

Executive Summary

In response to the changes to the DSG funding formula for pupils with EAL, this study investigated how much progress primary pupils had made with acquisition of English four years after arrival in the school system as beginner English speakers. Over 1000 pupils were tracked, the majority of whom were born in London but were described as new to English on arrival at school/nursery. Only 69 pupils had started school as casual admissions during Years 1 to 6.

Early findings indicate that in total approximately 13% of all pupils with no special needs achieved age appropriate fluency after four years of school/Nursery in Lambeth. However, only 10% of children arriving in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 achieve fluency, whereas 34% of older pupils arriving from abroad in Years 2 to 6 did so.

Common factors elicited by further interviews with children making exceptional progress suggest that more able children with an established use of their first language and usually well supported by parents and school can learn English more quickly and to a higher, more academic level.

Key Findings

- 1600/20,000 (8%) primary aged pupils were beginner English speakers in 2008
- Mobility of pupils is a challenge - over one third had left Lambeth after four years
- 13% of remaining pupils were fluent after 4 years
- 34% of new arrivals in Y2-6 were fluent after 4 years
- The starting age of pupils, coupled with their previous education history has an effect on the speed at which they learn English
- Schools need to ensure that all pupils entering the state sector and with a home language other than English are recorded as EAL, as they are eligible for funding for three years, whether or not there is an additional need



§ Introduction

This study has arisen from recent changes in the funding arrangements (DfE, 2012) for pupils with English as an additional language, EAL, which now continue only for a child's first three years of statutory schooling in the UK (appendix 1). It is also an attempt to explore concerns about the difficulties faced by children arriving from countries with a later school-starting age than our own (appendix 2) and whether this is a factor in achieving English fluency. Therefore, we have focused on children who are new to English and the relationship between their year of entry into the English education system and the time taken for English fluency to be achieved.

It is recognised that these pupils do not make up an homogeneous group, rather one with a range of experiences and cultural, linguistic, educational, socio-economic and religious backgrounds. Although it has not been possible to fully consider the influence of other factors on language acquisition, the research has identified some features common to children who have made exceptional progress.

Assessment techniques

In Lambeth, pupils' acquisition of English is assessed using the Lambeth Stages of English, which were derived from the Hilary Hester stages (Hilary Hester, 1989) and modified for use with pupils aged 3-16. Schools are responsible for the reportage of assessment data to the Lambeth Research and Statistics team. Each year, these data are moderated by Lambeth consultants. Children are assigned one of four stages:

Stage 1: New to English

Stage 2: Becoming familiar with English

Stage 3: Becoming confident

Stage 4: Age appropriate fluency

Lambeth Stages of English may be accessed at

<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3E3986CB-62E5-4C7E-AE32-573403C2929C/0/LambethStagesofEnglish2011.pdf>

Data

In January 2008, 1604 children in Lambeth primary schools were assessed as being new to English. Of these, 1033 were still attending primary and secondary schools in Lambeth four years later. 593 had arrived in the school system on or after 1 September 2007. This study tracks their development of English over the ensuing four years.

The following have been extracted:

- Data for pupils currently assigned a statement of special needs or considered school action plus have been extracted and will be considered separately
- Pupils starting in nursery and reception classes (the majority of whom were likely to have been born in the UK and the remainder having arrived as infants)
- Pupils entering the school in years 1 to 6 (by definition from outside the UK)
- Pupils making exceptional progress

Fig 1: Bar chart showing the progress of 1033 pupils assessed as new to English in January 2008 and still attending Lambeth schools in 2012

