

## School Readiness

Healthy pregnancy, good parenting and good early years provision are essential foundations for healthy development and achievement of a child. The early years are highly influential for a child's future outcomes in life. Children who do not achieve a good level of development by the age of five will often struggle with reading, maths, social and physical skills leading to long term impacts on their educational attainment and health. Growing up in areas such as Sandwell where poverty and deprivation is ranked so high, makes it harder for children to reach their potentials.

An Ofsted review of local authorities in 2014<sup>1</sup> reported that there is no nationally agreed definition for the term 'school readiness'. However, in Sandwell, the definition has been agreed with both children's centre managers and managers from the private and voluntary day care sector in Sandwell, as:

- Is a process which starts from birth
- Covers the time before a child starts at reception class in school
- Must involve parents
- Prepares children to be emotionally ready for school e.g. being separated from their main carer
- Prepares parents for the transition process
- Ensures children have sufficient language to communicate
- Ensures children have experience of play with their peers
- Ensures children show a degree of independence e.g. toilet trained; able to dress themselves
- Ensures children can hold a pencil

As part of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework<sup>2</sup>, school readiness is a key measure of early years development across a wide range of developmental areas. As shown in table 2.1 school readiness covers seven prime areas of learning and seventeen early learning goals. Not only do these prime areas impact on educational outcomes but also health and crime. The EYFS profile assessment is carried out for each child in the final term of the year in which a child reaches age five. Assessment is completed from a practitioner's observation and interaction with the child in a range of daily activities and events.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/are-you-ready-good-practice-in-school-readiness>

<sup>2</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/596629/EYFS\\_STATUTORY\\_FRAMEWORK\\_2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf)

**Table 2.1 School Readiness Areas of Learning**

	<b>Area of Learning</b>	<b>Early Learning Goal (ELG)</b>	<b>Good level of development</b>
<b>Prime Areas</b>	Communication and Language	1: Listening and attention	✓
		2: Understanding	✓
		3: Speaking	✓
	Physical Development	4: Moving and handling	✓
		5: Health and self-care	✓
	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	6: Self-confidence and self-awareness	✓
		7: Managing feelings and behaviour	✓
		8: Making relationships	✓
<b>Specific Areas of Learning</b>	Literacy	9: Reading	✓
		10: Writing	✓
	Mathematics	11: Numbers	✓
		12: Shape, space and measures	✓
	Understanding the World	13: People and communities	
		14: The World	
		15: Technology	
	Expressive arts and design	16: Exploring and using media and materials	
17: Being imaginative			

Children achieving at least the expected level in the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) within the three prime areas of learning and within literacy and mathematics are classed as achieving a 'good level of development'.

**Table 2.2 School Readiness Indicators**

School Readiness Indicators	Age	Time period	Value	Compared to England	Compared to West Midlands	Trend
% of children achieving a <b>good level</b> of development at the end of reception	5 yrs	2017/18	66.4	Worse	Worse	
% of children with free school meal status achieving a <b>good level</b> of development at the end of reception	5 yrs	2017/18	55.2	Similar	Similar	-
% of children achieving at least an <b>expected level</b> of development across all learning goals in communication and language	5 yrs	2017/18	77.9	Worse	Worse	
% of children with free school meal status achieving at least an <b>expected level</b> of development across all learning goals in <b>communication and language</b>	5 yrs	2017/18	71.2	Worse	Worse	

Source: PHE Profiles (2019)

A lower proportion of Sandwell children are school ready compared to than other parts of the West Midlands region and England. For 2017/18, 66.4% of Sandwell children achieved a good level of development. This is statistically lower than England (71.5%) and the West Midlands region (69.8%).

Similarly, to the national and regional rates, for the past 5 years, the percentage of children in Sandwell achieving a good level has been increasing, however in comparison to the regional and national figures, the inequality gap is still large.

Ranking the levels of good development across the West Midlands Metropolitan Councils, Sandwell rank is the lowest.

The inequality gap for children who are eligible for free school meals in Sandwell compared to those that have more prosperous socio-economic environments in Sandwell is even larger. Only 55.2% of children who have free school meals are achieving a good level of development. Although this is a similar rate to the national and regional achievements for children with free school meals; when looking at performance of the learning and communication area which includes ELGs ‘listening and attention’, ‘understanding’ and ‘speaking’, Sandwell’s rates are statistically lower.

Similarly, to the national and regional trends, girls outperform boys considerably in achieving a good level of development. In 2018, 14% more girls are achieving good level of development than boys.

