home during school closure

Examining this further, responses were collated according to the reported level of proficiency in English of the household.

Table 4.2: Parent feedback of pupil needs by proficiency in English per household (%)

Parent Proficiency in English	My child needed help understanding the work sent home during school closure	
	Always or most of the time	Sometimes or Rarely/Never
High	28%	72%
Moderate	38%	62%
Low	61%	39%

The survey feedback suggests that the higher the proficiency in English of a family, the less support that their child required in understanding the work. As a caveat to this, the survey question did not differentiate whether understanding the work was based on the level of difficulty of the work set by the teacher, or by the language barrier of the EAL learner in understanding the work and lessons.

The needs of EAL learners were also examined by the stage of education of the child. When compiling the survey feedback by Key Stage, there did not appear to be a discernible pattern or difference between groups. However, after extracting respondents who were not yet fluent in English (moderate or low proficiency), a different picture emerges:

Table 4.3: Parent feedback of pupil needs by Key Stage of EAL learner (%)

Key Stage	My child needed help understanding the work sent home during school closure	
	Always or most of the time	Sometimes or Rarely/Never
KS1	81%	19%
KS2	43%	57%
KS3	40%	60%
KS4	53%	47%

4.5.2   Someone at home helped my child to understand the work during school closure

Respondents were asked to comment further on this and their personal experiences of supporting home-learning. The following were the key themes which emerged:

- Parents felt their **use of English** was not up to the task of teaching their children

"Very concerned about the academic development of my children for not having sufficient means to assist them in their learning, and the difficulty of communicating, my English is not very good."

"As my son needed help, I had to translate everything to understand what it was to do to be able to explain and almost spent the whole day to do the work"

"It was hard to teach new content both for him and for me even more not being in our language, a double challenge."

> *"Help my children with homework for me was a challenge for English."*
>
> *"I do not know how to explain, my literacy was in Portuguese, to teach skills in English is very difficult for me"*

- Parents alluded to their own **education and teaching skills**, which they felt were insufficient to help their child to learn. In many cases, seeing their child struggle firsthand, but not feeling able to support them, led to feelings of negativity and sadness:

> *"It was difficult because we do not have the education necessary to help you learn at home."*
>
> *"Home learning was non existent because I couldn't motivate him or teach him because I had no idea what I was doing"*
>
> *"At first it was very hard, my son needs constant help and to teach things that I had never learned was difficult."*
>
> *"Bad because I can not teach my child in school work"*
>
> *"Powerless to help my children with their homework. Chaos no one was prepared for this sudden change. The tasks were not according to the English level of the child with no continuity because they were excessive and leave it alone that the end was very sad. The child as angry, sad, worried about not finishing some tasks"*

- Survey comments also suggested that **work and home-life commitments** presented a huge challenge. Although recognising that their child needed help with learning at home, the ability to deliver this was limited owing to having to balance this with work inside and outside the home and was especially felt by single parents and larger families with more children.

> *"This is absurd. The person who is not working can look after children at home. School should have been opened. Now children have gaps in their education."*
>
> *"I've had a mixed experience; the whole situation was strange. Balancing everyday tasks with supervising children's learning and lesson preparations."*
>
> *"It was tough because both parents worked and our children never had regular classes or online."*
>
> *"Sometimes it was difficult because when had to work had to leave my children with grandparents who do not understand English so it was very complicated they have the necessary help if needed."*
>
> *"As a single parent, and the working, COVID made it very difficult for me as I have to pay extra hours for childcare when my child should have been in school. there's only so much a child minder can teach individual children as they have to attend to other children which meant her education was limited"*
>
> *"The main challenge was lack of social interaction for my daughter and for me, which contributed to my decision to spend most of this and last year's lockdown in Poland."*

- Parents felt they were **unable to motivate** their children, especially when they had several children at home

> *"My eldest showed some enthusiasm but the younger one in reception flatly refused to do any online work most days"*
>
> *"It was hard, because children don't really listen to their parents when it comes to learning at home."*
>
> *"Difficult as children lose motivation and atmosphere at home doesn't let them concentrate."*
>
> *"Extremely stressful, struggled with the extra cost of keeping the house warm, my child did not want to do homework, lack of contact with other children was very hard for my son"*
>
> *"My daughter was fine as she is in year 6 and she was able to do her study but I think staying at home doesn't motivate children as when they are at school between other kids."*

- However, not all experiences were negative, and several parents described how they were able to successfully adapt, finding the second lockdown easier than the first. Some parents were able to accommodate home-schooling by altering their daily household routines and some were working at home and so found the adjustment easier. The feeling that there was improvement over time resonated as did embracing the opportunity to engage with their child's curriculum and language learning first-hand.

> *"Started off hard but became easier"*
>
> *"I had to alter the daily household needs to my children needs during Covid, so the change did not cause my child to have anxiety or feel isolated from the world."*
>
> *"Very good and useful to understand how they work in class. My daughter has improved during the home schooling."*
>
> *"The experience we had was good. My son has always done the homework. We study together, both in English and in Portuguese."*
>
> *"Fantastic. I was able to learn my child development level and the requirement for me to enable my child to achieve the required goal."*
>
> *"It was really interesting to get more of an insight into school. The challenge was to home school two children at the same time, but I felt very privileged, having access to enough devices, and having a separate room for each child."*
>
> *"He improved a lot on reading and writing - this is also according to the teachers- and his confidence in sharing on zoom platform increased with time"*

4.5.3 Teachers from school helped my child to understand the work during school closure

Survey respondents were asked about their experiences with the learning support to their child provided by their school. The overall picture here was split. Half the respondents stated that their school supported their child sometimes and one sixth rarely or never.

