English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Educational Achievement in England: An Analysis of Publicly Available Data

February 2025

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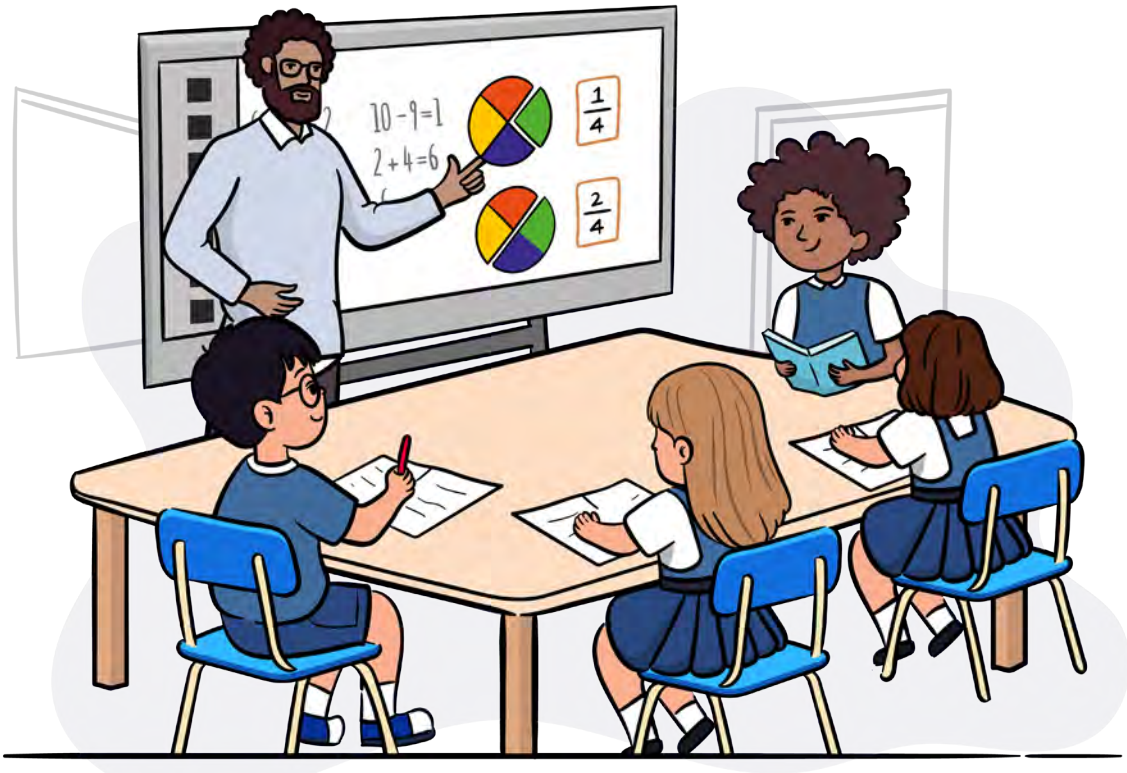

About The Bell Foundation

The Bell Foundation is a charity which aims to change lives and overcome exclusion through language education.

We work on practical interventions, research, public policy, training, and innovation.

By generating and applying evidence, we aim to change practice, policy, and systems for multilingual children, adults and communities who experience social exclusion.

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Acronyms and initialisms

DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EBacc	English Baccalaureate
EPI	Education Policy Institute
EYFS	Early years foundation stage
FSM	Free school meals
GLD	Good level of development
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local authority
NPD	National Pupil Database
OR	Odds ratio

Executive summary

Key findings from this report

The number and proportion of school-age pupils in England who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) has continued to increase over time, from just under 500,000 (7.6% of all pupils) in 1997, to 1.05 million (16.2% of all pupils) in 2013, to 1.68 million (20.5% of all pupils) in 2023.

This increase has been more pronounced among primary school pupils than those in secondary schools, suggesting – as indicated in previous reports (e.g. Strand, Malmberg & Hall, 2015) – that there may be issues around the recording of EAL status during pupils' transition to secondary school. We would not normally expect a pupil's EAL status to change over time, given its formal definition as a marker of the child's exposure to a language or languages other than English during early development. Yet the recorded proportion of EAL pupils in Year 7 is often lower than that of the same cohort in Year 6 (Strand & Lindorff, 2021).

Across the nine regions of England, there is still considerable variation in the respective proportions of pupils who use EAL. However, while most regions have seen an increase of around 4–5%, the Inner London area has recorded a decrease of 6%, from 52% to 46%, over the same period. This is despite methodological adjustments to ensure the same 15 local authorities (LAs) are included in the figures for Inner London in both 2013 and 2023. The finding is worthy of further exploration using the individual-pupil-level data when they become available.

Pupils who use EAL continue to be largely concentrated in LAs containing urban centres, but "heat maps" for 2023 show some spreading out of this population. In particular, EAL pupils are being recorded in a greater number of schools throughout the LAs adjacent to those with the highest concentrations.

In 2013, EAL pupils made up less than 5% of the population for over half of all maintained, mainstream primary and secondary schools. In 2023, this was the case for only around one-third of schools, meaning that a greater proportion of schools now have populations of at least 5% with recorded EAL status. However, the proportion of schools with the highest concentration – over 50% – of EAL pupils has not changed as dramatically, increasing only slightly from 8.4% in 2013 to 9.2% in 2023.

The "White British" share of the school-age population in England has decreased from 83% in 2003 to 62% in 2023; in other words, the ethnic-minority population has increased by more than 20% over this period. The greatest increases within this 20-year timeframe have been in the "Any Other White" (+5.2%; from 2.1% to 7.3%) and "Black African" (+3.2%; from 1.7% to 4.9%) groups. As noted by Strand, Malmberg, and Hall (2015), these

two groups both contain large proportions of EAL pupils, and also tend to have larger achievement gaps associated with this status.

Relationships between EAL status and educational achievement in summer 2023 suggest that pupil age is still an important factor. EAL pupils have lower achievement than their monolingual-English-speaking peers across all areas at the end of the EYFS at age 5 (OR=0.73 to 0.82), and in reading at age 7 (OR=0.80) and age 11 (OR=0.82). However, in mathematics, there is only a small gap at age 7 (OR=0.91), and a significant advantage for EAL pupils by age 11 (OR=1.22). By age 16, on average, EAL pupils are as likely as their monolingual-English-speaking peers to attain a good GCSE in English (OR=1.04); are substantially more likely to achieve a good GCSE in mathematics (OR=1.22) and the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) (OR=1.47); and have significantly higher mean Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores. Generally, the trends across all age groups continue to suggest that language support is most crucial in the earlier years of schooling.

Looking at changes between 2013 and 2023, there has been a significant decrease in the size of the EAL achievement gaps that exist at age 5, and likewise for those in reading at age 7 and age 11. Additionally, where EAL pupils have had higher average scores than their monolingual-English-speaking peers – for example, in mathematics at age 11 and in a wide range of outcomes at age 16 – these advantages have also increased in their favour. There is, therefore, an overall picture of continually improving achievement by EAL pupils. Generally, changes over time have been incremental rather than dramatic. Although COVID-19 was reported to be associated with some quite marked negative impacts on EAL pupils at the time, there is no evidence from the data reported here of any long-term detriment to educational achievement.

However, from the analysis conducted by Strand, Malmberg, and Hall (2015) 10 years ago, we know that the average achievement of EAL pupils is misleading because it does not elucidate in sufficient detail the nuances of need within this diverse group. The overall average of the EAL cohort masks significant variation within this group, based particularly on language learning needs. This can be proxied in terms of those pupils who enter the English education system from outside of England from Year 3 onwards, as shown in analyses completed by the Education Policy Institute (EPI, 2024). However, this is still only a proxy, as pupils may enter from abroad but having studied in international schools through the medium of English and be entirely fluent in English. Ultimately, the most significant determinant of educational achievement by pupils who use EAL in England is their proficiency in English, as shown clearly by Strand (2021) and Hessel and Strand (2023). Since English is the medium of instruction in schools, those entering school with limited proficiency in English are likely to struggle to access the curriculum, unless significant additional support is provided. This support may be required for up to six years or more for pupils who are at the “New to English” stage of proficiency (Strand & Lindorff, 2021).

Our full report – due in the autumn, following our analysis of the individual-level data from the NPD – will dig deeper into the diversity of this group and the variation in educational achievement; however, we may be limited in our ability to account for these variations with the pupil background factors that are available in the data, given that they do not include a measure of proficiency in English.

There are limits to what we are able to learn from the aggregate data presented in this report – and therefore to what we are able to address at this point in time. However, our findings so far offer us some broad directions of enquiry for the analysis of individual-level pupil data in the next phase of the project. They also provide some continued support for conclusions reached based on earlier research – most notably, the limitations of an EAL indicator in facilitating our understanding of the range and extent of language support needs among pupils with first languages other than English in the school-age population.

1 Introduction

English as an Additional Language (EAL) in England

In the context of schools in England, children who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) are those who have been "exposed to a language at home that is known or believed to be other than English" (DfE, 2020). EAL status is based on a pupil's first language as recorded in the annual school census, in which "first language" is defined – according to the official census guidance for schools and local authorities – as that to which a child was initially exposed during early childhood and to which they continue to be exposed at home or in their community (DfE, 2024). Where it is possible to judge with a high degree of confidence whether a pupil's first language is English or not, but not possible to obtain confirmation or any other response from the parent/carer, schools may record the pupil's first language as "not known but believed to be other than English" or "not known but believed to be English". A child's formally recorded first language, and therefore their EAL status, may be complicated by the fact that if the child was exposed to more than one language (one of which might be English) during early development, they will be recorded as having a first language "other than English". This makes the group of pupils recorded as EAL-speakers potentially complex and heterogeneous – it can include pupils who are fluent in English as well as those who are newly arrived from other (non-English-speaking) countries, with very little English proficiency and widely varying needs in terms of English-language support.

Research on EAL and pupil achievement in England

Somewhat unsurprisingly, because EAL status is not an indicator of proficiency in English, previous research on the relationship between EAL status and educational achievement has reflected the complexity and diversity of the EAL group itself.

This is the fifth in a related series of reports published over the last decade investigating the relationships between EAL and educational achievement, funded by The Bell Foundation and Unbounded Philanthropy. In the following, we summarise findings from the previous four reports.

Strand, Malmberg & Hall (2015)

In this report, individual pupil data from 2013, obtained from the National Pupil Database (NPD) in England, were analysed to investigate trends in the number and distribution of EAL pupils, as well as relationships between EAL status and educational achievement at various key stages. Key findings included:

- The EAL population in schools more than doubled, from 7.6% in 1997 to 16.2% in 2013.
- One fourth of schools had less than 1% of pupils recorded as EAL pupils, while in 1 in 11 schools the EAL-pupil population was over 50% – meaning that needs were very concentrated in some schools.
- At age 5, 44% of EAL learners had achieved a good level of development, compared to 54% of their monolingual-English-speaking peers. At age 16, the gap was much narrower, with 58.3% of EAL learners achieving five A*–C GCSEs including English and mathematics, compared to 60.9% of their monolingual-English-speaking peers. Additionally, there was no gap in GCSE best-8 points scores based on EAL status. In other words, by the age of 16, on average, pupils who spoke EAL seemed to catch up with their peers for whom English was the first language.
- There was substantial variation in educational achievement within the group of pupils who spoke EAL. Certain first languages (especially within the "White Other" and "Black African" ethnic groups), the absence of a prior attainment score from the beginning of a given key stage, and mobility between schools were all risk factors for lower achievement. These factors can be seen as proxies for international arrival from abroad, as well as for proficiency in English.