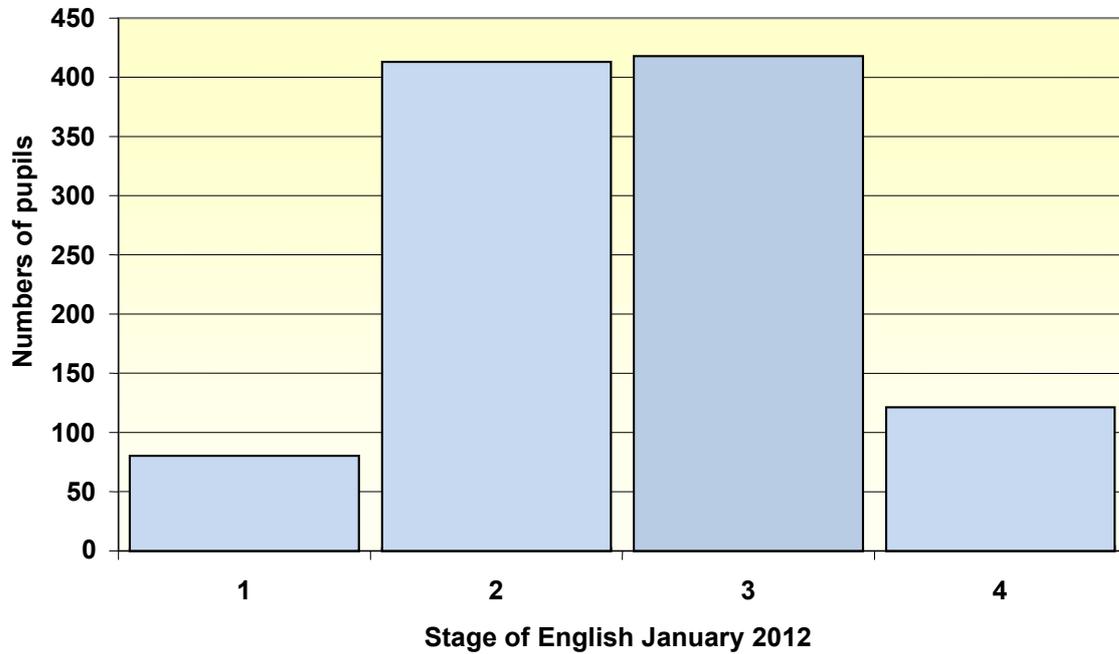


Fig 2: 58 Home languages of 1033 pupils assessed as new to English in 2012

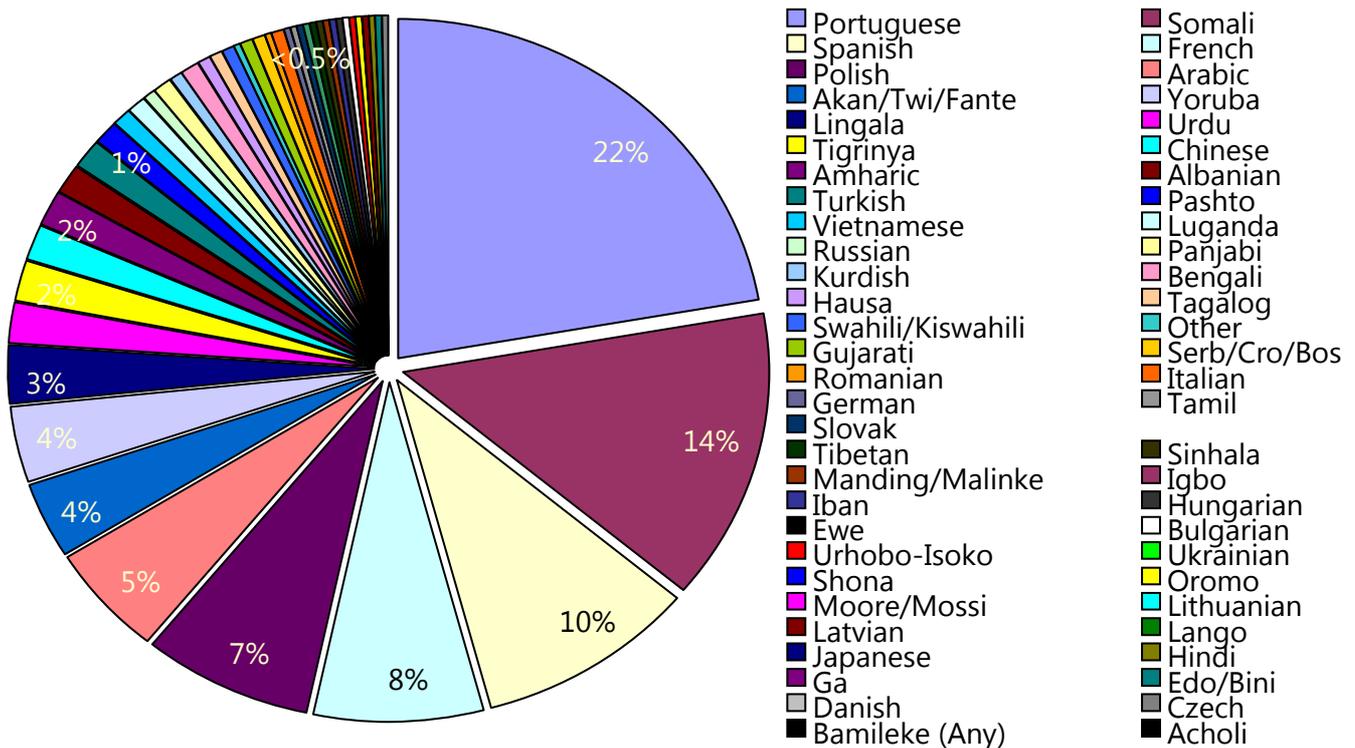


Fig 3: Progress of the 593 pupils who entered the school system in Nursery to