Parents of EAL learners who felt well supported by their school, praised them for their organisation and ability to deliver home-schooling effectively and making sure their child understood what was taught:

> *"It was great experience. All the lessons our children had were very well prepared with all the materials, links for support ready."*
>
> *"My child school was wonderful, great support, great lessons structure, they make home schooling feel like a breeze, I cannot praise their dedication enough."*
>
> *"We had a great support from our school. With regular lessons and live sessions. We are fortunate enough to have multiple screens, lots of books, pen and paper, number squares, etc…"*
>
> *"The way the home schooling was organised with the second lockdown was great. It made the children engage with the work and having feedback catch-up was giving the children a good reason to engage more. It was good as my son is very independent, and I had the chance as a mum to be more involved. Great work from the school and teachers! Very supportive too"*
>
> *"The teachers did a great job providing us with teaching material via the Tapestry app, and once we got a login to Oxford Owl, I was able to do reading practice with her too."*
>
> *"We did what we had to do. Sometimes it was easy, sometimes it was tough. I could dedicate my day to my child home learning and I am grateful for this. I think it was necessary, especially for Year 1."*

However, many respondents also felt that their school could only provide limited support (if any) to their child. The reasons for this included:

- School work being too difficult for their child to understand or do alone
- Work set was not stimulating enough for the child
- Too much homework and tasks set
- Tasks set not being according to the English level of the child
- Insufficient time given to complete tasks

> *"The schoolwork was too difficult to leave my child unattended. The 2nd lockdown work was easier as there were less tasks. Home schooling was not easy and not something I would like to do again in a rush."*
>
> *"Some of the work was not stretching enough for them"*
>
> *"Too boring to really be sustained. Primary age too young to do it alone, even year 6."*
>
> *"Terrible, they left a lot of stress and tasks that often I not understood myself to help my children"*

"The tasks were not according to the English level of the child which no continuity because they were excessive and leave it alone that the end was very sad. The child as angry, sad, worried about not finishing some tasks."

"I no longer had access to all the help we used to receive from attending school."

"I think my child didn't have enough contact with the teacher"

4.5.4   Teachers have given my child extra help in English during school closure

As shown in figure 4.4, just over half of EAL families were receiving some degree of extra support from school in developing their child's English, while nearly half received this rarely or never:

"Chaos, the act of sending daily work of different subjects without having an online master class with its previously."

"Very concerned about the academic development of my children for not having sufficient means to assist them in their learning"

"My brother has felt more frustrated since he wants to learn English being locked up but has not been able to learn quickly"

"Bad because it delayed much progress my child in the subject English"

"I think you should take classes via teams and more activities to do by writing, my daughters have felt short of writing by hand."

"The tasks should make online under the supervision of teachers. I say so because my daughter is learning the language."

4.6   Reflections

Survey respondents were asked ***"Is there anything else which might help you if schools have to close again?"***. Thematic analysis of the recommendations suggested the following key areas:

4.6.1   Live online classes

The recommendation with the most feedback received was for more "live" lessons hosted online. Some respondents felt that their child didn't experience enough online lessons and felt that this should be delivered more regularly. EAL learners benefit from exposure to spoken English both with teachers and their classmates and for those who are in a non-English speaking home, this may have been almost completely absent during home-schooling. Comments pertaining to this included:

"Live online lessons as they only had a group google meet once a week"

"They should have an online lesson or meeting with teacher and classmates at least once each day."

"More live teaching, opportunities for children to work together"

"Explanations of the content of daily work by a class. Online "zoom" in order to better develop the work at home"

"Definitely provide online classes to all children. Unforgivable that this has not happened."

"Kids need lessons online, they need to see friends, teachers. If the school to continue with the system adopted in this lockdown, I think it will be beneficial for everyone."

A number of respondents also commented that that the live lessons needed to be longer. It was suggested that children with EAL need more time to understand the work and that children with EAL would also benefit from having extra interactive time allocated to explain the tasks set to them properly. An issue raised was that as more work was set, without the child fully understanding, the tasks and work pressure accumulated over time. Responses included:

"Online classes that are longer"

"Give online lesson more than 30 minutes because in 30 minutes is not enough, I think they need give more help to the children"

"If schools do close again it would be more helpful when the teachers post the work online, they could explain it properly to make it easier for children who don't understand the work. More 'live' online interaction"

"With the tasks they accumulate work and sometimes they do not understand"

"It would be better if there are more meetings with teachers online, at least an hour every two days to enable children to talk about their work"

4.6.2   Structured home-schooling routine

Parents suggested having a more structured and consistent routine for home-schooling:

"Consistency with the same routine"

"Structured learning and learning should be fun for the children"

"The tasks should be placed all at once, for example 9 am … not all children have at their disposal 1 tablet/computer to do the tasks to which they are placed throughout the day"

4.6.3   School attendance

During the pandemic year, schools made provision for keyworker children and vulnerable pupils to attend. Respondents requested that this provision should be made for their children with EAL, so to better receive the support that they required.

"EAL children should be included in keyworker bubbles. Keyworker bubbles should be learning the same things as home learning children."

"My son needs to attend even if one day per week"

"I am an essential worker so I hope my daughter will be able to attend school despite possible future lockdowns."

"Well, I'd like my child to attend like other children who have attended school when they were closed"

4.6.4   1 to 1 teaching support

Parents indicated that their child would benefit from more 1:1 support from teachers and tutors.

