

Appendix 8

Additional Information: The importance of school readiness

- 1.1. A key indicator of the quality and impact of early years education is school readiness. This measure is linked to the quality and availability of funded early education, however, it is important to note that school readiness is impacted by a range of indicators, for instance mother's mental health and wellbeing, safety and stability of the home environment, family income, child's gender, birth weight and health needs.
- 1.2. While there are different interpretations of school readiness, there is consensus that school readiness is not merely being ready to start school. [UNICEF has a conceptual framework for school readiness](#) which is defined across three dimensions:
 - Children's readiness for school
 - Schools' readiness for children
 - Families' and communities' readiness for school
- 1.3. In statutory terms, a Good Level of Development (GLD) is the measure to assess how 'school ready' a child is, both in prime areas (physical development, communication and language development, and personal, social and emotional development) and specific areas (literacy, maths, expressive arts and design and understanding the world). It is based on observation of children over a long period and best fit judgements are made at the end of Reception Year to capture how the child is developing and learning, and ready to start in year 1. Using this score, a child with a GLD will have reached the expected level in all the prime areas of learning¹.
- 1.4. A Public Health England report on improving school readiness in London² states that those who do not reach a GLD by age five, will go on to struggle with key skills such as communication, language, literacy and mathematics; which will in turn influence future life chances.
- 1.5. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework³ sets the standards that all early year's providers must meet to ensure that children from birth to five years learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. This framework applies through nursery and into Reception Year of statutory education.

¹ [Early years foundation stage - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

² [PH Improving School readiness London 10 Sep 15.pdf](#)

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

- 1.6. Based on the [Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results 2021/2022](#), Kent's GLD (65.8%) is below the South East regional average (67.5%). Within this there are significant variations in GLD between Kent's districts. Thanet consistently performs worst across a number of indicators, including: percentage of 0-5s living in a relative low-income (24.2%), access to Early Help (7.3%), referral to social care (7.2%), highest percentage of 0 – 5s with an EHCP (1.7%) and the lowest GLD of all districts (60.7%). In fact, the three districts in East Kent have the lowest percentage of Year R pupils who have achieved a GLD. In contrast, the districts in West Kent generally have more favourable outcomes, particularly Tonbridge and Malling, which also has the highest GLD in Kent (70.4%).
- 1.7. Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF) can be accessed by any early years provider (maintained or PVI) and childminders to enable inclusion of children with additional needs in mainstream education, subject to meeting the relevant criteria. High needs funding can be accessed for children in reception Year of statutory education which is part of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- 1.8. Given that GLD is a primary indicator of school readiness measured at the end of year R, the number of applications for both SENIF and HNF and number of EHCP applications can be used as an indicator to explore barriers to school readiness. Data in relation to SENIF, HNF and EHCP indicates that Thanet and Swale are generally the districts with the highest number of applications. However, the average cost of SENIF and HNF has been higher in the districts in South Kent (Ashford, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe) and Maidstone in West Kent, suggesting that the more applications are submitted from areas with lower average GLD, but spend per pupil is higher in with higher average levels of GLD.
- 1.9. Within this review, school readiness has also been considered in relation to outcomes for summer born children.
- 1.10. According to research published by The London School of Economics (LSE)⁴, only 49% of summer born children receive a GLD in their reception year, compared to 71% of autumn born children. National research (e.g., Campbell 2021 report) confidently indicates disproportionality in SEN support among children born in the summer months due to differences in skill development according to age.
- 1.11. Kent Analytics have created an integrated dataset for all children and young people educated in Kent. One of the key findings is that Summer born children are more likely to be identified as having SEND and that across all age ranges, a higher percentage of children with SEN support and EHC Plans are born in summer months.

⁴ [Summer born children unfairly labelled as having SEND \(lse.ac.uk\)](#)

- 1.12. Further research into this correlation yielded inconclusive findings, citing other influencing factors, such as deprivation, parental involvement in education and attendance at pre-school. Schools spoken to through this research report that most do not take birth month into account when planning curriculum, and that children born in the summer months are not necessarily at a disadvantage to their peers in terms of their progress at school, although this may be a contributing factor in some cases. Participants also felt that, in their schools, there was no correlation between summer born children and children being assigned an EHCP because the EHC assessment considers a complex set of factors which would outweigh the effects of age alone.
- 1.13. A critical factor in school readiness is the importance of timely and co-ordinated transitions, particularly for children with SEND. As part of being ready for the next phase of education from home onwards, good practice involves collaboration between all agencies involved in the child's life, including home visits and providing reassurance for families.
- 1.14. Feedback from stakeholders, particularly families of children with SEND, highlighted that timely and effective transitions are not always well planned and executed.
- 1.15. [The Education People \(TEP\) offer a range of products](#) to support early years practitioners, schools and parents/carers in their understanding of school readiness and how they can support children with transition into school. These are mostly chargeable training offers. Enrolment in the 'school readiness' e-learning course has been poor, with only five schools purchasing the training in 2021/22, and zero in 2022/23 (as of 25 May 2023).