Year 6 on or after September 2007 and were assessed as EAL Stage 1 in January 2008. Not including children subsequently given a statement of special needs

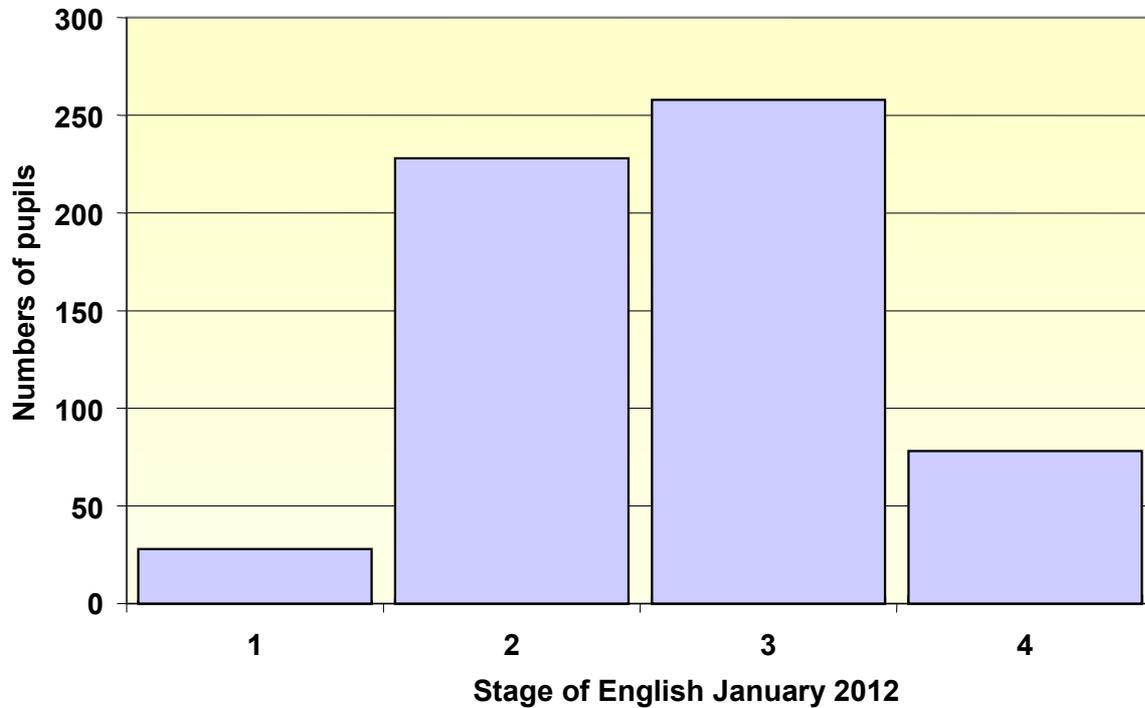
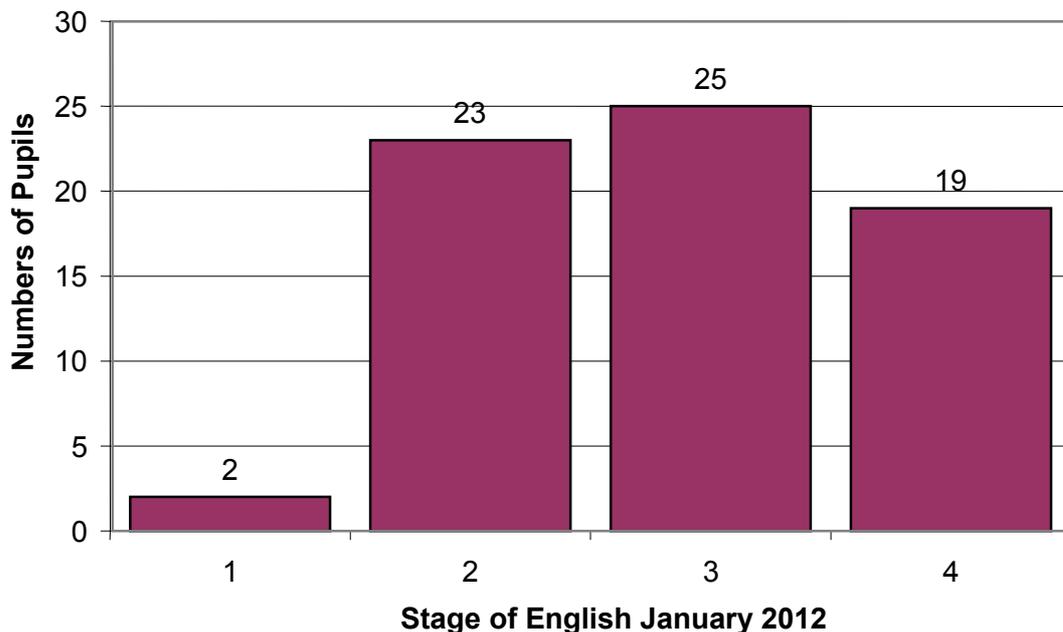