The main conclusion of the report was based on the observation that the group recorded as "EAL" in the NPD could include pupils who were fully fluent in English as well as new arrivals who spoke little or no English at all. The NPD's EAL-status indicator did not provide any information about pupils' proficiency in English – which was likely to be the major factor influencing educational achievement. The report therefore recommended that the Department for Education (DfE) introduce a new "proficiency in English" measure, to allow schools to better assess and respond to pupils' needs. In January 2017, the DfE did introduce this measure – based on one used in schools in Wales since 2009 – and started collecting proficiency-in-English data for all pupils in England.[1] However, this measure remained in place only for the 2017 and 2018 school censuses, after which it was discontinued.

Strand & Hessel (2018)

Although proficiency-in-English information was collected from schools in England in 2017 and 2018, these data were not made public (beyond a single table, published in DfE [2017]) nor made available for research. In order to explore the proficiency-in-English measure and its relationship to educational achievement, the authors of this report worked with local authorities (LAs) to collect data from a large, nationally representative sample of pupils. The sample obtained included over 140,000 pupils in 1,569 schools across six LAs, with data matched to pupils' national assessment results at ages 5, 7, 11, and 16. Key findings included:

1 Proficiency in English was measured on a five-point scale: A = New to English; B = Early Acquisition; C = Developing Competence; D = Competent; and E = Fluent.

- Proficiency in English varied widely across the group of EAL pupils.
- Age – rather than gender, ethnic group, or eligibility for free school meals (FSM) – was the most important factor related to pupils' English-language proficiency. Nearly three-quarters of pupils were still acquiring proficiency by the end of Reception (age 5); this figure dropped to just under half still acquiring proficiency by the end of Key Stage 1 (age 7), just under a quarter by the end of Key Stage 2 (age 11) and one in six by the end of Key Stage 4 (age 16).
- Based on the above, language support is especially important in the early years of primary education, but is still crucial for the relatively small proportion of pupils still acquiring proficiency in later years of schooling.
- Proficiency in English was a powerful predictor of educational achievement, explaining 22% of the variation in educational achievement within the EAL group. In comparison, about 3–4% of this variation could be explained by other background factors such as gender, FSM eligibility, and ethnic group.
- Low proficiency in English was associated with lower achievement than corresponding national averages. However, pupils who were classed as "Developing Competence" on the English-language proficiency scale reached close to the national average for educational achievement, and those who were "Competent" or "Fluent" scored significantly higher than their peers for whom English was the first language.

This report recommended reinstatement of the measurement of proficiency in English in the school census in England, following its discontinuation after 2018. It further recommended the inclusion of proficiency-in-English data within the NPD for research purposes. Finally, the report recommended that even if not required to provide such data for the school census, schools should continue to assess their pupils' English-language proficiency, in order to better understand and address their needs.

Strand & Lindorff (2020)

This report used data from Wales to explore how long it took for pupils to reach English-language proficiency – from a starting point of "New to English" on the five-point scale – and for how long these pupils needed to receive specialised language support. The sample for this study consisted of just under 5,500 EAL pupils, who entered Reception (age 4/5) in Wales between 2009 and 2011, and were followed through to the end of Year 6 (i.e., the end of primary school, around age 11). The report focused on the time required for at least 50% of pupils in the sample to transition between the various levels of proficiency. Key findings included:

- Of the pupils entering Reception who were classified as "New to English", over half (59%) were recorded as in "Early Acquisition" by Year 2, and over half (51%) as

"Developing Competence" by Year 4. Only around one-third (31%) were classed as "Competent" or "Fluent" by the end of Year 6, however.

- Put another way, the majority of pupils starting primary education as "New to English" will take more than six years to be rated as "Competent" or "Fluent" in English. This finding aligns with research from the USA suggesting that it takes between four and eight years to acquire English-language proficiency.
- Based on a sample of 1,839 pupils tracked through to the end of primary school, "New to English" pupils who joined schools in later years (between Year 1 and Year 5, or ages 5/6 to 9/10) could be expected to make about the same rate of progress as those who entered in Reception.
- Other issues identified in the report included: consistency in interpretation concerning the distinction between "Competent" and "Fluent" on the proficiency scale; demographic factors associated with making progress in proficiency; and the relationships between proficiency in English and educational achievement at ages 7, 11, 14, and 16.

A major conclusion of this report concerned implications for funding. Whereas the national funding formula in England provides targeted funding for EAL pupils for three years after they join school, the report's findings suggested that this is not enough time to gain language proficiency – and therefore not enough time for these pupils to fully access the curriculum.

Strand & Lindorff (2021)

This report extended the previous one with an analysis of the same dataset from Wales, this time using multilevel statistical models to delve further into variations in proficiency in English across schools and LAs; the length of time taken to gain proficiency; and the relationships between proficiency in English, other pupil background characteristics, and educational achievement. Key findings included:

- Schools and LAs varied substantially in their assessments of proficiency in English, as well as in the average time taken to progress between the levels. The variation was much greater than that found in other teacher-assessed educational outcomes, such as achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2. This underscores the importance of robust moderation procedures and clear and consistent definitions and criteria to underpin assessments of English-language proficiency.
- Proficiency in English was strongly related to achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2 (ages 7 and 11, respectively). Among EAL pupils, those acquiring proficiency ("New to English", "Early Acquisition", or "Developing Competence") scored significantly below non-EAL peers, on average; while those rated as "Competent" or "Fluent" scored significantly higher than their non-EAL peers. This result further underscores the need for a measure of proficiency in English, where the EAL indicator alone is not sufficient to capture pupils' language learning needs.

- On average, EAL pupils in the "White Other" ethnic group took significantly longer to progress through levels of proficiency, and had lower educational achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2, compared to other ethnic minority groups.
- After accounting for the clustering of pupils in schools, and controlling for pupil background factors, the proportion of pupils who were acquiring proficiency in English (i.e. needing language support) was not associated with levels of achievement for all pupils in a given school, nor with levels of achievement specifically for the school's non-EAL pupils. The report noted that this finding might change, however, given a revision of the Welsh funding formula: at the time the data for the report were collected, the funding formula had taken account of the number of pupils acquiring proficiency in English – but by 2020 this was no longer included.
- Attending a school with a high proportion of pupils eligible for FSM was associated with lower educational achievement, over and above the effects of individual deprivation (proxied via FSM eligibility). This effect was not specific to EAL pupils, but remains worth highlighting due to its implications for funding allocation – in particular, that it might be appropriate to allocate more funding to schools with the highest proportions of pupils eligible for FSM.
- EAL pupils with high levels of proficiency (particularly those rated as "Fluent") seemed to be re-coded as monolingual (i.e. non-EAL) in some schools, suggesting that the EAL indicator was being conflated with "needing language support". Given that EAL status is supposed to be defined by a child's exposure to a language other than English during their early development, the status should not change over time. This confusion of EAL status with fluency further underscores the need for a separate measure of proficiency in English in addition to the EAL indicator, as the two have distinct meanings.

The present research

This paper builds upon the findings of the previous reports summarised above, as part of a project to update the findings of the Strand, Malmberg, and Hall (2015) report 10 years later.

Access to individual pupil data requires a formal application to the DfE England, and the timeline from application to receipt of data can be considerable. As such, this research project has two phases. The first, on which the present report is based, has involved an analysis of publicly available aggregate data while awaiting the processing of an application for individual pupil data. The latter will then be analysed, and a further report compiled, in the project's second phase.

The emphasis in this first report is on trends over time – particularly in relationships between EAL status and educational achievement at different ages (5, 7, 11, and 16) and across different subject areas (e.g. reading, writing, punctuation and spelling, mathematics) – and in patterns of stability or change in these results over the last decade (2013–2023).

Next steps

Once access has been gained, the research team will analyse individual-level NPD data to provide more detailed insights into the distribution of EAL pupils – including in relation to other pupil background characteristics such as first language, ethnic group, age group, and FSM eligibility. Other areas that will be analysed include the relationship between EAL status and educational achievement at different ages; how this varies across schools and LAs and according to the characteristics and composition of individual schools; and how these results compare to corresponding findings from the Strand, Malmberg, and Hall (2015) report that used NPD data from 10 years earlier.

Specific research questions for the second report include:

- How is the size of any EAL attainment gap moderated by other pupil demographics (e.g. ethnicity, FSM eligibility, sex, first language)?
- Are there any groups formed by combinations of ethnicity and first language that show particularly low achievement at age 11 or age 16?
- Can these gaps be accounted for by socioeconomic factors, such as eligibility for FSM?
- Do any school-level factors, such as concentrations of poverty and language needs (measured by the proportion of FSM-eligible and EAL pupils, respectively), explain further variability in pupil achievement, over and above pupil-level variables?
- Are there particular regions or LAs where the gaps are wider than others? Do the data suggest any reasons for this?

Delivery of the second report is planned for the autumn.

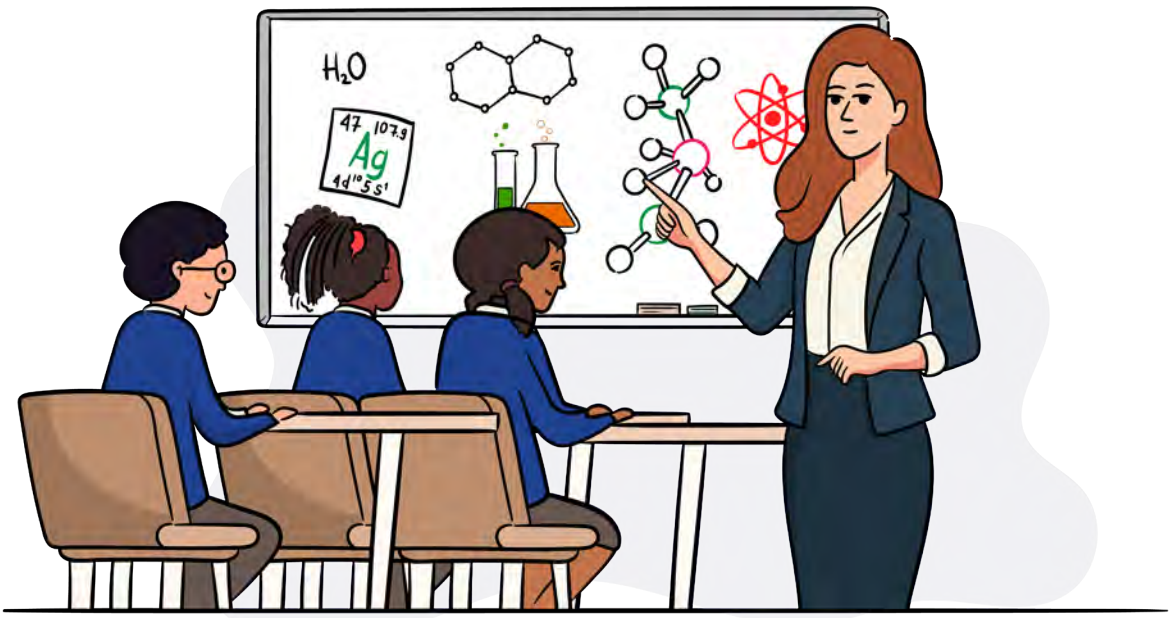
Methodology

All data used in this report came from publicly available sources. The main source was the Department for Education (England) webpage, "Explore education statistics" (https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk), which allows users to browse available data and create custom tables, always reported in aggregate (e.g. by school phase, region, LA, or school). Other sources included the school-level underlying data for the DfE's statistical release, "Schools, pupils and their characteristics", available at https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics/2022-23. Historical information was drawn from previous reports (including those by Strand, Malmberg, and Hall [2015] and Strand and Hessel [2018] where available).