**Figure 2.9**

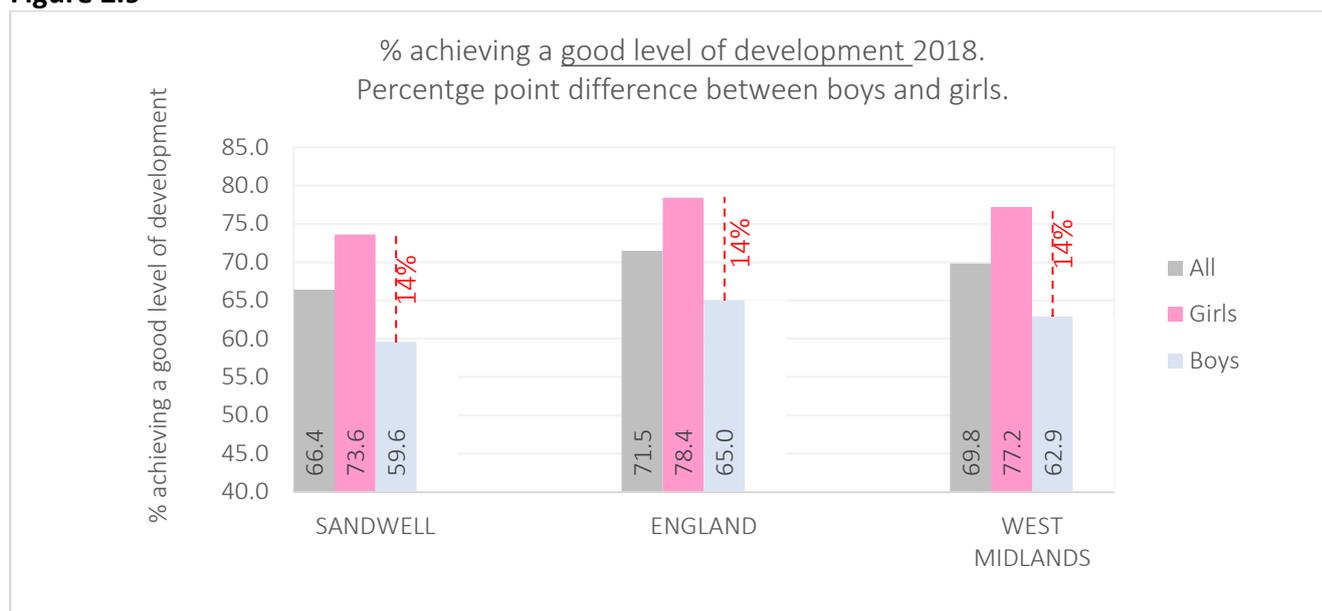
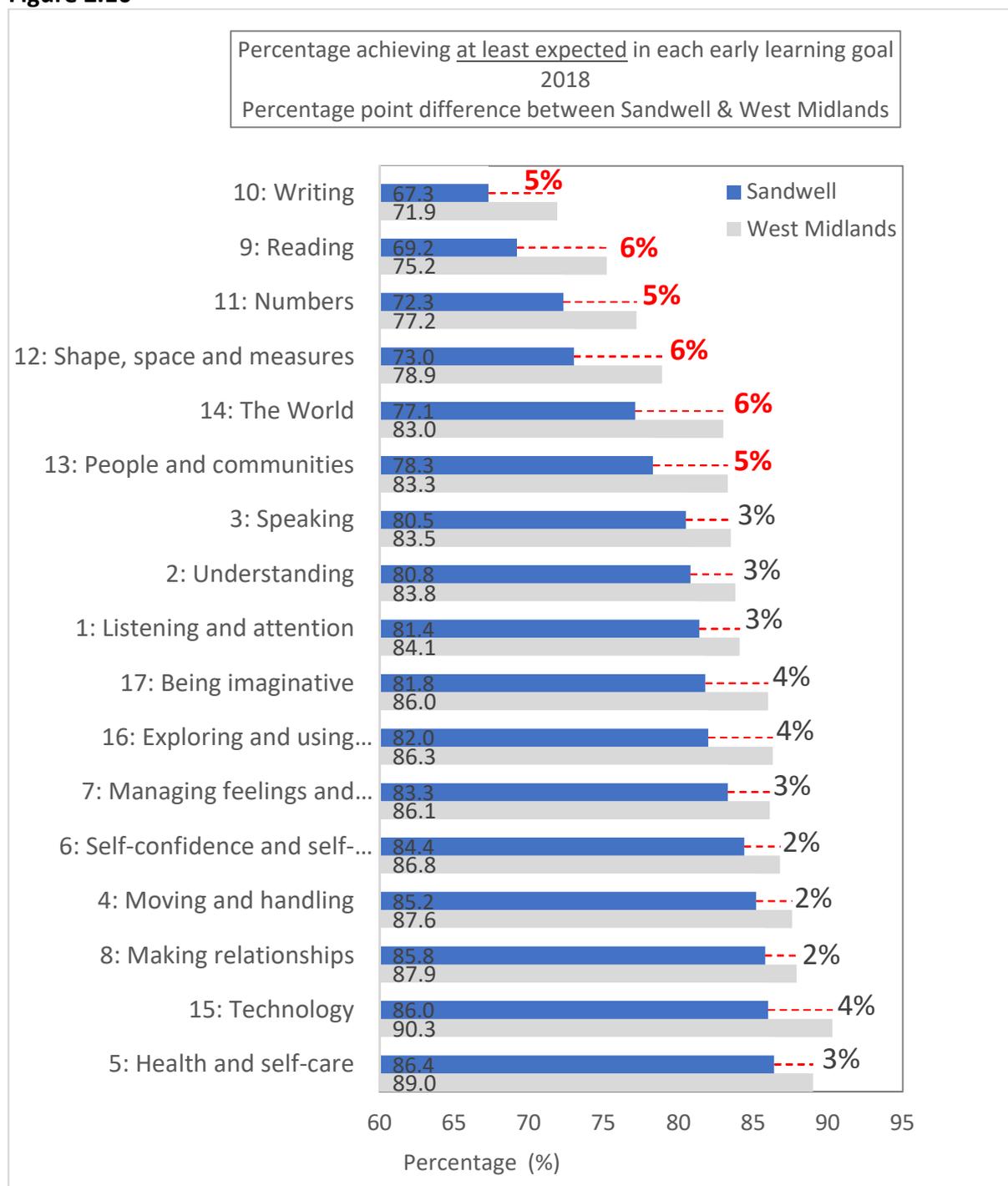