"More one to one teaching"

"My daughter would have to have a special person to help me with her, why because she said she don't understand when I teach her, but I tried"

"Would like a tutor to teach my daughter, because I do not understand the tasks that are sent"

"More hours with the teacher but individual to be more comfortable because group sometimes laugh, of course I understand they are children but not all learn the same way and need further explanation."

"They need more support from school, not had a single call to my son. Mainly support classes in subjects that pupils have difficulty"

4.6.5   English language support for non-fluent pupils

Several respondents to this question suggested that their child would require more English language support from school. Respondents described the challenges they faced with supporting their child's English acquisition and in many cases having no one at home who could help them:

"My daughter is recent time here, because of that, starting with learning the language"

"My child needs to learn to read better"

"For my part I wish that you strengthen in writing"

"I would need a teacher or someone to teach only English to my brother. since I have not been able to with so much confinement"

"Greater assistance for children whose parents does not speak English well"

4.6.6 Homework

Some parents suggested that the volume of work was too high, and less homework should be set when home-schooling.

> *"Less work maybe? or less obligatory and more dip in and out. Work at different levels (even beyond the bronze, silver, gold)"*
>
> *"If they give less homework as we have to look after the kids at home."*

Some respondents also commented that when work is set, they would like better communication between the school and the child, to explain the work that was set and for regular reminders:

> *"Be communicating at all times for teaching children"*
>
> *"More explanation from teachers when they submit an assignment"*
>
> *"Be more up to date on what my son has to do with his homework with reminder messages - Learning Support"*

4.6.7 Support for parents

Parents described how challenging they felt home-schooling was and there were various suggestions on what might help them. For some, more financial help was needed:

> *"More support with childcare cost especially for working parents"*
>
> *"Yes, with some voucher"*

Some parents also commented on their need for more advice from the school on how to home school their child and suggested having tips and guidebooks to help them:

> *"To send information on how to help and support in homework and teaching parents. It is not enough to send the work and expect children to do the work alone without much explanation."*
>
> *"It would be more interesting that parents receive tips or advice on how to broach the subject to be learned"*
>
> *"We could give a guidebook on extra exercises we could do"*
>
> *"Yes, and telephone and explain me how to work with it at home"*

Respondents described the value of good communication and interaction between schools and parents, feeling part of the school community.

> *"Just keep the interaction going, for both the children and parents - we need to know that we are part of a school community. And I think live lessons are better"*

> *"It will be nice if you could speak to the children parents that were going through the same and listening their experience"*

4.6.8 Child wellbeing

> *"May be a way that the children can communicate to each other in a secure environment whilst they are in lockdown, so they don't feel so lonely and apart from everyone."*
>
> *"Having some child menu in hand. Some quick and easy healthy recipes for children."*
>
> *"I hope that does not happen, but if it were to happen teacher (a) to talk with the child and his companions zoom once a week to make it enjoyable break that routine or relax, laugh, chat, etc."*
>
> *"Thank teachers for their great work. If you may include physical education, welfare, and health. (Tips). Thanks."*
>
> *"But recreational activities, without having to stand only on the computer, I think it would be good."*

4.6.9 Digital access

Many respondents suggested having more laptops and devices available to their child for home schooling. Despite programmes of laptop allocation, it appears that this didn't meet the need of all families. Respondents described how sharing of devices and using devices inappropriate for home-schooling such as mobile phones made home-schooling difficult. In some cases, home internet access was also an issue:

> *"A laptop for my child to be more autonomous"*
>
> *"Giving my child an iPad to use while home learning. He uses my mobile phone and while it has internet, it's quite basic and small so it was difficult to complete some work set"*
>
> *"Considering that some children don't always have a device to use"*
>
> *"I need some more accessibility for stronger internet and for my children to all get a chance to do their class work."*
>
> *"With a laptop so you can do their homework online, because I have only one computer at home and have three children"*
>
> *"Extra computers/laptops help to pay for electricity and internet. Also, good working internet"*

One respondent went further to suggest that with the lack of internet access at home, that perhaps the school could provide alternative methods such as daily or weekly worksheets which could help their child continue working:

> *"Daily worksheet from school to do at home as not all parents can access the internet or even know how to use the internet at home. Weekly worksheets which consist of maths and English can help parents who cannot access online sessions, and it will also keep children busy at home."*

4.6.10 Translation

Those with little or no English at home suggested that having a translator or translation service into their home language would help them with supporting their child at home:

> *"Also, if possible, with the help of a Spanish interpreter, to be sure I understand correctly."*
>
> *"The translation into Portuguese of the exercises to facilitate parents in child understanding"*
>
> *"If there could be a way to translate"*

4.7 Summary of parent survey

Parents responding to the survey expressed the challenges faced during school closures - namely juggling work and home life, their feelings of not being up to the task because of educational, language and time barriers and the inability to motivate their children to study at home. They reported wishing for more and longer 'live' lessons, more 1:1 tuition, booster language classes, less homework and a chance for their children to attend school as vulnerable and keyworker children. Some requested financial help in the form of vouchers, laptops and internet access. In contrast, other parents described the great experience they had teaching their child at home, with others reporting how the situation had improved as school systems for remote learning and communication with home were developed.

Chapter 5: Pupil survey evidence on the impact of school closures

5.1 Introduction

During the 2020–21 school closures, pupils were, in the main, required to continue their education working at home remotely. Two separate surveys were distributed, for primary and secondary pupils, to account for differences in reading age and maturity. Respondents were asked questions about their experiences and feelings during the lockdown period.