The analysis in the present report is descriptive; its primary emphasis is on the size, distribution, and change over time of the EAL-pupil population in England, and secondly on patterns and gaps in achievement, at various key stages, by EAL status.

Although at the time of publication of this report some demographic data is available from the January 2024 school census – and thus the 2023/24 academic year – the most recent published assessment results are those from summer 2023 (i.e. the 2022/23 academic year). To ensure consistency when referring to the "year", this report uses the 2022/23 school year for both the demographic and academic data.

Similarly, the previous report by Strand, Malmberg, and Hall (2015) was published in 2015 but used data from 2012/13. The 2022/23 school year used in the present report is therefore exactly 10 years on from that used in 2015.



2 Growth in the prevalence of EAL pupils over time: Frequencies and distributions

Frequency of EAL pupils

Figure 1 shows the percentage of EAL pupils recorded over time in English schools, and the full data are set out in Table 1 below.

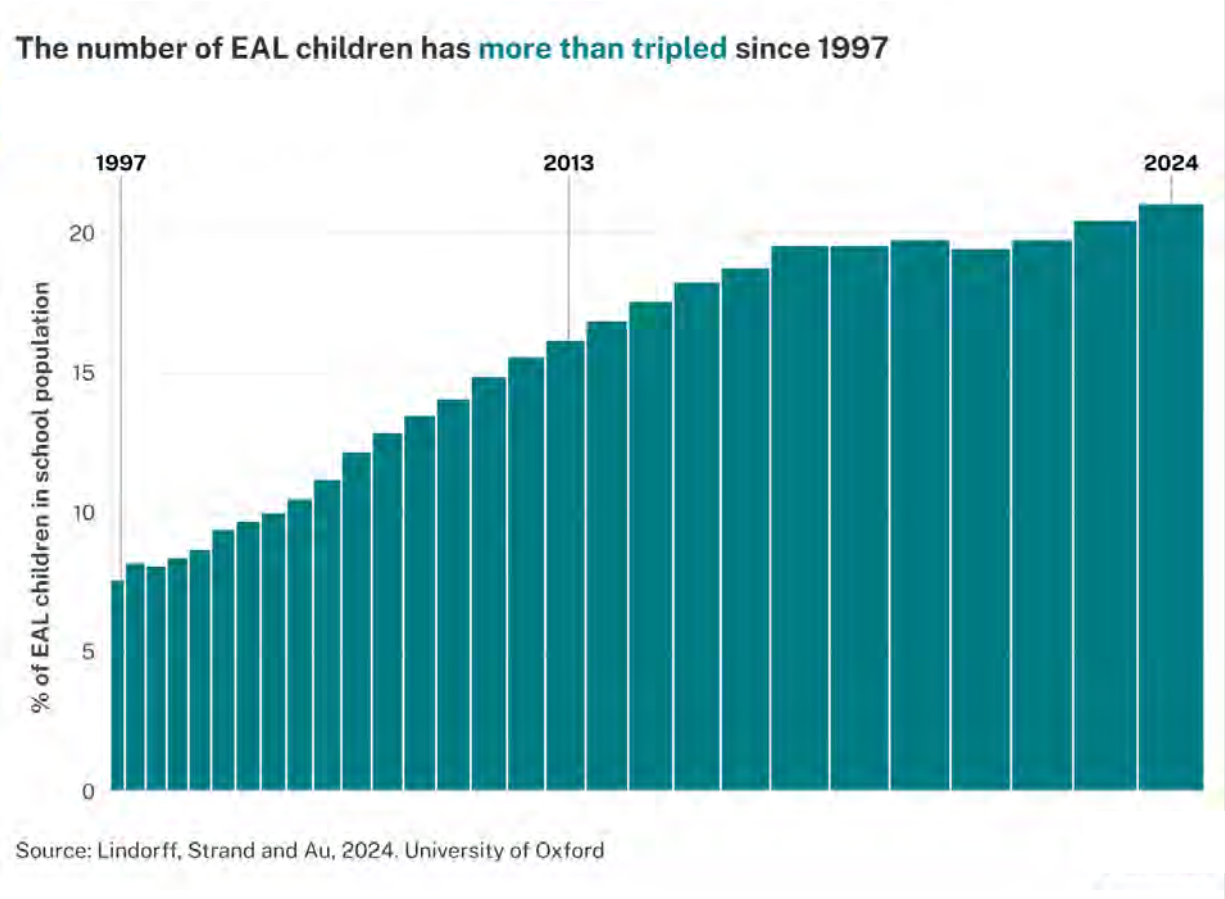


Figure 1: Percentage of pupils recorded as EAL learners in England (all phases), 1997–2024

Table 1: Number and percentage of pupils with a first language other than English (i.e. "EAL pupil") by year in England, 1997–2024

	Primary		Secondary		All pupils	
Year	First language other than English (N)	First language other than English (%)	First language other than English (N)	First language other than English (%)	First language other than English (N)	First language other than English (%)
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	9.4
2003	362,690	10.4	291,110	8.8	653,800	9.7
2004	376,600	11.0	292,890	8.8	669,490	10.0
2005	395,270	11.6	299,200	9.0	694,470	10.5
2006	419,600	12.5	314,950	9.5	734,550	11.2
2007	447,650	13.5	342,140	10.5	789,790	12.2
2008	470,080	14.4	354,300	10.8	824,380	12.9
2009	491,340	15.2	362,600	11.1	853,940	13.5
2010	518,020	16.0	378,210	11.6	896,230	14.1
2011	547,030	16.8	399,550	12.3	946,580	14.9
2012	577,555	17.5	417,765	12.9	995,320	15.6
2013	612,160	18.1	436,150	13.6	1,048,310	16.2
2014	654,405	18.7	455,205	14.3	1,109,610	16.9
2015	693,815	19.4	477,286	15.0	1,171,101	17.6
2016	734,355	20.1	499,061	15.7	1,233,416	18.3
2017	771,083	20.6	520,083	16.2	1,291,166	18.8
2018	998,829	21.2	539,895	16.6	1,538,724	19.6
2019	1,002,292	21.2	561,002	16.9	1,563,294	19.6
2020	1,002,387	21.3	584,565	17.1	1,586,952	19.8
2021	975,238	20.9	601,238	17.2	1,576,476	19.5
2022	987,252	21.2	623,631	17.5	1,610,883	19.8
2023	1,022,969	22.0	658,504	18.1	1,681,473	20.5
2024	1,050,199	22.8	684,422	18.6	1,734,621	21.1

Note: Percentages for "All pupils" are a weighted average of primary and secondary percentages (authors' own calculation)

In January 1997, the earliest date at which consistent national figures could be found, just under 500,000 pupils were recorded as EAL learners – amounting to approximately 7.6% of the English school population aged 5–16. By 2013, this had increased to over 1 million pupils, representing 16.2% of the school population. In 2023, almost 1.75 million EAL pupils were recorded, representing over 20% – more than 1 in 5 – of all pupils aged 5–16 in English schools.

While the rate of increase in the proportion of pupils recorded as EAL learners levelled off slightly between 2018 and 2022, the last two years have seen a return to further increases.

In addition to the overall increase in the proportion of the pupil population recorded as EAL learners between 1997 and 2023, it is also apparent that the gap between the proportion of EAL learners recorded in primary versus secondary school has changed. In 1997, 7.8% of primary school children were recorded as EAL pupils, compared to a similar 7.3% of the secondary school population; by 2013, 18.1% of primary school children were recorded as EAL pupils, compared to only 13.6% at secondary school. Since 2013, however, this gap has remained fairly stable, with only some small fluctuations. As noted by Strand, Malmberg, and Hall (2015), the higher percentages of EAL pupils in primary schools may reflect some issues with recording practices; for example, in some cases, secondary schools may be updating and changing pupils' EAL status from that on their historical primary school records.

Distribution of EAL pupils by region, LA, and school

Distribution by region

There is considerable variation in the respective proportions of EAL pupils across the nine regions of England. The lowest proportion (as of 2023) is in the North-East (8.3%), while the highest is in London (44.0%).

Table 2: Number and percentage of EAL pupils recorded by region, 2013 and 2023

Region	2013 Primary (%)	2013 Secondary (%)	2013 Avg[a] EAL (%)	2023 EAL (number)	2023 EAOL (%)	2023 Total roll	Change
North-East	6.1	4.4	**5.3**	33,193	**8.3**	398,425	3.1
South-West	5.9	4.3	**5.1**	72,562	**9.4**	773,802	4.3
South-East	11.6	9.1	**10.4**	210,084	**15.7**	1,343,746	5.3
East of England	12.2	8.9	**10.6**	152,291	**15.9**	963,220	5.3
East Midlands	12.0	9.3	**10.7**	122,848	**16.9**	732,319	6.2
North-West	13.2	9.2	**11.2**	192,681	**16.8**	1,150,005	5.6
Yorkshire & the Humber	15.8	11.3	**13.6**	145,170	**17.1**	852,629	3.5
West Midlands	19.9	14.9	**17.4**	210,450	**22.1**	956,029	4.6
Outer London	43.1	34.4	**38.9**	160,051	**43.2**	377,717	4.3
Inner London[b]	54.9	48.1	**51.9**	255,592	**46.1**	474,581	-5.7
London (all)	47.5	39.1	**43.6**	578,833	**44.3**	1,311,112	0.7
England	18.1	13.6	**15.9**	1,715,912	**20.3**	8,481,287	4.4

Notes: (a) 2013 data were only available for pupils of compulsory school age and separately for primary and secondary schools. The simple arithmetic average of the two has been taken here to give an overall EAL figure. (b) For consistency between the 2013 and 2023 data, "Inner London" is defined here as the following 15 boroughs: Camden, City of London, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster. EAL proportions calculated excluding the small fraction of students recorded as "unclassified"

In most regions, the proportion of EAL pupils increased by around 4 to 5 percentage points between 2013 and 2023, except in London, where the figure has remained largely static (43.6% and 44.3% respectively). However, this very small increase in London overall masks a larger average growth of 4.3% in Outer London and a decrease of almost 6% in Inner London. What lies behind this change is not clear. Haringey is now classified as Inner London, and Newham was designated an Inner London borough in 2021 – but this analysis defines Inner London using the same 15 LAs for both the 2013 and 2023 figures (see footnote to Table 2). Borough-by-borough data is presented in Table A2 of the Appendix. Most Inner London boroughs have seen single-figure decreases in EAL learner populations, but double-figure declines were recorded in two of the three boroughs that had the highest percentage of EAL pupils in 2013 (Tower Hamlets, from 73.2% to 61.4%; and Westminster, from 66.7% to 53.9%). This demographic shift is worthy of further exploration as we move into Phase 2 of the research project.