Figure 2.10 shows the proportion of children achieving at least expected for each of the individual ELGs. The ranking of the ELGs by proportion of children achieving at least expected is the same for Sandwell and West Midlands.

The six lowest performing ELGs, have the largest percentage point differences, with Sandwell proportions being up to 6% lower than the West Midlands.

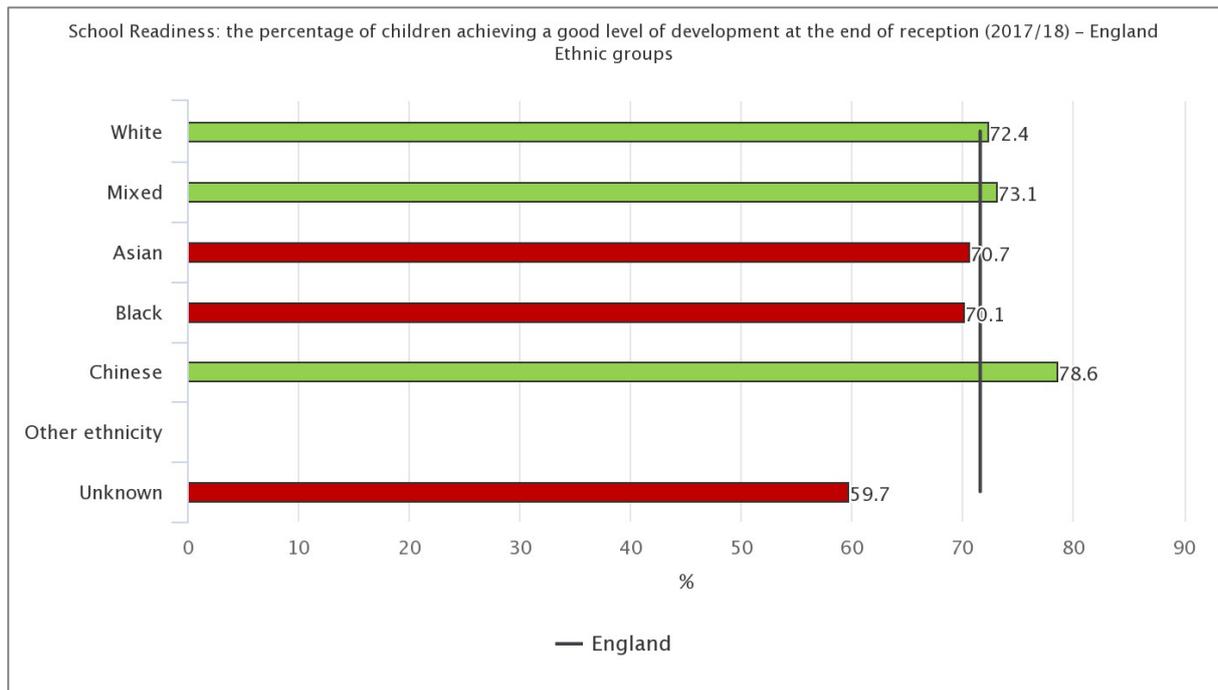
In addition to the prime areas, reading is one of the goals that contributes to the 'good level of development' measurements. However, this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest performing ELGs for Sandwell.