5.2 Background characteristics

Lambeth schools were asked to select a small sample of their non-fluent children. In some cases, especially with younger pupils, the surveys were completed with the assistance of their teacher. In total, 50 completed surveys were returned. This is too small a number to give statistical validity but the comments are of interest nonetheless.

Table 5.1: Breakdown of pupil survey respondents

	No.	%
Phase		
Primary	32	64%
Secondary	18	36%
Year Group		
Year 1–2	7	14%
Year 3–4	15	30%
Year 5–6	10	20%
Year 7–8	3	6%
Year 8–9	5	10%
Year 10–11	10	20%
Language Spoken		
Spanish	15	30%
Portuguese	11	22%
Polish	5	10%
Somali	4	8%
Arabic	3	6%
Chinese	3	6%
Bulgarian	1	2%
Fula (West Africa)	1	2%
French	1	2%
Hausa	1	2%
Lithuanian	1	2%
Romanian	1	2%
Turkish	1	2%
Ukrainian	1	2%
Urdu	1	2%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Responses were received from pupils in each statutory year group, but most were in years 3 and 4 in primary school (30%) and years 10 and 11 in secondary (20%). 141 different languages are spoken in the Lambeth school population and this survey collected just a small sample (15) of these languages, mainly speakers of Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, and Somali, representing the home languages most commonly understood by pupils in Lambeth.

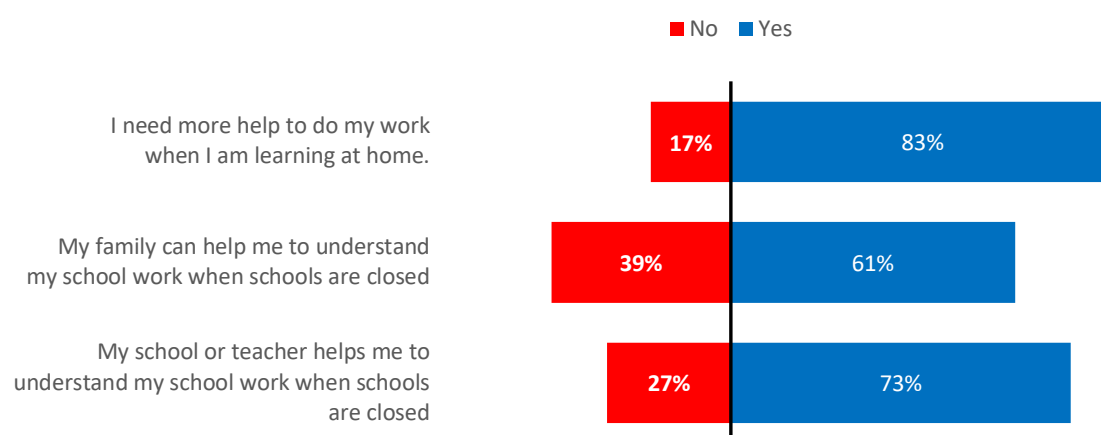## 5.3 Experiences of primary pupils with EAL

5.3.1 The experience of home learning

Survey respondents were asked about their experience of working at home, including the kind of help they received (Figure 5.1)

Figure 5.1: Primary pupil experiences when working at home (%)

As shown above, the overwhelming majority felt they needed help with working at home. To a lesser degree, pupils reported being helped by their families. Almost three quarters agreed that they were helped remotely by teaching staff.

5.3.2 The experience of returning to school

The survey asked pupils how they found schoolwork when learning at home and also how they found it after having returned. (Figure 5.2)

Figure 5.2: Primary pupil experiences on returning to school (%)

A large majority (89%) of primary EAL learners who provided a response, said that they found schoolwork harder during school closures. Around half agreed that school was harder having returned. The overwhelming majority did not prefer working at home.
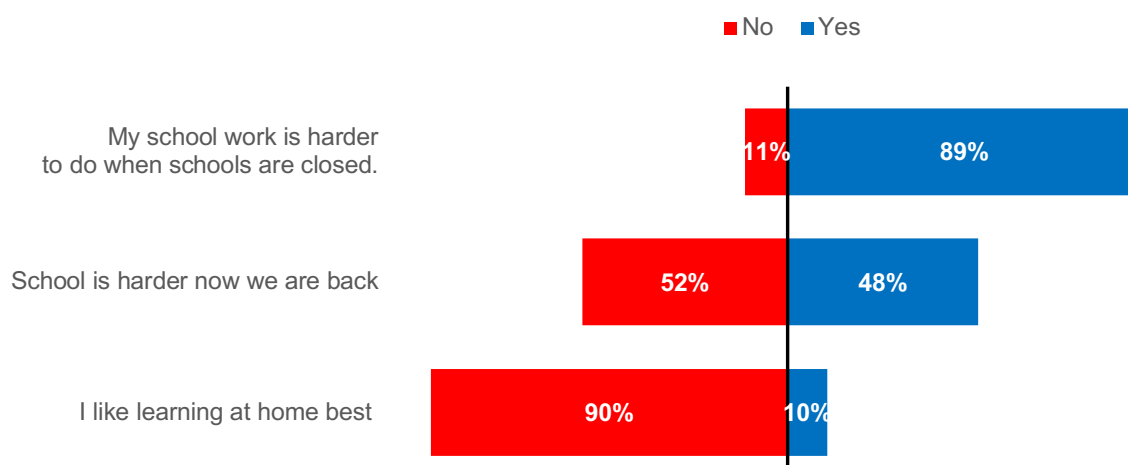
5.3.3   Language development when learning at home