Distribution by LA

Figure 2 (see next page) shows the percentage of pupils – banded into five groups, ranging from 0–12.5% up to over-50% – that were recorded as EAL learners in each of the 152 LAs in England, as at 2023. The highest percentages are found in urban areas, e.g. London, the West Midlands, and the North-West.

Comparing these figures with the corresponding 2013 data (Strand, Malmberg & Hall, 2015, pp. 22–23), there appears to have been some outward spread from these urban areas; i.e., more of the LAs that surround them are now in the 25% and above categories than was previously the case. This suggests that language support needs may be more widely distributed across schools and LAs than was the case a decade ago.

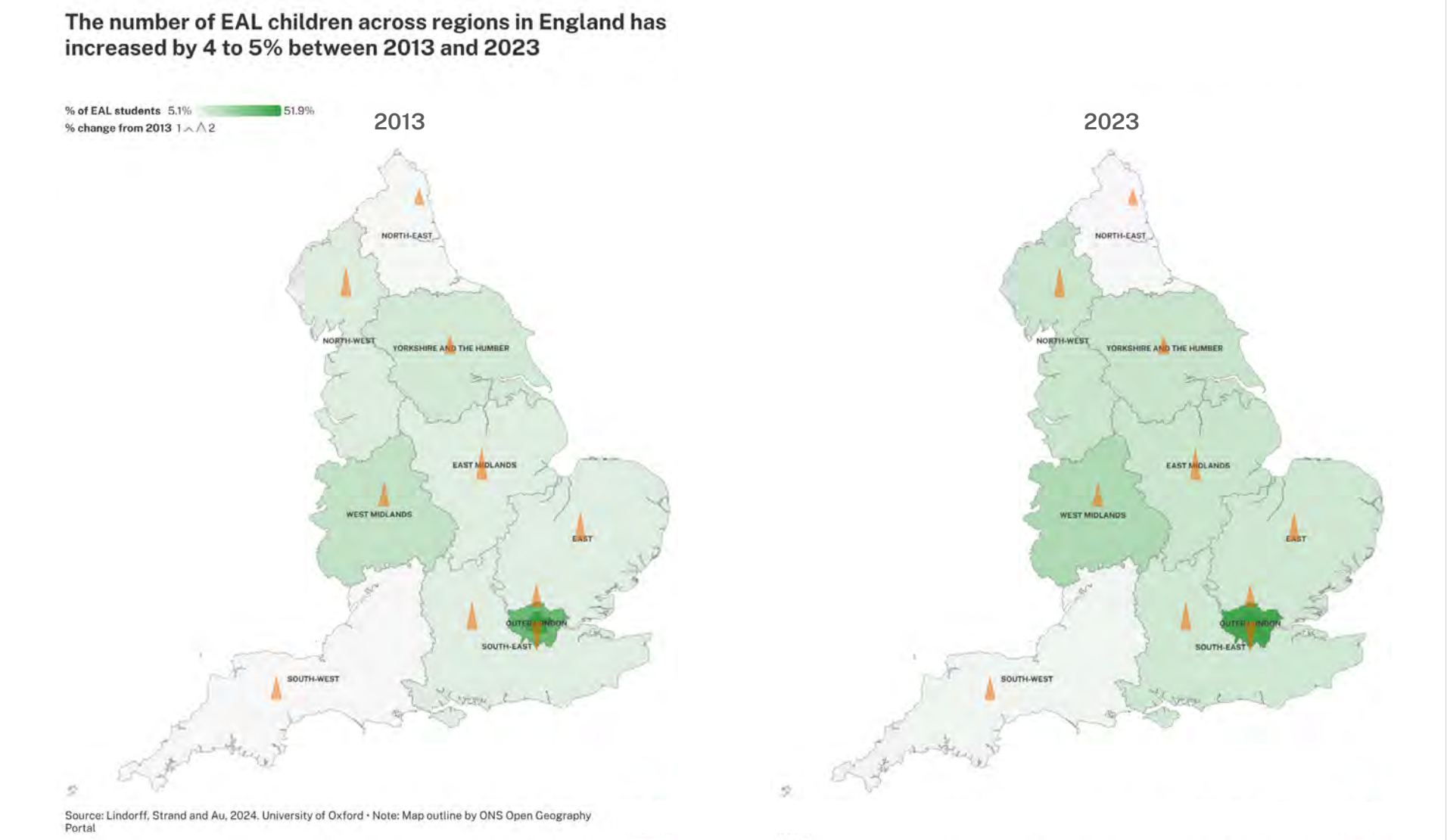


Figure 2: Percentage of EAL pupils by region in England, as at 2013 and 2023

Tables 3a and 3b provide another view of the variation across LAs, focusing on the 20 LAs with, respectively, the highest and lowest proportion of EAL pupils. Although there have been small changes in the composition of the top-20 group since 2013, it has remained consistent in that only a few of these LAs are located outside of the Greater London area (specifically Manchester, Leicester, Luton, and Slough, as at 2023). Similarly, the composition of the group of 20 LAs with the lowest percentages of EAL pupils has changed only slightly since 2013.

Table 3a: Number and percentage of pupils recorded as EAL learners in 2023, by local authority (top-20 regions)

		English as an Additional Language		
Rank	**Region**	**N**	**%**	**Total roll**
1	Newham	42,722	66.1%	64,675
2	Harrow	24,822	63.2%	39,279
3	Brent	30,623	63.0%	48,583
4	Tower Hamlets	28,347	61.4%	46,188
5	Ealing	32,792	59.6%	55,012
6	Hounslow	26,931	58.6%	45,967
7	Redbridge	33,193	56.8%	58,439
8	Leicester	33,042	54.7%	60,375
9	Westminster	11,582	53.5%	21,648
10	Slough	17,584	51.6%	34,056
11	Luton	20,047	49.2%	40,733
12	Camden	10,512	48.3%	21,775
13	Kensington and Chelsea	6490	48.1%	13,487
14	Hillingdon	25,326	47.5%	53,270
15	Barnet	29,476	47.2%	62,481
16	Enfield	26,492	47.1%	56,270
17	Barking and Dagenham	21,149	46.5%	45,468
18	Haringey	17,479	45.6%	38,337
19	Lambeth	16,395	44.8%	36,601
20	Manchester	40,613	43.6%	93,201

Note: Excludes Isles of Scilly and City of London, which have only 263 and 271 pupils respectively

Table 3b: Number and percentage of pupils recorded as EAL learners in 2023, by local authority (lowest-20 regions)

		English as an Additional Language		
Rank	Region	N	%	Total roll
131	South Tyneside	1405	6.1%	23,012
132	North Yorkshire	4793	5.8%	83,133
133	Wirral	2799	5.5%	51,193
134	Torbay	1095	5.4%	31,560
135	North Tyneside	1700	5.4%	31,560
136	Hartlepool	794	5.2%	15,141
137	St. Helens	1427	5.2%	27,279
138	Devon	5115	5.0%	101,363
139	Rutland	295	4.8%	6105
140	Shropshire	1888	4.7%	40,001
142	East Riding of Yorkshire	2154	4.7%	46,084
143	Halton	812	4.3%	19,052
143	Cumbria	2960	4.2%	70,791
144	Dorset	1963	4.1%	48,420
145	Isle of Wight	670	4.0%	16,831
146	Derbyshire	3766	3.4%	109,404
147	County Durham	2510	3.4%	74,332
148	Cornwall	2183	2.9%	74,578
149	Northumberland	1197	2.6%	45,449
150	Redcar and Cleveland	517	2.4%	21,330

Note: Excludes Isles of Scilly and City of London, which have only 263 and 271 pupils respectively

Concentration of EAL pupils within schools

Our analysis used the school-level underlying data from the DfE statistical release "Schools, pupils, and their characteristics" (DfE, 2023), and included maintained, mainstream schools in England with more than 10 pupils on roll.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 present the numbers and percentages of schools with different proportions of EAL pupils in all, primary, and secondary schools, respectively. Across both primary and secondary phases, EAL pupils make up 5% or less of the school population in around a third of all schools; meanwhile, the population is over 50% EAL pupils in nearly 10% of primary schools and just over 8% of secondary schools. This is somewhat different to the distribution of EAL pupils across schools in 2013, at which point over half of all schools had less than 5% of pupils recorded as EAL learners; however, the percentage of all schools with over 50% EAL pupils has not changed dramatically (from 8.4% in 2013 to 9.2% in 2023).

Table 4: Percentage of all maintained, mainstream schools by concentration of EAL pupils, 2023

% EAL	Frequency (N)	(%)	Cumulative (%)
0.1–1	1870	9.3	9.3
1.1–5	5466	27.0	36.3
5.1–10	3559	17.6	53.9
10.1–20	3355	16.6	70.5
20.1–30	1885	9.3	79.8
30.1–40	1310	6.5	86.3
40.1–50	915	4.5	90.8
50.1+	1854	9.2	100.0
Total	**20,214**	**100.0**	

Table 5: Percentage of maintained, mainstream primary schools by concentration of EAL pupils, 2023

% EAL	Frequency (N)	(%)	Cumulative (%)
0.1–1	1788	10.7	10.7
1.1–5	4545	27.1	37.8
5.1–10	2848	17.0	54.7
10.1–20	2691	16.0	70.8
20.1–30	1502	9.0	79.7
30.1–40	1065	6.4	86.1
40.1–50	756	4.5	90.6
50.1+	1576	9.4	100.0
Total	**16,771**	**100.0**	

Table 6: Percentage of maintained, mainstream secondary schools by concentration of EAL pupils, 2023

% EAL	Frequency (N)	(%)	Cumulative (%)
0.1–1	82	2.4	2.4
1.1–5	921	26.7	29.1
5.1–10	711	20.7	49.8
10.1–20	664	19.3	69.1
20.1–30	383	11.1	80.2
30.1–40	245	7.1	87.3
40.1–50	159	4.6	91.9
50.1+	278	8.1	100.0
Total	**3443**	**100.0**	