Fig 4: Progress of 69 pupils starting school in Years 1-6 on or after 1 September 2007 and assessed as EAL stage 1 in January 2008. Figures do not include pupils subsequently given a statement of special needs or assigned as school action plus



Discussion of figures 1-5

Of the 1604 primary aged pupils reported as beginner English speakers in January 2008, only 1033 (fig 1) can be tracked, the remainder having left Lambeth. It is clear that pupil mobility constitutes a major drain on school resources, as 500+ pupils who spent some years here as beginner English speakers have moved elsewhere.

Language data show that 58 home languages were spoken (Fig 2). However, over half the pupils (54%) spoke either Portuguese, Somali, Spanish or French. A further quarter spoke Polish, Arabic, Yoruba, or Akan (family). Of the latter two, one would expect the parents to be fully conversant with spoken and written English as well as speaking their traditional languages at home.

Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union on January 1 2007 and children began arriving in Lambeth from those countries. Together, speakers of these languages constituted <1% of this survey.

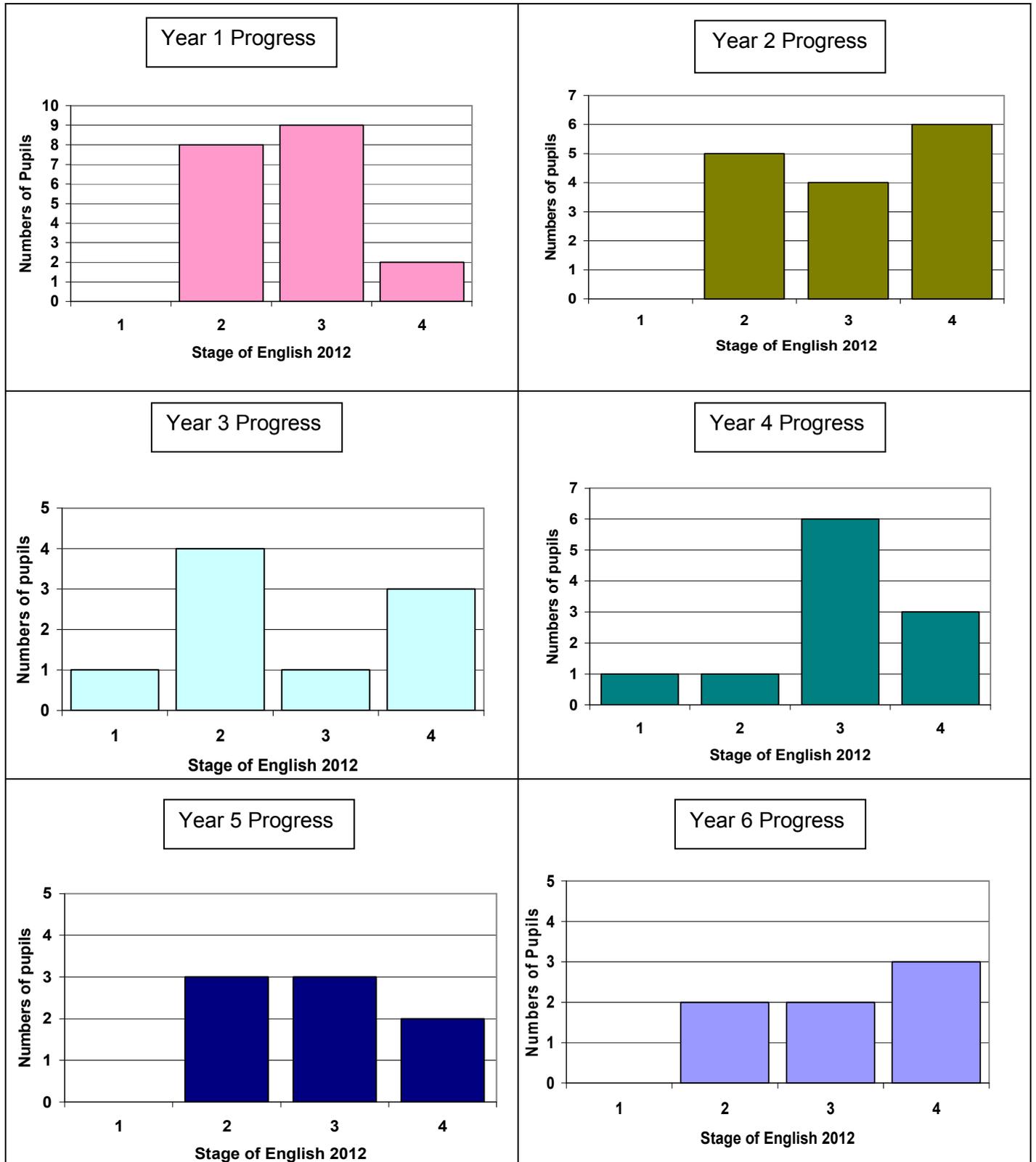
As indicated in fig. 3, the data for 592 pupils show that an overwhelming number of them (87%) did not achieve fluency within four years and most (82%) were at stages 2 or 3. This concurs with studies by Lambeth Research and Statistics team (Demie, 2011). We are currently investigating more fully individual pupils still recorded as stage 1. Overall, only 13 % of pupils had achieved fluency by 2012. A number of these pupils and their teachers have been interviewed and recorded as case studies below.

Most children entered the school system at Nursery and Reception. As mentioned previously, the majority of these were born in the UK with the remainder arriving in infancy. Only 69 pupils arrived as casual admissions in years 1-6. These are recorded in fig. 4. The data show that, after four years, 19 of these pupils were fluent English speakers (27%), more than twice the proportion of children achieving fluency in all years combined, as described in figure 3. With such a small sample size it would be unwise to conclude too much but we have interviewed many of these pupils and their teachers to gain as much insight as possible into the reasons for and factors influencing exceptional progress.