Pupils were asked how they felt their use of English had developed during school closures (Figure 5.3)

Figure 5.3: Primary pupil language development when learning at home (%)

The pupils were evenly divided by the first statement - whether home learning benefitted their learning of English. However over three quarters felt that learning at home had aided the development of their home language.
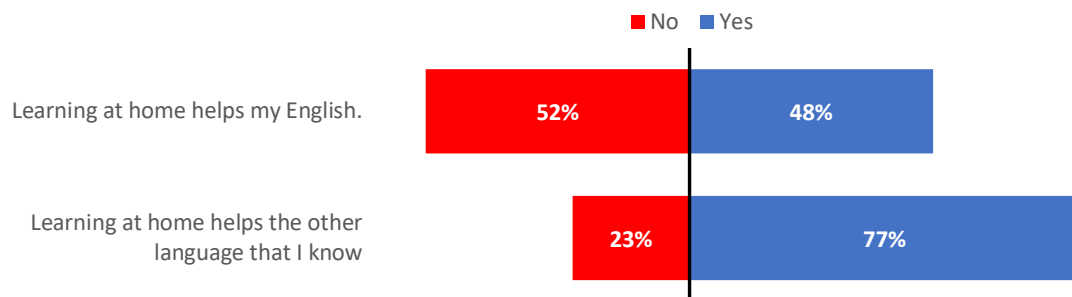
5.3.4   Comments on what primary pupils liked and didn't like about home-learning

Pupils were asked to comment on what they found to be positive about home-learning.

Key themes emerging included:

- Being at home with family and siblings
- Schooling with parents
- Online games and materials
- Use of technology and digital features

"Because I can stay with my family. My mum can help me more with my work."

"I used the iPad to see the work but wrote on paper. I go on google for help. Dad helps me with homework."

"I like reading diary [texts given during lockdown]. I like playing with my brothers and sisters."

"Fun. I put my hand up and when I wasn't sure she (teacher) gave me clues. I like both learning from home and being in school. Mum and dad helped me a little bit."

"You could do things like very quickly… like right after the lesson ended you can do homework. Things were straight forward. I like that you could ask questions with the raise hand button. Mum and sometimes dad helped me learn."

"I was learning the words and how to try to speak it well"

"I liked the meetings. I liked star of the week. I would ask Alexa and Siri for help"

"It is more difficult to concentrate in school because more people are talking." When asked to explain this, the pupil said that learning at home is easier because they can focus in on the teacher as it is quieter.

"They liked the help." The pupil said that the teacher would give him additional help when the others were sent into break out rooms and he liked that.

"At least I could see my friends through the screen. Put your hand up button was good."

"I like doing Maths at home"

Respondents were asked what they didn't like about home-learning. Analysis of the comments uncovered some key themes which included:

- Missing friends
- Using online learning
- Lack of classroom support and reluctance to ask for help
- Not understanding the work set
- Not having enough time to complete the work
- Distractions at home

Reluctance to ask for help when needed. Lack of resources at home "I wished I was back in school"

"I missed my friends… a long time. It was a little bit hard. I only asked my teacher for help once because I am shy."

"Not seeing my teachers and not working with my teachers and I need help. I miss my friends"

"I did not like doing anything at home, the only thing I did was study in the morning was to study in online classes" "I didn't log on google classroom."

When interviewed by the teacher they said, "In school they explain it well… (but) I couldn't log on for 2 weeks."

"Felt nervous as I didn't know how to use the computer"

"The work was harder on the PC"

"I didn't know how to send my work. My mum didn't know how to send it."

"Maths and English, I didn't understand sometimes what they are saying, I get help in school."

"Little sister distracted me"

"My brothers annoy me"

When asked by the teacher they said, "I don't get to see my friends much. It was sad. I'm not that good at writing at home it took me the whole day. I'm kind of slow writer." The pupil also said that sharing a computer with their sibling was 'very annoying' and they said, "No, my teachers didn't help me because I was in my house. I didn't ask for help but my mum helped me focus."

"Because there are no resources at home to help me. For example, card/paper to make things"

5.4   Experiences of secondary pupils with EAL

5.4.1   The experience of home-learning

The secondary school pupil survey asked pupils about their experiences of learning during the periods of school closures and home learning.

Some secondary schools in Lambeth had arranged for beginner English speakers to attend school. However, 83% of respondents were home learners. Respondents were asked about their experiences learning at home and the kind of help they received (Figure 5.4)

Figure 5.4: Secondary pupil experiences when working at home (%)
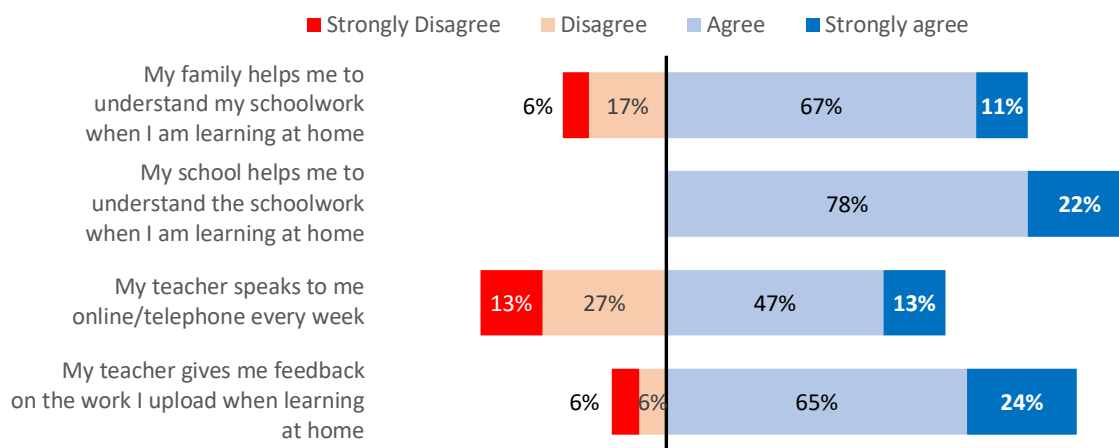