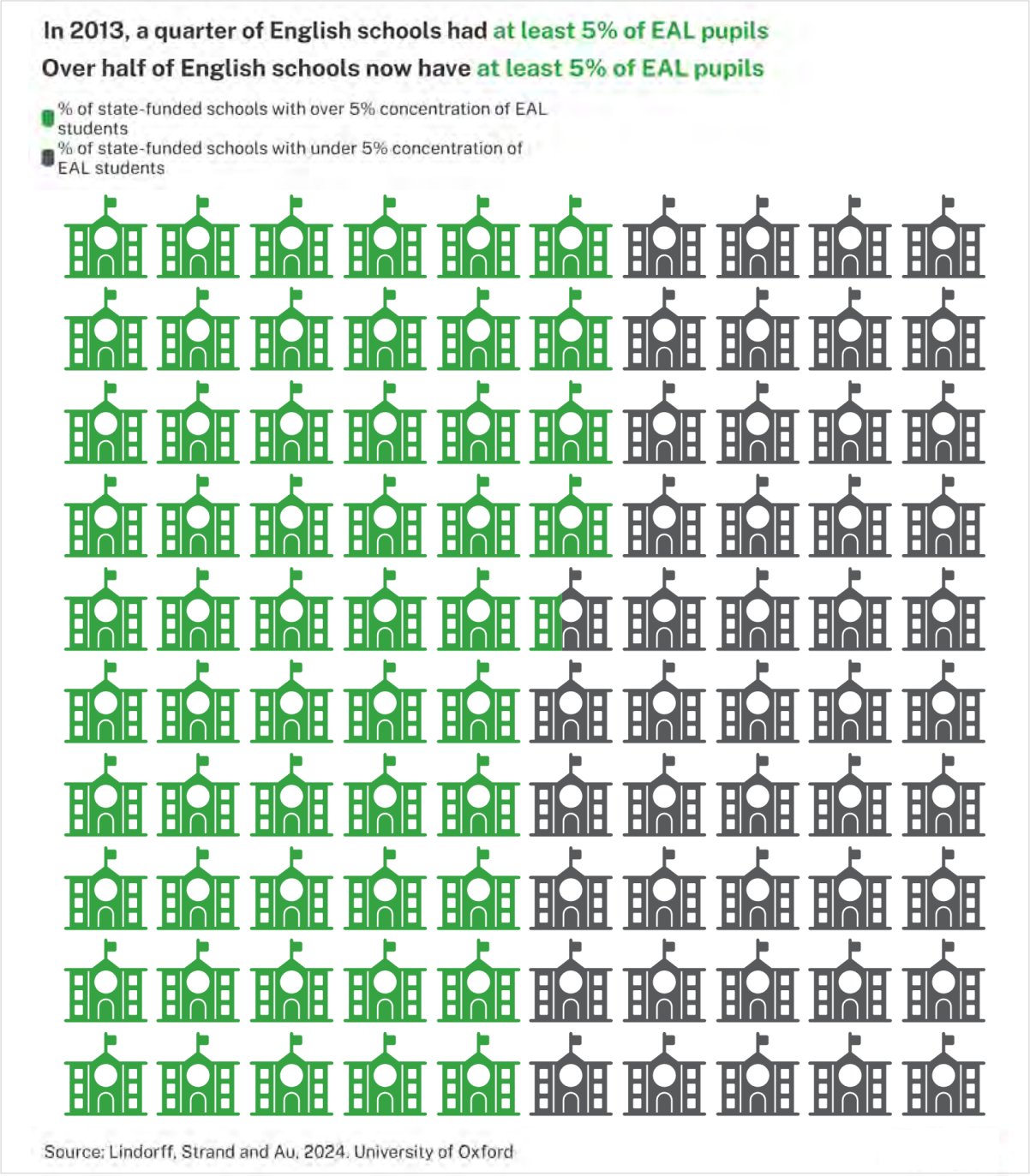


Figure 3: State-funded schools in England with EAL pupil concentration over and under 5% in 2023

Table 7 shows the numbers, percentages, and locations of the 1,854 schools in which a majority (over 50%) of pupils were recorded as EAL learners in 2023. Of these 1,854 schools, 888 are located in the Greater London area, constituting 46.8% of the primary schools and 54.0% percent of the secondary schools. However, there are also fairly large numbers of schools with high concentrations of EAL pupils in the West Midlands (n=244; 12.7% and 15.8% of the primary and secondary schools, respectively); the North-West (n=215; 11.9% and 10.1%); and Yorkshire & the Humber (n=174; 9.6% and 7.9%).

This scenario – which is very similar to that noted by Strand, Malmberg, and Hall (2015) based on the corresponding 2013 data – highlights the importance of school-level data, revealing that high concentrations of EAL pupils can be present in small local areas, even where they appear lower across a broader geographic area.

Table 7: Number and location of schools with a majority (>50%) of EAL pupils recorded in 2022/23

		Phase		
Region		**Primary**	**Secondary**	**Total**
North-East	N	19.0	1.0	20.0
	%	1.2	0.4	1.1
North-West	N	187.0	28.0	215.0
	%	11.9	10.1	11.6
Yorkshire & the Humber	N	152.0	22.0	174.0
	%	9.6	7.9	9.4
East Midlands	N	100.0	15.0	115.0
	%	6.3	5.4	6.2
West Midlands	N	200.0	44.0	244.0
	%	12.7	15.8	13.2
East of England	N	68.0	8.0	76.0
	%	4.3	2.9	4.1
Greater London	N	738.0	150.0	888.0
	%	46.8	54.0	47.9
South-East	N	80.0	10.0	90.0
	%	5.1	3.6	4.9
South-West	N	32.0	0.0	32.0
	%	2.0	0.0%	1.7
Total	**N**	**1576.0**	**278.0**	**1854.0**
	%	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

EAL status and ethnic group

As noted in previous research, EAL status is not a reliable indicator of ethnic-minority status. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities in the English school-age population is much larger than that of pupils who use EAL; while 20.5% of all pupils were recorded as using EAL in 2023, over a third (37.7%) belonged to ethnic minority groups.

Table 8 shows the proportion of pupils from each ethnic group making up the total English school population in 2003, 2013 and 2023. The ethnic group codes used were first introduced in 2003. Over 20 years, the "White British" share of the school-age population in England has decreased by more than 20%, from 83.2% to 62.3%; or, put differently, the ethnic-minority population has increased from 16.8% to 37.7% over the same period. The greatest increases within this 20-year timeframe have been in the "Any Other White" (+5.2%; from 2.1% to 7.3%) and "Black African" (+3.2%; from 1.7% to 4.9%) groups; As noted by Strand, Malmberg, and Hall (2015), these two groups both contain large proportions of EAL pupils, and also tend to have larger achievement gaps associated with this status.

Table 8: Proportion of ethnic-minority students: England 2003, 2013, and 2023

Ethnic group	2003	2013	2023	20-year change
White British	**83.2%**	**73.4%**	**62.3%**	**-20.9%**
White Other	**2.6%**	**5.0%**	**8.0%**	**5.4%**
Irish	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	-0.2%
Traveler of Irish heritage	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Gypsy/Roma	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Any Other White background	2.1%	4.3%	7.3%	5.2%
Mixed	**2.6%**	**4.6%**	**7.1%**	**4.5%**
White & Black Caribbean	0.9%	1.4%	1.6%	0.7%
White & Black African	0.2%	0.6%	1.0%	0.8%
White & Asian	0.5%	1.0%	1.7%	1.2%
Any Other Mixed background	0.9%	1.6%	2.8%	1.9%
Asian	**6.8%**	**10.2%**	**13.6%**	**6.8%**
Indian	2.4%	2.6%	4.1%	1.7%
Pakistani	2.7%	3.9%	4.6%	1.9%
Bangladeshi	1.1%	1.6%	1.8%	0.7%
Chinese	0.4%	0.4%	0.8%	0.4%
Any Other Asian background	0.6%	1.6%	2.3%	1.7%
Black	**3.6%**	**5.3%**	**6.6%**	**3.0%**
Caribbean	1.5%	1.4%	0.9%	-0.6%
African	1.7%	3.3%	4.9%	3.2%
Any Other Black background	0.4%	0.6%	0.8%	0.4%
Any Other ethnic group	**0.8%**	**1.5%**	**2.4%**	**1.6%**
Total	**6,782,400**	**6,712,645**	**8,146,917**	**20.1%**

3 EAL status and educational achievement

In this section, we look at the relationship between educational achievement and EAL status across the Early Years Foundation Stage (age 5), Key Stage 1 (age 7), Key Stage 2 (age 11), and Key Stage 4 (age 16), in 2013, 2017, and 2023. We focus on the percentages of monolingual English speakers and EAL pupils, respectively, who achieve key threshold measures at each key stage.

Because the precise nature of these measures have changed over time in many cases, a direct comparison of figures across temporal points can be problematic. Instead, therefore, our analysis focuses on odds ratios (ORs), which show the success of monolingual English-speakers and EAL pupils relative to each other – and as such can be compared over time even if the specific measures have changed. There is no single criterion to determine when an OR is considered educationally significant; however, in our previous work we have applied a rule of thumb that where the odds of success for a focal group are one-third lower or one-third higher than those for the reference group (3:4 or OR<0.75; 4:3 or OR>1.33, respectively), these are meaningful differences to consider. In the tables that follow, ORs <0.75 are shown in green, to make it easier to see the trends.

Early Years Foundation Stage (age 5)

In 2023, EAL pupils were less likely than their monolingual-English-speaking peers to attain the expected standard or above in literacy and mathematics, or to fall within the overall category of "good level of development" (GLD). The gap was typically around 7 percentage points.

As shown in Table 9, in 2013, the odds of EAL pupils attaining a GLD were typically about two-thirds (OR=0.67) that of monolingual-English-speaking pupils. In 2023, the odds were closer to four-fifths (OR=0.82), indicating relative improvement over time by the EAL cohort.

Table 9: Percentage of EAL and monolingual-English-speaking pupils achieving key thresholds in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) phase (age 5) by assessment domain in 2013, 2017, and 2023

Indicator	Pupil grouping	2013	2017	2023
Percentage of children with a **good level of development**	Monolingual	54.00	73.00	69.30
	EAL	44.00	65.00	62.40
	Odds ratio	*0.67*	*0.69*	*0.82*
At expected levels across all early learning goals in **literacy**	Monolingual	73.00	77.00	71.80
	EAL	63.00	70.00	64.50
	Odds ratio	*0.63*	*0.68*	*0.79*
At expected levels across all early learning goals in **mathematics**	Monolingual	71.00	83.00	79.30
	EAL	62.00	74.00	71.50
	Odds ratio	*0.67*	*0.60*	*0.73*

Notes: The EYFS was reformed in 2013 and again in 2021, with changes affecting both the educational goals themselves and the ways in which they were assessed – although the focus remained on broadly similar domains. These changes will affect the percentages in the data, but the ORs provide a consistent relative comparison. To achieve a "good level of development" (GLD), pupils must be learning at expected level or above in 12 (out of 17) Early Learning Goals covering five areas of learning: communication and language; personal, social, and emotional development; physical development; literacy; and mathematics. Data to one decimal point were reported in 2023, but rounded to whole numbers in 2013 and 2017

Key Stage 1 (age 7)

Table 10 shows that monolingual-English-speaking pupils were more likely than their EAL peers to attain the expected standard or above, by about 5% in reading and 6–7% in science. These correspond to ORs of approximately 0.75–0.80 and 0.68–0.69, respectively. In mathematics, monolingual-English-speaking pupils were still more likely than EAL pupils to achieve the expected standard, but by a slimmer margin, of about 2% (OR=0.90).