Figure 5 (below) shows the progress by year group on entry of these 69 pupils. The numbers in each year group are very small, chiefly because Lambeth schools are oversubscribed and have very limited capacity for accepting new pupils at either the start of the school year or as mid-term arrivals. However it is of interest that the pattern of progress changes between year groups - The greatest proportion of pupils attaining fluency started in Years 2 and 6. It is possible that this reflects intensive support given to children in those year groups to prepare for SATs. The lowest attainers were in Year 1, with only 9.5% becoming fluent in English after four years. This proportion is comparable to the achievement of pupils starting in the Nursery and Reception years. It is possible that all three of these groups achieve basic, social language quickly but that their progress in acquiring academic language is not targeted. By contrast, 34% of pupils arriving in Years 2-6 achieved fluency within four years.

The bar chart for Year 3 shows the greatest proportion of children attaining only stage 2 after four years. Many children arriving in Year 3 will not have had formal schooling, owing to the later school starting age in other countries. (Appendix 2 contains information on school starting ages) Therefore, children who are not yet secure in their first language and until then with no literacy or prior educational experience need to adjust to a change of country, a new language, and formal schooling at one stroke. Certainly, as part of this study, some schools have reported that several children starting in Year 3 had experienced distress. Even those interviewed because they had made exceptional progress commented to the interviewer that, arriving in Year 3, they knew that they had missed one or even two years of school. However, it also might reflect differences in the descriptors used for pupils moving from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in the Lambeth stages of English.