The main findings show that:

- Over three quarters reported that help was available at home
- All respondents received help from school while at home
- 60% spoke to a teacher individually, online or by telephone each week, however 40% did not have weekly conversations
- The overwhelming majority were given teacher feedback

5.4.2   The experience of returning to school

The survey asked secondary school pupils how they found schoolwork when learning at home and also how they found it when returning to school after home learning. (Figure 5.5)

Figure 5.5: Secondary school work during and after school closures (% respondents)
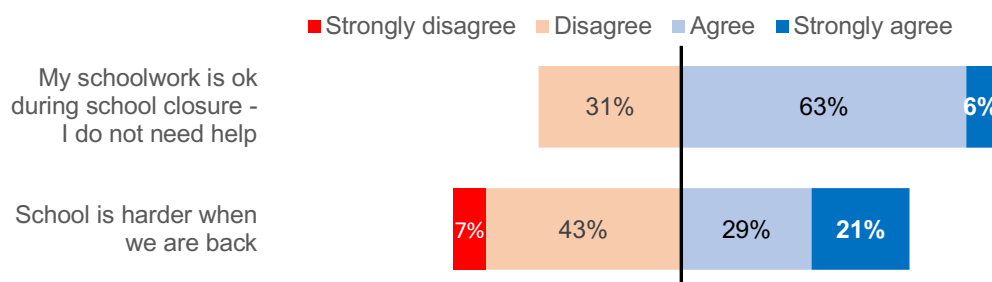
My schoolwork is ok during school closure – I do not need help

Over two thirds of pupils agreed that they did not need help with their schoolwork at home

School is harder now we are back

Opinion was divided on whether it was harder working in school upon return than before lockdown, with half of secondary respondents saying it wasn't harder and half of respondents agreeing it was harder, including 21% of respondents who strongly agreed.

5.4.3 Language development when learning at home

Respondents from secondary school were asked how they felt their language acquisition had developed during school closures (Figure 5.6)

Figure 5.6: Language development during home learning (%)
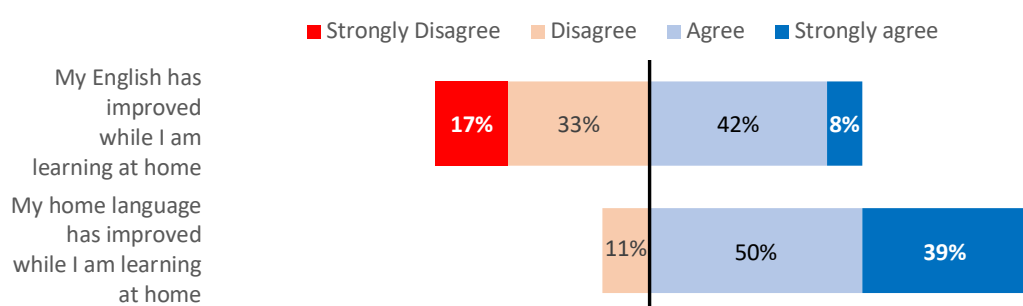
Use of English

Half the pupils felt that their English had improved and developed during the period of home learning. However, half of respondents disagreed, with 17% strongly disagreeing.

Use of the home language

In contrast, 89% felt that their home language had improved whilst learning at home, including 39% who strongly agreed that it had.

5.4.4 Comments on what secondary pupils liked and didn't like about home-learning

When asked for their thoughts and feelings about home learning there was only one comment:

> *"My experience was ok, but I don't like it at all because I don't see anybody or talk. Was very sad."*

5.5 Summary of pupil survey

Up to four in five pupils, in what was a very small sampling, reported needing and getting at least some help to understand the work sent home from school. One third of pupils were unable to access help from their families. Many children enjoyed spending more time at home with their families, while others missed school and their friends. The overwhelming majority felt that they had improved their first language skills during school closures. However it is not possible to know in what ways their language improved, ie whether their academic language was enriched by discussing homework with parents, or whether their everyday use of the home language was more practised. In the former case we would expect this to improve cognition and help with future school work.

Chapter 6: Summary and conclusions

6.1 Introduction

Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) attract a great deal of interest among policymakers, school leaders and teachers, yet there are relatively few studies that have examined EAL attainment and the impact of Covid 19. This issue is increasingly important for EAL policy development, given that the percentage of pupils recorded as speaking English as an additional language has more than trebled since 1997 and is about 19% of the school population (DfE, 2021). There is also now research evidence that school closures have meant that EAL learners may not have had access to models of good English language and EAL pedagogy and sufficient opportunities to rehearse and practise speaking in English, particularly in the key language areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The main findings of the surveys confirm Covid has created significant disruption to EAL learners' education and suggest that not only has their English proficiency fallen behind, but that the achievement gap will have widened. It indicates that the Covid pandemic has had a significant negative impact on EAL learners relative to their peers. There are a number of key messages. The key findings of the surveys are summarised below.