In the Year 1 phonics screening check, monolingual-English-speaking pupils were only 1–2% more likely to attain the expected standard than their EAL peers; the corresponding ORs were 0.94 in 2017 and 0.89 in 2023. As there was no phonics test at this age in 2013, only the reading and mathematics outcomes are potentially comparable over the whole period from 2013 to 2023 – but even across these domains comparisons may be impacted, as the outcomes were measured slightly differently in 2013. In general, across the assessment domains, there was a small decrease in the percentages of pupils attaining expected standards from 2017 to 2023, but this is reflected about equally in both the monolingual-English-speaking and EAL groups.

Table 10: Percentage of KS1 (age 7) EAL and monolingual-English-speaking pupils achieving key thresholds by assessment domain in 2013, 2017, and 2023

	2013 2A+	2017 Expected or above	2023 Expected or above
Reading			
% Monolingual	57.00	77.00	70.00
% EAL	48.00	72.00	65.00
Odds ratio	0.70	0.77	0.80
Maths			
% Monolingual	53.00	76.00	71.00
% EAL	46.00	74.00	69.00
Odds ratio	0.76	0.90	0.91
Phonics			
% Monolingual	-	82.00	80.00
% EAL	-	81.00	78.00
Odds ratio		0.94	0.89

Note: A combined "Overall" assessment outcome, available only in the 2013 data, is not included in this table. There was no phonics test at age 6 in 2013

Key Stage 2 (age 11)

Table 11 shows results of national assessments at Key Stage 2 – across the subject areas of reading; mathematics; and grammar, punctuation, and spelling (GPS), as well as overall (available for 2013 and 2017 only) – for monolingual-English-speaking pupils and for those who use EAL. In general, from 2013 through to 2023, monolingual-English-speaking pupils have remained more likely to attain the expected standard or above in reading compared to their EAL counterparts (OR=0.82 in 2023), as well as overall (OR=0.85 in 2017); but EAL pupils have been at least slightly more likely to attain expected standards in mathematics (OR=1.30 in 2023) and GPS (OR=1.17 in 2023).

Table 11: Percentage of KS2 (age 11) EAL and monolingual-English-speaking pupils achieving key thresholds by assessment domain in 2013, 2017, and 2023

	2013 4B+	2017 Expected or above	2023 Expected or above
Reading			
% Monolingual	76.00	73.00	74.00
% EAL	68.00	65.00	70.00
Odds ratio	0.67	0.69	0.82
Mathematics			
% Monolingual	74.00	75.00	72.00
% EAL	72.00	76.00	77.00
Odds ratio	0.90	1.06	1.22
GPS			
% Monolingual	-	77.00	72.00
% EAL	-	78.00	75.00
Odds ratio	-	1.06	1.17
Overall			
% Monolingual	64.00	62.00	-
% EAL	59.00	58.00	-
Odds ratio	0.81	0.85	-

Notes: GPS= grammar, punctuation and spelling. "Reading, writing, and maths" and "Writing" assessment datasets, available only in 2013 and 2017, respectively, are not included in this table. No "Overall" data is available for 2023

Key Stage 4 (age 16)

At Key Stage 4 (Table 12), there has been some apparent change over time in the achievement gaps between monolingual-English-speaking pupils and pupils who use EAL. In English, EAL pupils historically underperformed on average compared to their monolingual-English-speaking peers – at least to a slight extent – but by 2023, there was now a small difference *in favour* of the EAL group. This was also the case for the mathematics outcomes. EAL pupils have been more likely to achieve the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) with GCSE 9–4 or 9–5 passes than their monolingual-English-speaking peers (ORs=1.48 and 1.47 in 2023, respectively).

Table 12: Percentage of KS4 (age 16) EAL and monolingual-English-speaking pupils achieving key thresholds by assessment domain in 2013, 2017, and 2023

	2013	2017		2023	
	GCSE A*–C	GCSE 9–4	GCSE 9–5	GCSE 9–4	GCSE 9–5
English					
% Monolingual	69.00	68.00	52.00	71.00	54.00
% EAL	65.00	66.00	49.00	72.00	55.00
Odds ratio	0.83	0.89	0.89	1.05	1.04
Mathematics					
% Monolingual	71.00	69.00	52.00	72.00	51.00
% EAL	72.00	68.00	49.00	73.00	56.00
Odds ratio	1.03	0.95	1.04	1.05	1.11
EBacc					
% Monolingual	23.00	23.00	21.00	23.40	16.00
% EAL	22.00	28.00	24.00	31.00	22.00
Odds ratio	0.99	1.07	1.04	1.11	1.08

Notes: The EBacc has been calculated differently over time: in 2013 it recorded A–C passes in the relevant subjects; in 2017 it included GCSE grades 9–5 in English and mathematics, and 9–4 in the other EBacc subjects; in 2023, both grade 9–4 pass and grade 9–5 pass versions were calculated. From the 2023 data, we used the aggregated results for English language as this subject had higher overall entry compared to English literature. When individual-level pupil data are available, we will be able to take whichever is the pupil's best result, language or literature, and so calculate an overall English measure*

Short-run changes 2019–2023

Table 13 explores changes in some key measures between 2019 and 2023, allowing a comparison between results from the pre-COVID-19 year (summer 2019) and those from 2022 and 2023 – and indeed, from summer 2020 and 2021 where the relevant data are available. The analysis focusses on the Key Stage (KS) 2 scaled scores in reading and mathematics, and some key outcomes at KS4.

At KS2, the mean reading score for EAL pupils was slightly lower than that for monolingual English-speakers in 2019, and this has not changed to any great extent. In mathematics, the mean score for EAL pupils was slightly higher than that for monolingual English-speakers in 2019, and again this picture has remained largely the same. There is no indication from the data reported here that the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with any substantial long-term impact on achievement gaps for the EAL cohort at KS2.

At KS4, the changes are again not large, and generally show improved levels of achievement by EAL pupils. The proportion of the latter achieving a GCSE pass (9–4) has overtaken the average for monolingual English-speakers, and the existing gap in favour of EAL pupils achieving the EBacc has also increased by a small amount. In terms of overall Attainment 8 score, the 2023 average for monolingual-English-speaking pupils has dropped back to slightly below the 2019 average, whereas for EAL pupils it has increased by one grade on average.[2] As a result, the EAL advantage in average score has actually increased threefold between 2018 and 2023 (see Figure 5).

Table 13: Short-run changes 2019–2023 in key indicators at KS2 and KS4: Comparison of averages for monolingual English-speakers and EAL pupils

Measure	Group	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
KS2 reading scaled score	Monolingual	104.60	-	-	104.90	105.30
	EAL	103.70	-	-	104.50	104.40
	Diff. in score	*-0.90*	-	-	*-0.40*	*-0.9*
KS2 mathematics scaled score	Monolingual	104.80	-	-	103.50	105.30
	EAL	105.90	-	-	104.90	104.40
	Diff. in score	*1.10*	-	-	*1.40*	*1.60*
GCSE passes (9–4) in English and mathematics	Monolingual	66.30	73.20	74.00	70.20	66.40
	EAL	64.40	70.90	72.70	71.50	67.70
	Diff. in score	*0.95*	*0.92*	*0.95*	*1.05*	*1.04*
GCSE passes (9–4) in all EBacc subjects	Monolingual	24.70	29.50	29.10	26.20	23.40
	EAL	29.60	35.60	36.00	33.30	31.00
	Diff. in score	*1.07*	*1.09*	*1.11*	*1.11*	*1.11*
Attainment 8 average score	Monolingual	47.50	51.20	51.80	49.60	46.90
	EAL	48.20	51.60	52.80	51.4	49.30
	Diff. in score	*0.70*	*0.40*	*1.00*	*1.80*	*2.40*
Progress 8 score	Monolingual	-0.07	-	-	-0.09	-0.09
	EAL	0.51	-	-	0.58	0.55
	Diff. in score	*0.58*	-	-	*0.67*	*0.64*

2 Attainment 8 is the student's average grade over eight key subjects, with English and mathematics scores double weighted.

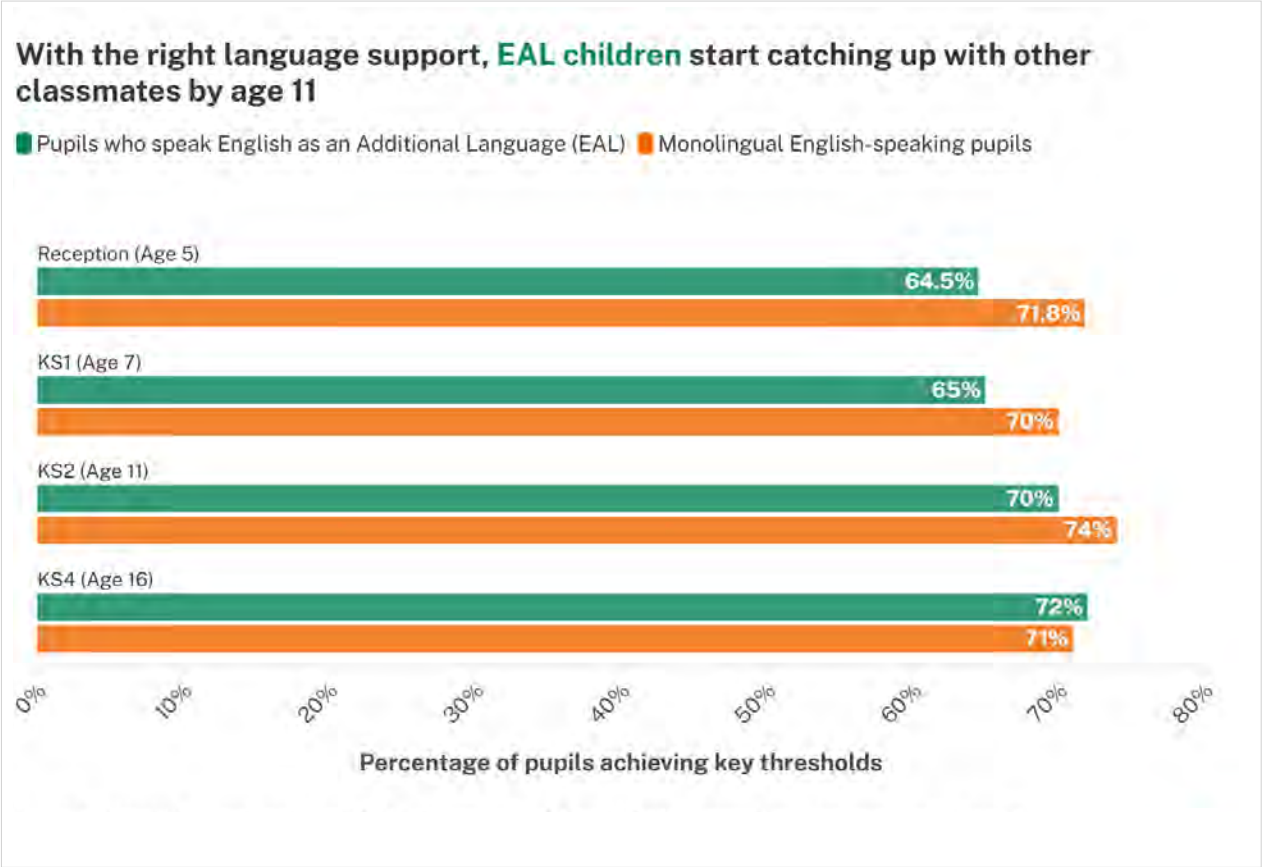


Figure 4: Percentage of pupils achieving expected or above scores in reading at KS1, KS2, KS3; and grades 9–4 in English at GCSE

