

The Impact of Covid-19 on Children's Language, Educational and Socioemotional Skills

Interim Briefing October 2022 - A focus on children learning English as an Additional Language

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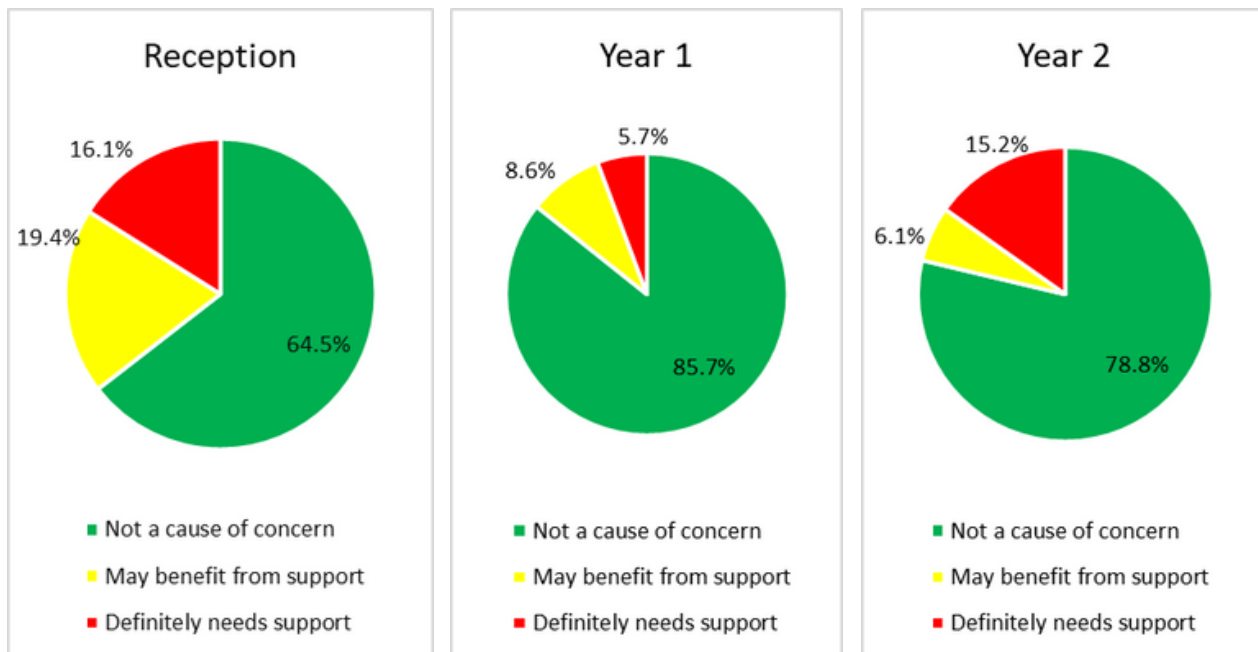
Introduction

The ICICLES project is a three-year study investigating the impact of Covid-19 on children's language, socioemotional and educational outcomes focusing on children from Reception to Year 2. The ICICLES project started in September 2021 and we have now completed the first two testing points.

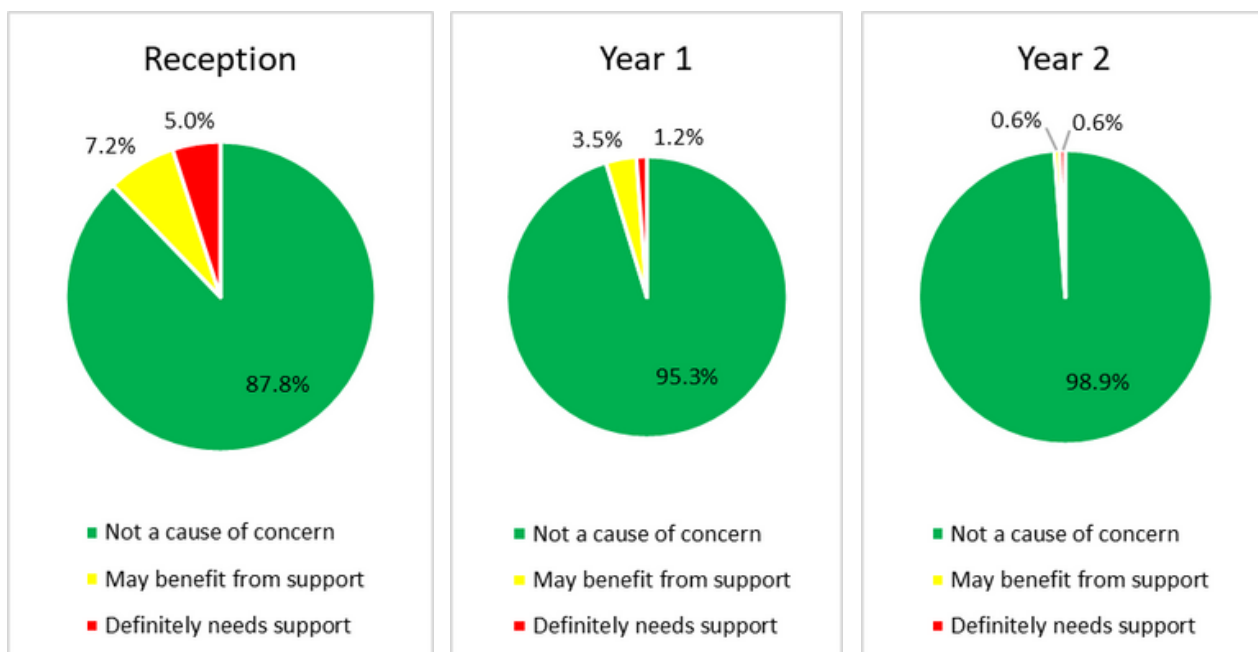
In this interim briefing we look specifically at the language skills of children learning English as an Additional Language (EAL). Previous research found that children learning EAL were more impacted by the pandemic compared to their Non-EAL peers. In this interim briefing, we present how EAL and non-EAL children participating in the ICICLES project performed in a language measure in two different testing points during the 2021/2022 academic year. The language measure used was the Language Screen, a standardised measure that focuses on four specific areas: receptive and expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension and sentence repetition. In testing point 1 (Spring 2022), schools completed 627 Language Screens. In testing point 2 (Summer 2022) schools completed 694 Language Screens.