6.2 Teaching staff and school leaders survey

Respondents to the teaching and leadership surveys gave the following views:

- 85% of school leadership felt that the learning needs and support for non-fluent EAL learners was greater than that for other pupils during school closures and 83% of teaching staff felt that it had been challenging to effectively support EAL learners during school closures
- 88% of school leadership said their non-fluent EAL learners required extra provision to access the curriculum during school closures
- 54% of teaching staff felt that their EAL learners engaged with the learning hosted online. Almost the same percentage stated that their families engaged effectively with home learning.
- 62% of leaders and 66% of teaching staff believed that Covid safe arrangements in the classroom (e.g. seating arrangements) impacted EAL learners more than their non-EAL peers
- 69% of school leadership said that the impact of school closures on curriculum learning was greater for non-fluent EAL learners than their classmates and 49% of teaching staff felt there had been a negative impact on EAL pupil's curriculum learning
- 71% of leadership stated that their non-fluent EAL learners had shown no English development or progression since lockdown and 59% of teaching staff thought there had been a negative impact on EAL pupil's development in English
- 75% of teaching staff were concerned about a long-term educational impact for EAL learners and 92% of leadership recognised the importance of establishing a plan and making additional provision for non-fluent learners

Overwhelmingly teaching staff respondents said they found home teaching of EAL learners challenging, in terms of enabling access to learning platforms, ensuring learners understood the content and tasks in the lessons and developing their English proficiency. Unsurprisingly, the language barrier was the main reason.

6.3 Parent and pupil survey

The overall evidence from the parent and pupil surveys show that:

- Only one in four (25%) of parents reported that they spoke mainly English at home, compared to 84% who stated that they mostly spoke their home language.
- 70% of parents read with their child during school closures, of which 47% read to their child in English and 39% in their home language.
- 94% of families had internet access at home, with 5% sometimes or never having internet access.
- 88% of parents responded that their child could access a computer at home. 12% indicated that their child sometimes or never had access to a computer when needed, rising to 18% for families with three or more children.
- 87% of parents felt their child needed help understanding the work sent home during school closures, with nearly one in two (47%) of respondents stating that help was needed most of the time or always. This rose to 61% for families with low English proficiency.
- Younger pupils needed more help, with 81% at Key Stage1 needing help most of the time or always.
- Only 36% of parents responded that someone was able to help their child understand the work at home. The majority noted that they could help only sometimes (35%) or never (29%).
- Only half (51%) of parents felt that that teachers from school helped their child understand the work sent home, with 33% replying that their school only sometimes helped and 15% never.
- Only 32% of parent responded that their child received extra help in English during school closures all or most of the time. Almost half (48%) of respondents stated that their child had not ever received any help in English
- 78% of all EAL learner respondents said they needed help to complete their work at home. This was higher for primary pupils (83%) than secondary (31%)
- 80% of pupils reported that their school helped them to understand the work sent home. However, one in five (20%) were not given help
- One in three (34%) pupils were not helped by someone in the family because they could not/did not understand the work
- Half (49%) of pupils thought learning at home helped their English
- 82% noted an improvement in the home language
- Half (49%) felt that school is harder now they have returned

The parent survey respondents also suggested the following key areas to help if schools have to close again:

- More live online lessons for longer
- Structured home-schooling routine
- School attendance as part of keyworker/vulnerable group
- 1:1 support between child and teacher
- English language support lessons for non-fluent in English pupils
- Volume of work given to children
- More support and communication with parents in teaching children
- Child wellbeing strategies, including communication, recreational activities and preventing feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Improved digital access
- Access to translation services and interpreters

The surveys suggested that many parents had a difficult and challenging time supporting their child(ren) with remote learning, owing to language, educational and financial barriers, with children feeling cut off from their classmates despite enjoying extra time with their families.

6.4   Concluding remarks and recommendations

The main finding of the survey is that school closures have had a negative impact on pupils with EAL, both in terms of their English acquisition and their education.

Since returning to school, school respondents have assessed proficiency in English and have reported a negative impact across all four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening for pupils not yet fluent in English. Stage A pupils have been most affected, with 75–80% respondents reporting a negative-highly negative impact. Stage B learners were somewhat less affected, with 65–75% respondents reporting a negative impact.

Respondents reported a more mixed response for Stage C pupils. Although, still perceived to be negatively impacted especially in writing as reported by 61%, the impact on speaking and listening was much less with slightly more respondents (52%) saying that they had not seen a negative impact.

This was corroborated by comments which highlighted:

- New to English and Early Acquisition pupils (Stage A/B) have been most impacted
- Younger EAL learners, especially in the Early Years may be very negatively affected
- Writing skills may be more likely to be behind age-related expectations

Comments highlighting the key messages from the teaching survey are that:

> *"All children have regressed both in education and in their ability to speak English"*
> *(Classroom Teacher – Early Years)*

> *"Pupils were keen to learn, but had made little to no progress during lockdown 1 and over the Summer" (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)*

> *"One Portuguese student burst into tears as he had forgotten all the English language he had been taught." (HLTA – Primary School)*

Some schools classified their new to English pupils as 'vulnerable' and so invited them into school. The majority attempted to provide additional support through the home language, differentiation and extra teaching. However, this was hampered by a lack of staff, either who shared the home languages or because they were spread thinly, trying to cope with teaching both pupils in school and at home. This challenge was echoed by many parents of EAL learners, who found home schooling problematic and would have wanted their non-fluent in English children classed as keyworker/vulnerable in order to go to school:

> *"Best that they can go to school with the children of key workers there and the teachers explain tasks."*

Communication with pupils and families was identified as being the key to successful engagement, especially through the home language. However, this was challenging in schools where many languages were spoken. Many channels were created, both directly as in frequent phone calls and indirectly enabling parents to support each other through social media such as WhatsApp and other groups. Schools which had existing systems to share information and support families as an integral part of a pre-Covid school life, described how this had helped during school closures and perhaps provide examples of good practice for the future.