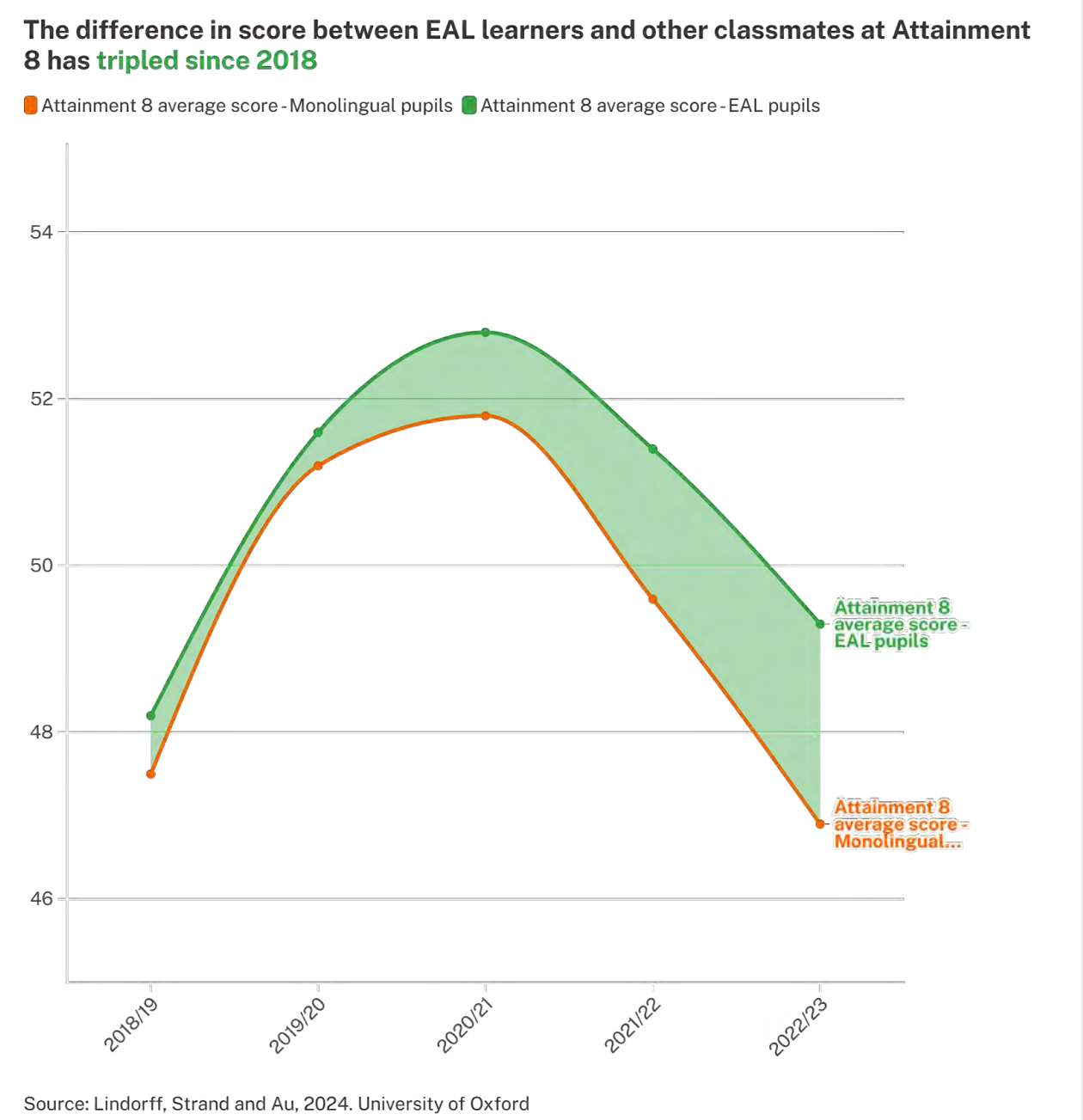


Figure 5: Attainment 8 average scores for EAL and monolingual-English-speaking pupils, 2018-2023

4 Implications for policy and practice

With the population of EAL pupils in England continuing to increase, the importance of schools' ability to understand and meet the language support needs of this growing group cannot be overlooked. Meanwhile, this group of pupils continues to show the demographic diversity noted in previous research, and is not only increasing but spreading out across a greater number of schools and LAs.

Relationships between EAL status and educational achievement in summer 2023 suggest that pupil age is still an important factor. EAL pupils have lower achievement than their monolingual-English-speaking peers across all areas at the end of the EYFS at age 5 (OR=0.73 to 0.82), and in reading at age 7 (OR=0.80) and age 11 (OR=0.82). However, in mathematics, there is only a small gap at age 7 (OR=0.91), and a significant advantage for EAL pupils by age 11 (OR=1.22). By age 16, on average, EAL pupils are as likely as their monolingual-English-speaking peers to attain a good GCSE in English (OR=1.04); are substantially more likely to achieve a good GCSE in mathematics (OR=1.22) and the EBacc (OR=1.47); and have significantly higher mean Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores. Generally, the trends across all age groups continue to suggest that language support is most crucial in earlier years of schooling

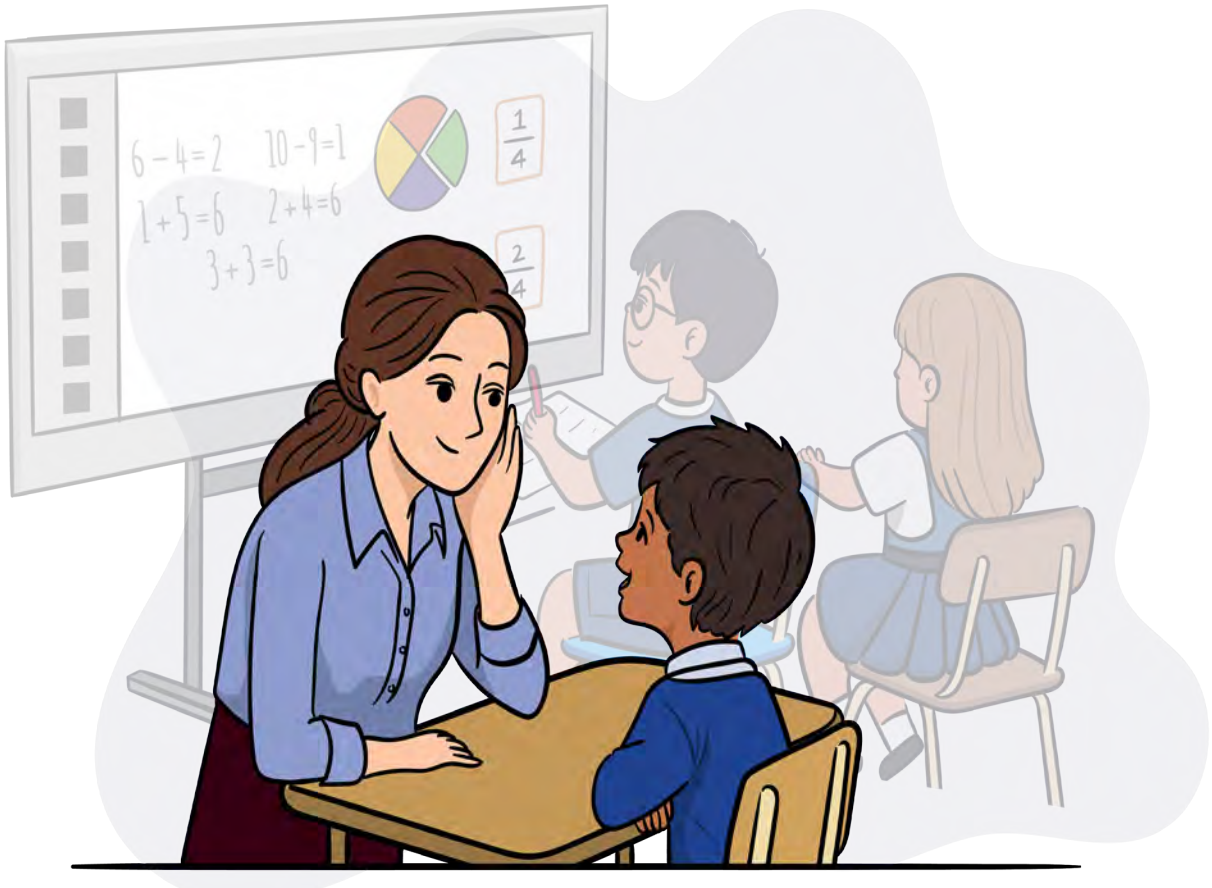
Looking at changes between 2013 and 2023, there has been a significant decrease in the size of the EAL achievement gaps that exist at age 5, and likewise for those in reading at age 7 and age 11. Additionally, where EAL pupils have had higher average scores than their monolingual-English-speaking peers – for example, in mathematics at age 11 and in a wide range of outcomes at age 16 – these advantages have also increased in their favour. There is, therefore, an overall picture of continually improving achievement by EAL pupils. Generally, changes over time have been incremental rather than dramatic. Although COVID-19 was reported to be associated with some quite marked negative impacts on EAL pupils at the time, there is no evidence from the data reported here of any long-term detriment to educational achievement.

However, from the analysis conducted by Strand, Malmberg, and Hall (2015) 10 years ago, we know that the average achievement of EAL pupils is misleading because it does not elucidate in sufficient detail the nuances of need within this diverse group. The overall average of the EAL cohort masks significant variation within this group, based particularly on language learning needs. This can be proxied in terms of those pupils who enter the English education system from outside of England from Year 3 onwards, as shown in analyses completed by the Education Policy Institute (EPI, 2024). However, this is still only a proxy, as pupils may enter from abroad but having studied in international schools through the medium of English and be entirely fluent in English. Ultimately, the most significant determinant of educational achievement by EAL pupils in England is their

proficiency in English, as shown clearly by Strand (2021) and Hessel and Strand (2023). Since English is the medium of instruction in schools, those entering school with limited proficiency in English are likely to struggle to access the curriculum, unless significant additional support is provided. This support may be required for up to six years or more for pupils who are at the "New to English" stage of proficiency (Strand & Lindorff, 2021).