**Figure 2.10**



National data suggests inequalities within certain ethnic groups. This is particularly important and relevant for Sandwell, due to its ethnically diverse population. Figure 2.11 shows that lower proportion of Asian and Black children achieve a good level of development. This is a vital point to consider as 30% of Sandwell’s population is from minority ethnic groups (Census 2011). In addition to this, the 2018 school census has identified that 33% of Sandwell primary school children’s first language is not English, suggesting a strong mix of ethnicities and backgrounds amongst Sandwell children. The 2011 census also highlighted that there are some wards, such as St. Pauls in Smethwick, where 13% of its population do not speak English well or at all.

**Figure 2.11**



Source: PHE Profiles (2019)

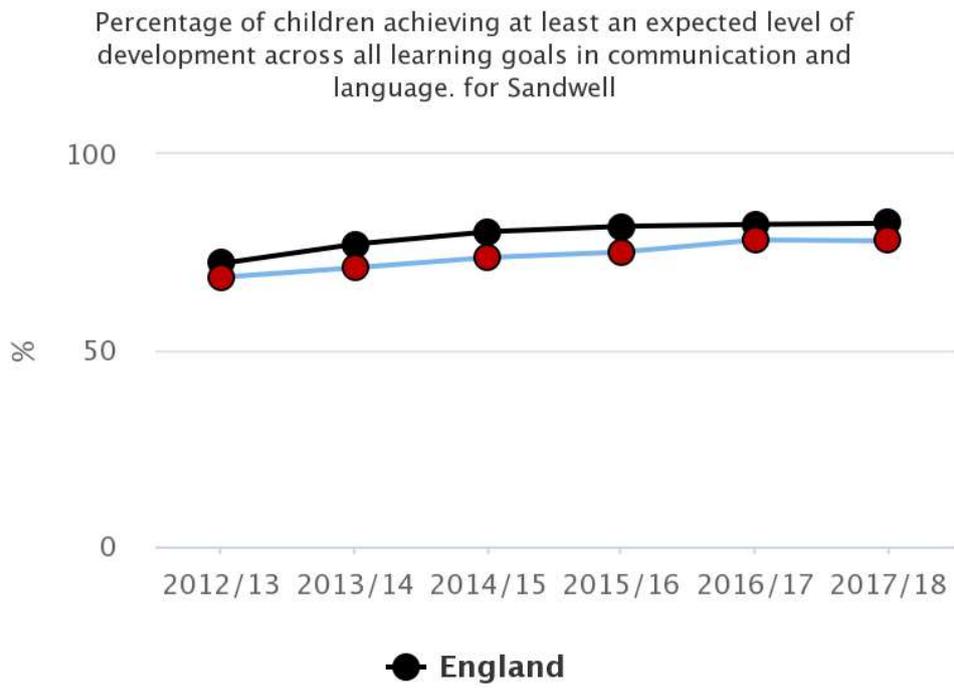
### Children achieving at least an expected level of development across all learning goals in communication and language

For children to have achieved at least the expected level of development means that they achieved 'expected' or 'exceeded' levels within all three communication and language early learning goals (listening and attention, understanding, speaking) at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

In 2017/18, 77.9% of Sandwell children achieved a good level of development compared with an England average of 82.4% and a West Midlands average of 80.2%.

- Sandwell has an increasing trend based on the past 5 years.
- The Sandwell rate is significantly lower than England and West Midlands.

**Figure 2.12**



Source: Public Health England Profiles