> *"Having previously built great support networks with Pastoral/Parents/Subject Teachers has helped to ride the wave of the Covid 19 upheaval" (EAL Coordinator – Secondary School)*

Parents responded in kind, welcoming frequent communication with the school:

> *"Just keep the interaction going, for both the children and parents - we need to know that we are part of a school community."*

Teachers employed a range of strategies and practices to support their EAL learners at home. **"Extra teaching support on an individual basis"** and **"extra teaching support on a group basis"**, were judged by teaching staff to have had the greatest impact, with 85–86% respondents who used these practices reported it as having an impact on their EAL learners. However, there were considerable differences between phases with 71% of secondary respondents citing the former, compared to only 46% of primary respondents and the latter was used by 65% of secondary respondents, compared to 44% of primary respondents. This may reflect the changes in primary schools in recent years, where EAL teachers have been replaced by coordinators who have the responsibility as a subsidiary to their main role, for example SENDCos or assistant/deputy headteachers. As one coordinator commented 'the role of EAL coordinator has become more data collection than support and intervention'. In the secondary phase, some EAL teachers were redeployed to subject teaching, thus reducing the amount of support they were able to offer. In both phases, respondents commented on shortages of staff and limitations imposed by covid safe restrictions. Some commented on the lack of EAL specialists and called for more support, either at local authority level or within schools. Similarly, parents expressed the need for 1:1 tuition, along with more 'live' lessons for longer periods of time.

> *"My daughter would have to have a special person to help me with her, why because she said she don't understand when I teach her, but I tried"*

There were other marked differences between primary and secondary phases. **"Online translators"** were used quite prevalently by secondary respondents (82%), but used considerably less in primary schools (35%), possibly because younger children are less likely to be literate. Similarly, **"Paper lesson resources"** were used more extensively by secondary respondents, particularly translated paper lesson resources, supporting those pupils who are literate in their home language. However, paper lessons resources were judged to have the least impact on pupils' learning.

Clearly those activities that required a lot of reading were a challenge, even if in the home language. In the primary phase there are only a few pupils who are literate in their home language. In addition, there are families who may speak the home language but do not read or write it. Some families rejected translations, as one early years' teacher commented,

> *"It was very challenging - my parents of EAL have all refused translated information and work as they believe they need to speak English because they are in England. communication was very little and interaction with zooms/home learning was poor."*

However, others believed that their pupils' home language would develop as a result of being at home and that would benefit their learning back in school, as much previous research has shown.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, the survey findings suggest that it was the direct teacher contact practice, either visual or oral, which had the most impact and those practices which required the pupils to work either independently or with support from home had the least. The low impact strategies may not have been first choice for schools, but a result of the shortage of staff as reported by many or lack of internet access for some. Parents especially appreciated hearing from teachers:

> *"The way the home schooling was organised with the second lockdown was great. It made the children engage with the work and having feedback catch up was giving the children a good reason to engage more. It was good as my son is very independent, and I had the chance as a mum to be more involved. Great work from the school and teachers! Very supportive too"*

The role of talk in the development of English as an additional language is well recognised as a key lynchpin. On the return to school, many respondents commented on the lack of exposure to English and opportunities to use it, whilst also recognising the value of continuing to develop the home language. However, concerns also focused on circumstances where children were engaged in greater amounts of non-oral play, for example an increased use of computer and TV screens, which they suggested may have limited all language development. A deputy headteacher commented,

> *"… the amount of time children will have spent in non-oral play etc (e.g. computer/devices) will far exceed the amount of time talking with peers etc".*

Whilst the importance of planning talk on the return to school was emphasised, respondents described barriers created by Covid-safe restrictions. The restoration of planned talk in the classroom, will be essential for accelerating language development.

Whilst there were some calls for the curriculum to be narrowed, so there could be a focus on English and Maths, it should be remembered that language is best learnt within its context and the wider curriculum offers these opportunities.

The key evidence from the surveys is corroborated by the study of literature reviews which identified some of the main reasons for the negative impact on education and the English proficiency of pupils with EAL. These include:

- *"less support in improving English proficiency during lockdown*
- *missing access to small group lessons and one-to-one support in school*
- *less access to technology for online learning*
- *lack of parent English language skills to support learning at home*
- *lack of targeted government funding to support EAL pupils."* (Demie, 2021:2)

Finally, the study also argues that there was a clear pattern of English language loss observed by teachers in both the primary and secondary phases. Many pupils at the early stages of English language acquisition did not have opportunities to hear, speak or read in English during school closures. This finding is supported by the Department for Education (2020) research which found in reading, pupils with English as an additional language experienced a learning loss of approximately 2.3 months for secondary aged pupils, compared to an average learning loss in secondary reading of around 1.7 months, reinforcing the challenges that schools face in supporting our EAL learners during catch-up. These survey findings demonstrate there was a lack of targeted intervention for pupils in the early stages of English proficiency during school closures. The recommendations from this study are that there is a need for well-focussed catch-up and recovery plans to take into consideration the English language learning loss, in addition to general learning loss for pupils. We suggest the national recovery and catch-up programme should go beyond disadvantaged pupils by including EAL learners who are not fluent in English. Improving English proficiency that was lost during school closures is key to raising the achievement of pupils with EAL .

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