Fig 5: Progress by Year group of 69 pupils starting school in or after September 2007 and assessed as EAL stage 1 in January 2008. Figures do not include pupils subsequently given a statement of special needs or assigned as school action plus.



Theory

It is well recognised that there are many factors which affect the development of an additional language, such as first language oracy, the age at which a child begins to learn the second language, level of education in L1 and the implications of similarities and differences between the first and second languages. Some argue that early exposure to a second language is advantageous: Genessee concluded that 'Early instruction confers an advantage by virtue of the extended opportunities it provides for language learning in and outside school' but that 'Late instruction confers an advantage on the learner by virtue of his learning efficiency'. (Genessee, 1978)

The data shown above, and further interviews with pupils described below, indicate that a firm grasp of first language combined with a full education in the country of origin are essential if a pupil is going to learn English rapidly and to a high standard. Cummins states that,

'The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. Children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language. When parents and other caregivers (e.g. grandparents) are able to spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss issues with them in a way that develops their mother tongue vocabulary and concepts, children come to school well-prepared to learn the school language and succeed educationally' (Cummins, 2000)

Indeed, many studies have suggested that children who start to learn an additional language between the ages of 8 and 12 are the most successful, simultaneously recognising that it is a lengthy developmental process, taking between 5 to 10 years to achieve full fluency in academic language. Collier stated that:

'When schooled only in the second language, students in the 8-12 age range on arrival may be the most advantaged acquirers of school skills in the second language, since they have some first language skills to transfer and they still have time to make up the years of academic instruction lost while acquiring basic second language skills and beginning to acquire school skills in the second language. Even though adolescents can acquire second language school skills at a fast pace, they have less time to make up lost years of academic instruction easily. She warns that 'Whatever the reasons might be, practitioners should be alert to the differences between younger and older schoolchildren in the amount of time required for them to develop second language skills adequate for schooling. Older learners (ages 8 to 12) have an advantage, at least initially.' (Collier, 1987)

Case studies of exceptional progress

Background information was gathered on a sample of children who had made faster than average progress over four years and had achieved full fluency in English. In most cases, teachers commented on the fact that the children had parents with high levels of education, who were very active in supporting their children's learning, often paying for additional tuition. Many schools had identified the children as 'being very bright', through initial assessment and rapid development during the first terms in school. Other common factors included having a father working in the UK prior to the family arriving; timing this arrival for the start of the school year; having been prepared by parents for the move to the UK and arriving with an age appropriate level of education and literacy.

Child A

Child A, a Portuguese speaker had arrived in Year 2, with no knowledge of English. His parents had a high standard of Portuguese and were keen to support their children. The school had an organised and thorough admissions procedure, through which they gathered information about the child's previous schooling, learning and language development. This, alongside initial assessments indicated that the child was working at a high cognitive level and enabled teachers to plan

accordingly. In addition they were able to share information about the school with the parents and the mother was encouraged to join family learning sessions, through which she both learnt English and ways in which she could support her child's learning at home. Throughout the four years, child A was in classes which were often supported by the EMA coordinator, who taught in partnership with the class teachers, focusing on developing and modelling strategies known to enhance the learning of children with EAL. All teachers within the school planned for both content and language development, identifying both key vocabulary and focus sentence structures. The school also worked with the family to support the development of the first language, lending him books in Portuguese and encouraging him to attend the school-run Portuguese club.

Child B

Child B started school in the Reception year, speaking Turkish. Initial information gathering indicated that much of the parents' time and energy was consumed by stressful home circumstances, with few aspirations for their son's education. As a result the school sought support from the Local Authority's bilingual assistant, who shared their language and acted as a bridge between the family and the school. She encouraged and enabled the family both to access all the school was offering and also to support their child's learning. It quickly became apparent that an older sister had high aspirations for her own and her brother's education and she took responsibility for his learning. The school supported her in so-doing through setting up processes and celebrating and rewarding her attitude and commitment.