Testing point 1: Spring 2022:

- EAL children:



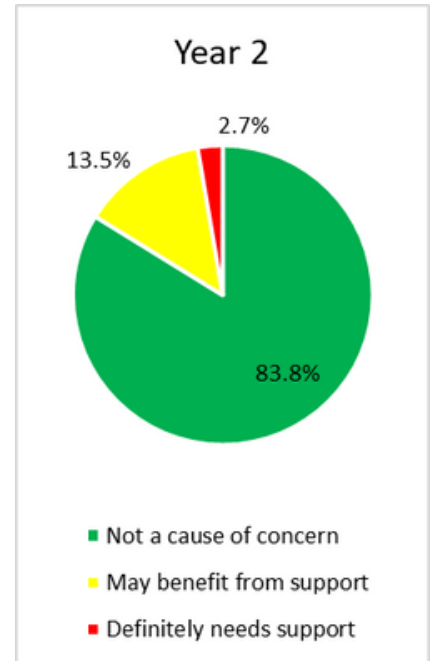
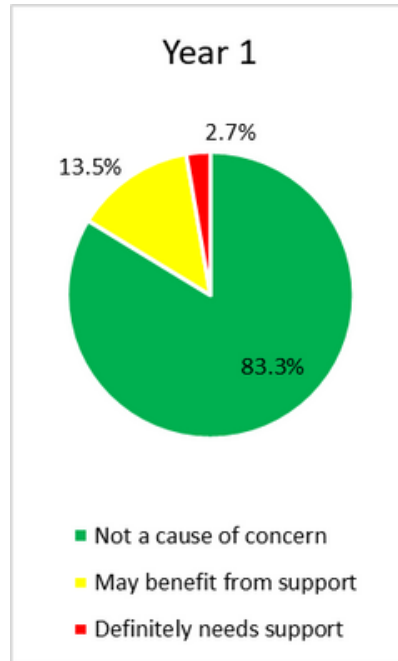
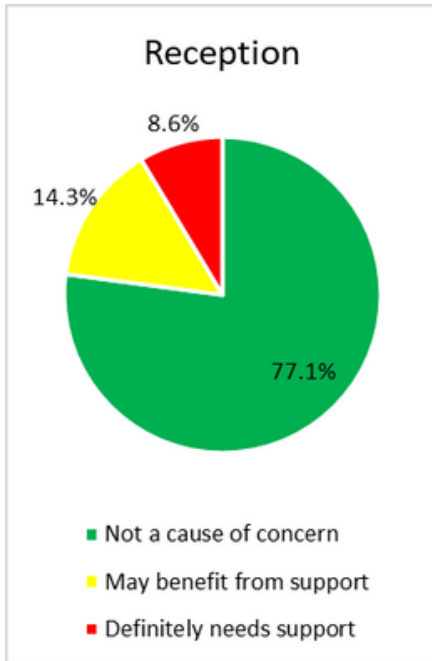
- Non-EAL children:



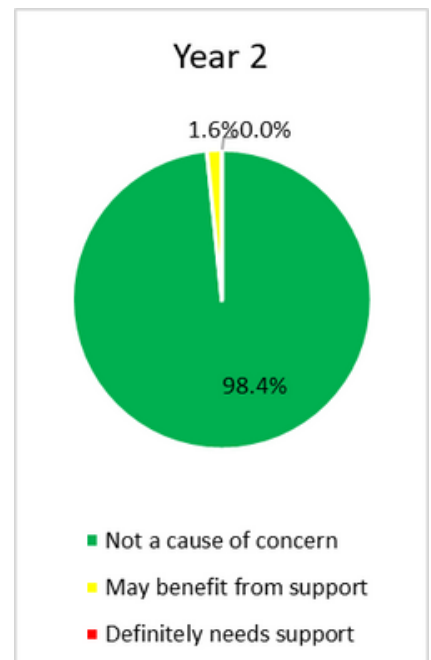
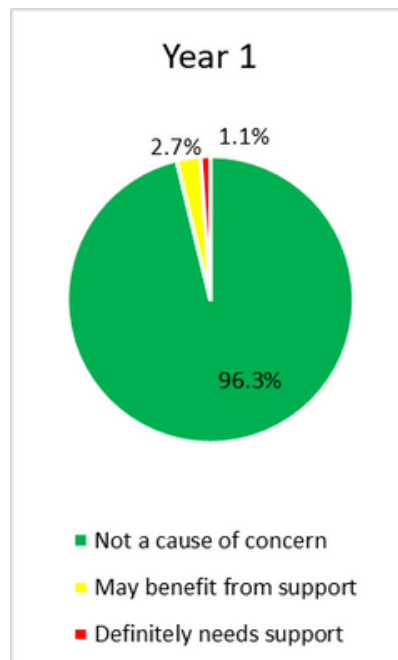
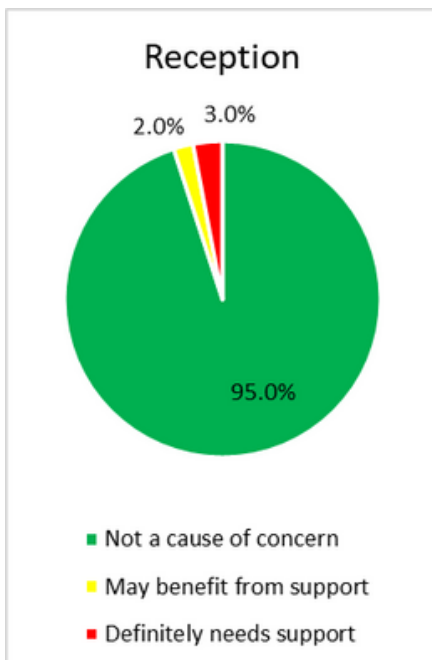
These preliminary findings suggest that in spring 2022, the language skills of most children across the three-year groups were in the expected range. They also show that a higher percentage of Non-EAL children were scoring in the expected range compared to EAL children in all year groups.

Testing point 2: Summer 2022:

- EAL children:



- Non-EAL children:



Similarly to the first testing point, the preliminary findings of testing point two suggest that in Summer 2022, the language skills of most children across the three year groups were in the expected range. They also showed that a higher percentage of non-EAL children were scoring in the expected range compared to EAL children in all year groups at the end of the school year. Results also showed that by Summer 2022 the percentage of EAL children definitely needing support decreased compared to Spring 2022.

While the results of both testing points show that most children were scoring in the expected range, it is important to note that the Language Screen looks at four specific areas (receptive and expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension and sentence repetition) and it may not be picking up on broader communication skills. Additionally, both testing points took place in the 2021/2022 academic year, therefore we can not know if a similar difference between EAL and non-EAL could be seen prior to the pandemic.

These findings should be taken with caution. They represent the overall scores across all participating children and schools and only assess specific areas of children's language. Further analyses will also be conducted to understand which other factors could be contributing to these results.

We also conducted 23 interviews with staff members from our participating schools regarding their experience of the impact of the pandemic and school disruptions. These are some of the things they told us.

The language skills of most children are poorer than in previous years, even in schools where historically children start with lower language skills.



According to most schools, socioemotional skills might be the area that has been impacted the most.

Some of the areas of the curriculum that have been impacted the most have been: Writing, phonics, reading, maths, physical activity, and any area that requires practical experience or knowledge of the world.



EAL children, SEN children and children from deprived areas are the ones that have been impacted the most.



Parents'/carers' circumstances, abilities, characteristics, and mental health also impacted their children's educational skills.



Most schools had to make some changes in their curriculum or prioritized different areas.

Findings from the interviews may be showing a contrasting picture to results from the language measure. Our results suggest that overall, the majority of children are performing in the expected range on the language screen measure. However, in the interviews, teachers were talking about all of the children in their classroom, not just those who completed the language screen. In addition, the language screen may not pick up on broader communication skills which may have been impacted by the pandemic. In contrast, the finding that a higher proportion of children learning EAL would benefit from support compared to English only speaking children does fit with the findings from our interviews that children learning EAL were particularly impacted by the pandemic. Our next steps are to analyse NPD data (National Pupil Database data) to have a more in-depth picture of how children's educational experience has been impacted so far. Therefore, results at the moment should be taken with caution

**For more information on this project visit
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**This project has been funded by the Nuffield Foundation, but
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