Our full report – due in summer 2023, following our analysis of the individual-level data from the NPD – will dig deeper into the diversity of this group and the variation in educational achievement; however, we may be limited in our ability to account for these variations with the pupil background factors that are available in the data, given that they do not include a measure of proficiency in English.

There are limits to what we are able to learn from the aggregate data presented in this report – and therefore to what we are able to address at this point in time. However, our findings so far offer us some broad directions of enquiry for the analysis of individual-level pupil data in the next phase of the project. They also provide some continued support for conclusions reached based on earlier research – most notably, the limitations of an EAL indicator in facilitating our understanding of the range and extent of language support needs among pupils with first languages other than English in the school-age population.



Appendix

Table A1: Number and percentage of EAL pupils recorded in 2022/23 by LA (all 152 English LAs)

Rank	Region	N	%	Total roll
1	Newham	42,722	66.1%	64,675
2	Harrow	24,822	63.2%	39,279
3	Brent	30,623	63.0%	48,583
4	Tower Hamlets	28,347	61.4%	46,188
5	Ealing	32,792	59.6%	55,012
6	Hounslow	26,931	58.6%	45,967
7	Redbridge	33,193	56.8%	58,439
8	Leicester	33,042	54.7%	60,375
9	City of London	145	53.5%	271
10	Westminster	11,582	53.5%	21,648
11	Slough	17,584	51.6%	34,056
12	Luton	20,047	49.2%	40,733
13	Camden	10,512	48.3%	21,775
14	Kensington and Chelsea	6490	48.1%	13,487
15	Hillingdon	25,326	47.5%	53,270
16	Barnet	29,476	47.2%	62,481
17	Enfield	26,492	47.1%	56,270
18	Barking and Dagenham	21,149	46.5%	45,468
19	Haringey	17,479	45.6%	38,337
20	Lambeth	16,395	44.8%	36,601
21	Manchester	40,613	43.6%	93,201
22	Hackney	14,485	42.8%	33,877
23	Waltham Forest	18,126	42.6%	42,563
24	Hammersmith and Fulham	8367	41.1%	20,375
25	Birmingham	83,846	40.5%	207,175
26	Merton	10,919	38.9%	28,050
27	Wandsworth	12,802	38.5%	33,255
28	Islington	9043	37.8%	23,938
29	Blackburn with Darwen	10,335	36.7%	28,125

30	Reading	8932	36.1%	24,719
31	Coventry	21,144	35.2%	60,135
32	Bradford	34,829	34.4%	101,309
33	Peterborough	14,011	34.3%	40,894
34	Kingston upon Thames	9223	33.8%	27,287
35	Southwark	14,477	33.8%	42,864
36	Sutton	13,838	33.5%	41,334
37	Lewisham	12,687	33.2%	38,254
38	Nottingham	16,114	32.9%	127,678
39	Croydon	19,019	32.6%	58,285
40	Greenwich	14,719	32.6%	45,184
41	Sandwell	20,283	32.4%	62,558
42	Oldham	14,287	31.1%	45,986
43	Southampton	10,253	30.2%	33,935
44	Wolverhampton	14,711	29.6%	49,696
45	Bolton	15,620	29.1%	53,667
46	Milton Keynes	14,283	27.9%	51,170
47	Derby	12,307	27.2%	45,238
48	Bedford	8141	25.9%	31,415
49	Rochdale	9823	25.8%	38,048
50	Richmond upon Thames	7473	25.8%	28,980
51	Newcastle upon Tyne	10,825	25.4%	42,560
52	Havering	10,280	24.3%	42,224
53	Wokingham	7023	23.6%	29,785
54	Walsall	12,713	23.5%	54,123
55	Stoke-on-Trent	9545	23.2%	41,196
56	Sheffield	19,703	23.1%	85,194
57	Kirklees	15,337	22.8%	67,374
58	Thurrock	7041	22.3%	31,613
59	Trafford	9513	21.8%	43,709
60	Swindon	7975	21.5%	37,064
61	Leeds	28,144	21.4%	131,361
62	Bristol, City of	13,547	21.2%	63,975
63	West Northamptonshire	14,021	20.7%	67,893

64	Salford	7922	20.6%	38,532
65	Portsmouth	5592	20.2%	27,642
66	Bexley	8790	20.1%	43,662
67	Buckinghamshire	17,189	19.2%	89,595
68	Liverpool	14,838	19.1%	77,791
69	Middlesbrough	4726	18.3%	25,858
70	Bury	5217	17.8%	29,344
71	Kingston upon Hull, City of	7487	17.3%	43,163
72	North Northamptonshire	9596	17.0%	56,356
73	Hertfordshire	34,344	17.0%	202,108
74	Oxfordshire	16,222	16.1%	100,654
75	Cambridgeshire	14,284	15.6%	91,509
76	Brighton and Hove	4898	15.6%	31,475
77	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	7997	15.1%	52,915
78	Medway	7447	15.0%	49,642
79	Windsor and Maidenhead	3433	15.0%	22,905
80	Bromley	7909	14.9%	53,229
81	Calderdale	5412	14.8%	36,534
82	Telford and Wrekin	4716	14.7%	32,082
83	Bracknell Forest	2754	14.6%	18,830
84	Tameside	5471	14.6%	37,586
85	Surrey	23,324	14.2%	163,679
86	Southend-on-Sea	4229	13.5%	31,337
87	Doncaster	6285	13.1%	48,075
88	Warwickshire	11,566	13.0%	88,998
89	Kent	32,468	13.0%	250,389
90	Warrington	4296	12.9%	33,286
91	Lancashire	22,936	12.8%	179,116
92	North Lincolnshire	3120	12.7%	24,640
93	Solihull	5067	12.5%	40,480
94	Norfolk	14,732	12.4%	119,236
95	West Sussex	14,609	12.3%	118,751
96	Stockport	5284	12.0%	43,893

97	South Gloucestershire	4901	11.9%	41,090
98	Wakefield	6282	11.4%	55,038
99	Lincolnshire	12,434	11.4%	109,347
100	Rotherham	5135	11.3%	45,533
101	Dudley	5281	11.0%	48,051
102	West Berkshire	2923	10.8%	27,118
103	Gateshead	3083	10.7%	28,940
104	Herefordshire, County of	2476	10.4%	23,828
105	Suffolk	10,499	10.0%	104,491
106	Nottinghamshire	12,627	9.9%	127,678
107	Essex	20,983	9.5%	221,845
108	Blackpool	1871	9.4%	19,955
109	Gloucestershire	8484	9.2%	92,117
110	Worcestershire	7606	9.2%	82,665
111	Somerset	6679	9.2%	72,603
112	York	2318	9.0%	25,724
113	Darlington	1427	8.8%	16,231
114	Cheshire East	5000	8.7%	57,167
115	Plymouth	3436	8.7%	39,371
116	Hampshire	15,781	8.6%	184,221
117	Leicestershire	8646	8.6%	100,953
118	Central Bedfordshire	3980	8.3%	48,039
119	Wigan	3847	8.0%	48,253
120	Staffordshire	9608	7.7%	125,041
121	North Somerset	2350	7.5%	31,524
122	Stockton-on-Tees	2348	7.3%	32,359
123	North East Lincolnshire	1723	7.1%	24,220
124	Bath and North East Somerset	1944	7.1%	27,503
125	Cheshire West and Chester	3645	7.0%	51,907
126	Barnsley	2448	6.9%	35,247
127	Wiltshire	4891	6.9%	70,702
128	Sefton	2799	6.9%	40,672
129	East Sussex	4699	6.9%	68,349
130	Sunderland	2661	6.4%	41,653

131	Knowsley	1366	6.4%	21,452
132	South Tyneside	1405	6.1%	23,012
133	North Yorkshire	4793	5.8%	83,133
134	Wirral	2799	5.5%	51,193
135	Torbay	1095	5.4%	31,560
136	North Tyneside	1700	5.4%	31,560
137	Hartlepool	794	5.2%	15,141
138	St. Helens	1427	5.2%	27,279
139	Devon	5115	5.0%	101,363
140	Rutland	295	4.8%	6105
141	Shropshire	1888	4.7%	40,001
142	East Riding of Yorkshire	2154	4.7%	46,084
143	Halton	812	4.3%	19,052
144	Cumbria	2960	4.2%	70,791
145	Dorset	1963	4.1%	48,420
146	Isle of Wight	670	4.0%	16,831
147	Derbyshire	3766	3.4%	109,404
148	County Durham	2510	3.4%	74,332
149	Cornwall	2183	2.9%	74,578
150	Northumberland	1197	2.6%	45,449
151	Redcar and Cleveland	517	2.4%	21,330
152	Isles of Scilly	<10	0.8%	263

Table A2: EAL data for Inner London boroughs, 2012/13 and 2022/23

	2013					2023					Change
	All pupils					All pupils					
LA name	EAL	Mono	Uncl	Total	%EAL	EAL	Mono	Uncl	Total	%EAL	
Camden	10,179	8,524	115	18,820	54.4%	10,512	11,082	181	21,775	48.7%	-5.7%
City of London	128	47	2	175	74.0%	145	125	1	271	53.7%	-20.3%
Greenwich	11,967	18,927	171	31,065	38.7%	14,719	29,876	589	45,184	33.0%	-5.7%
Hackney	13,115	12,544	78	25,735	51.1%	14,485	19,327	65	33,877	42.8%	-8.3%
Hammersmith and Fulham	7,234	8,442	71	15,745	46.2%	8,367	11,836	172	20,375	41.4%	-4.7%
Haringey	15,868	14,889	119	30,880	51.6%	17,479	20,351	507	38,337	46.2%	-5.4%
Islington	8,851	10,025	32	18,915	46.9%	9,043	14,825	70	23,938	37.9%	-9.0%
Kensington and Chelsea	5,274	4,641	11	9,920	53.2%	6,490	6,895	102	13,487	48.5%	-4.7%
Lambeth	12,978	15,006	77	28,060	46.4%	16,395	19,920	286	36,601	45.1%	-1.2%
Lewisham	9,849	22,313	344	32,505	30.6%	12,687	25,291	276	38,254	33.4%	2.8%
Newham	32,258	12,390	171	44,820	72.2%	42,722	21,552	401	64,675	66.5%	-5.8%
Southwark	13,281	18,114	305	31,700	42.3%	14,477	28,051	336	42,864	34.0%	-8.3%
Tower Hamlets	24,831	9,104	93	34,030	73.2%	28,347	17,785	56	46,188	61.4%	-11.7%
Wandsworth	10,884	14,288	86	25,260	43.2%	12,802	20,214	239	33,255	38.8%	-4.5%
Westminster	12,198	6,081	91	18,370	66.7%	11582	9,912	154	21648	53.9%	-12.8%
	188,895	**175,335**	**1,766**	**366,000**	**51.9%**	**220,252**	**257,042**	**3,435**	**480,729**	**46.1%**	**-5.7%**

Notes: Mono= Monolingual-English speakers; Uncl= unclassified. Cells with <10 observations have been left blank, including for monolingual-English-speaking pupils, so that numbers cannot be inferred by deduction. % EAL calculated excluding the small number of "unclassified" pupils

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