Child C

Child C joined the school at the end of Year 1 with no knowledge of English. Initial information gathered showed that she had attended a school in Portugal and could already read and write fluently in her home language. For a very short time she was taught in a small support group, but as a studious, bright and motivated child who was very interested in learning she made rapid progress. Her own eagerness to learn gave her the confidence to ask questions and respond thoughtfully to teacher's suggestions, totally immersing herself in her learning. She read a lot, in both languages, loved writing and would listen to and respond to any advice given to her by her teachers. Her knowledge of English and schooling quickly overtook that of her mother and as in another of the case studies, an older sibling living nearby, took responsibility for supporting her. She helped her with her school work, and taught her how to use the internet to research and learn independently.

Child D

Child D started in the nursery as an early English speaker. Information gathering and initial assessment indicated that he was a very able child, with a very supportive family. His parents, themselves educated to university level, valued education and language development and encouraged him to do well at all times. In class he was quiet, but hard working and was identified as 'gifted' by the school. He showed a love for words and quickly remembered 'long, hard, different' words, using them both in speech and writing. His older cousins, to whom he was close, also attended the same school and together they were going to Arabic classes on a Saturday. The creative curriculum and its context-embedded learning provided further stimulus and support for his rapid development.

Child E

Child E joined school in Year 5, with no knowledge of English, but initial assessment showed that he was both numerate and literate in Polish. With additional EAL support during that year and working in partnership with his parents, he made rapid development in and through English, which enabled him to work independently by Year 6.

Now in year 11, pupil E reflected that he started school in Poland at aged 6, attending nursery prior to that. He described himself as an average pupil in Poland and at that time hadn't liked school much. His father came to England first and his mother prepared him for the move so that he was looking forward to it. In London he helps his sister with her homework and his mother to learn English. He felt that 'It is easier for a child because they go to school.'

Child F

Child F joined the school in Year 3 from Slovakia and speaks Slovakian at home. He was quickly identified as being very able, especially in maths. His parents were active participants in his learning. The teachers believed that the school policy of in-class learning through a supportive context-based curriculum enabled him to make rapid progress and he achieved Level 5 in his Key Stage 2 SATs. Staff have been trained in the identification and teaching of language functions and one of his class teachers, bilingual herself, was very focused on the needs of EAL. Progress was closely monitored, with booster lessons when required, including for the very able. These may include a focus on the areas of grammatical difficulty for EAL learners in Year 5.

Pupil F is now at secondary school. He described how he had attended nursery classes for two years plus one year of school before arriving in London, so felt he had 'skipped' a year. He could not remember Year 3 but did remember having special English lessons in Year 4. He also reported that his father had come to London prior to the family and that he had been prepared for moving here.

Child G

Child G joined the school in Year 3 from Romania and speaks only Romanian at home. She had attended state nursery school before arriving here and learned to read and write at home (but now says 'I can actually write better in English than Romanian.') She had a clear memory of Year 3 and remembered learning from friends and using structured reading schemes. She left primary school with level 5 SATs scores in English and Maths.

Child G reflected that her father came to London as soon as he was able to in 2007 and the family followed later on that year. By then she had been taught a few basic phrases in English.

Child H

Child H was born in Eritrea and lived in Sudan for two years before arriving in London in year 6. He described his primary school thus 'It was a lovely place: they used to help you a lot...there was a teacher who used to take me out and practise spellings – homophones like there and their.' He had attended state school in Sudan and studied maths and Arabic. Earlier, in Eritrea, he had gone to school and learned Tigrinya and maths.

After a year, he left primary school with level 3s in Key Stage 2 SATs. At secondary school he continued receiving support from the EAL department: 'It helped me a lot'. This was corroborated by his teacher who recalled interventions and special media projects with which he had been involved. He now would like to become a film producer.

Reflections

As noted above, group sizes in Years 1-6 are too small to engender statistically meaningful conclusions but some patterns do seem to emerge:

- A considerably higher proportion, (34%) of pupils entering the school system in Years 2-6 achieved fluency within four years compared to younger pupils starting in the Nursery, Reception or Year 1(~ 10%). Schools need to be aware that children born in Lambeth and attending an educational setting from the age of two or three might take longer to develop age appropriate cognitive academic language proficiency than a child arriving from abroad. This need is often masked by a well developed social vocabulary.
- Schools might need to monitor children arriving in Year 2 and 3 who may have never experienced formal schooling before, as they might have particular difficulties.

On arrival, the extent of a child's facility and understanding of his or her home language(s) should be ascertained and the child placed accordingly. Some children will have no experience of reading and writing their first language; others might have a well developed use of more than one language and it is important to capitalise on this. A comprehensive online resource bank for new arrivals in primary schools is included in Supplement 1, which has been sent to all schools.

Lambeth research studies (Demie and Bellsham Revell 2013, Demie and Gay 2013) identify much excellent practice in our schools. They reinforce the need to for schools to provide a motivating induction programme for all new arrivals, alongside effective classroom strategies with a focus on academic language patterns in all subject areas. Many schools have made some provision for teaching the first language at Key stages 2, 3, 4 and 5. However, despite all best efforts, a considerable majority of pupils (~90%) starting in Lambeth schools in the Nursery, Reception and Year 1 as beginner English speakers with no recognised special educational needs are not achieving fluency after four years (let alone three). Monies and will still need to be found in order to provide them with specialist support, whether within or outside the mainstream until they are able to achieve on a par with their fluent peers.

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Appendix 1a: School funding reform: Next steps towards a fairer system DfE 2012

Extract : English as an additional language

1.3.35 We know that pupils who have EAL often require additional support in order to learn the English language.

1.3.36 In July we consulted on whether, in a potential national funding formula, we should fund EAL pupils for a fixed period only. The responses showed that just over half of respondents thought we should limit EAL funding and around a third thought that funding should be limited to 3 years. With earlier intervention, we think that pupils with EAL can achieve well earlier on and fully integrate with their peers.

1.3.37 We think that 3 years of additional funding should provide enough time for a school to support a pupil with EAL. Local authorities will be able to continue to provide funding to pupils with EAL but only for a maximum period of 3 years from when they entered the compulsory school system.

Appendix 1b: School funding reform: Next steps towards a fairer system FAQs

Extract: English as an additional language

Q62: *Can the EAL measure be weighted according to the first language of the pupil?*

A: No

Q63: *Does the 3 year limit on EAL start in any school or in the current school?*

A: The three year limit starts when the child first enters the state sector. For the majority of pupils this will be in Reception.

Q64: *The document says EAL funding should only apply for the first 3 years of compulsory education. Does this mean reception to year 2, or will national data be available to identify older EAL children who may have arrived in the country with no previous formal schooling?*

A: We have issued a full set of school-level data shortly so that all authorities are using the same data source. This data includes the relevant EAL data to identify the pupils that are within their first 3 years of compulsory education in this country. The majority of these pupils will be in Reception to Year 2; however there will also be pupils who have entered into the system in later years.

Q65: *Can EAL rates vary between primary and secondary phases?*

A: Yes.

Q66: *With EAL, can the LA fund a different rate for each of the 3 first years in education e.g.: year 1 - £1,000 year 2 £500 and year 3 £100 thereby reducing the support as the child progresses with its knowledge of English language?*

A: No. Local authorities will need to choose between a 1 year, 2 year or 3 year indicator and allocate a flat amount.

Q67: *Does the EAL data cover all EAL groups irrespective of whether these groups are generally high achieving or not e.g. Chinese?*

A: Yes. We are aware that there are groups within the EAL category who may not have an additional need. However, given that the funding will only be available for a maximum of 3 years, our view is that this limits the degree of potential over-funding to high-achieving pupils who have EAL.

Appendix 2: Statutory school starting age around the world

Albania	6	Hungary	7
Algeria	6	Italy	6
Angola	6	Jamaica	6
Argentina	6	Latvia	7
Australia	5	Lebanon	6
Azerbaijan	6	Lithuania	7
Bangladesh	6	Malawi	6
Belarus	6	Netherlands	6
Belgium	6	Nigeria	6
Belize	5	Poland	7
Benin	6	Portugal	6
Bolivia	6	Romania	7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6	Russian Federation	7
Brazil	6	Senegal	7
Brunei Darussalam	6	Serbia	7
Bulgaria	7	Slovak Republic	6
China	7	Slovenia	6
Colombia	6	Somalia	6
Congo, Dem. Rep.	6	Spain	6
Congo, Rep.	6	Sri Lanka	5
Cote d'Ivoire	6	Sudan	6
Croatia	7	Sweden	7
Ecuador	6	Syrian Arab Republic	6
Eritrea	7	Turkey	6
Estonia	7	Ukraine	6
Ethiopia	7	United Arab Emirates	6
Finland	7	United Kingdom	5
France	6	United States	6
Germany	6	Venezuela, RB	6
Ghana	6	Vietnam	6

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