



The British Embassy School Ankara

The impact of COVID 19 on pupil
progress, March 2020 to June 2021

Context

On Friday 13th March 2021, BESA moved all classes to distance learning for the first time. Since then, classes have been impacted by COVID in a variety of different ways. After the impact of the initial closures from March to May, the Nursery class initially, and then the Reception and Year 1 classes have been back in school for the majority of the 2020/21 academic year. Likewise, Year 9 have been able to attend school in person for much of the current year.

Decisions about when classes have been opened have aligned to guidance from a variety of Turkish authorities including the Ministry of National Education and the Ankara Governate. Once open, the school has risk assessed our operating procedures in line with expectations in the UK and Turkey as we have believed appropriate to our setting.

Mindful of the wellbeing needs of children we have also sought to bring groups of children into school for outdoor social activities as local curfews have permitted. We have also held 1 to 1 tutorials with Middle Years students at regular intervals.

The primary classes from Year 2 –5 and the Middle Years 6– 8 classes have been more heavily impacted by physical closures and have been required to access their learning from their own homes.

Distance learning provision at BESA has utilised Google Classroom which has provided teachers with tools to meet with students synchronously in live 'Meets' and share pre-recorded asynchronous materials. There has also been time available for children to work independently.

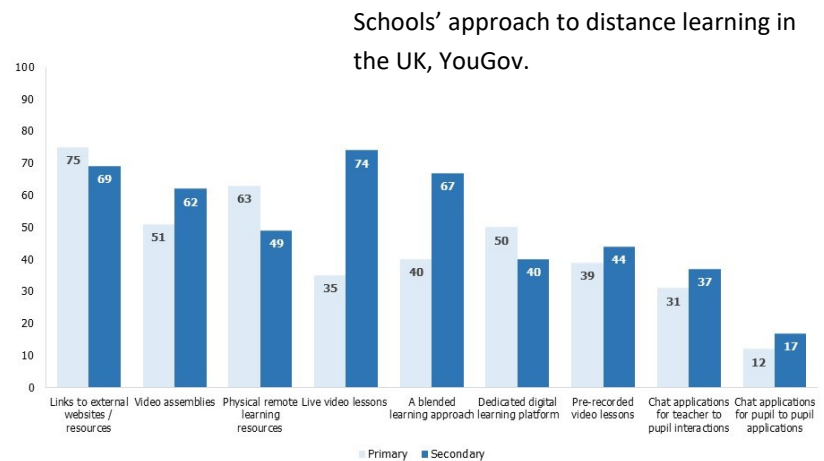
As the periods of distance learning has extended BESA has reviewed and updated its provision.

In September a priority was placed on English and Maths in the primary classes, although the breadth of the curriculum was maintained through the provision of specialist lessons.

The amount of live instruction and interaction was also increased to support both the engagement of the children, an increased opportunity to provide direct feedback and to support their wellbeing through peer interaction. PE sessions were adapted to provide regular short interactions rather than a single hour a week.

Throughout, our Student Support Team has delivered a program of individual and group support to meet identified special educational needs.

In Middle Years the full curriculum timetable has been maintained with live interaction increased from September 2020.



Figures are based on multiple responses given by participants
Base: All teachers whose school offers remote learning (n=969)
Source: YouGov

What does the research tell us about the impact of COVID on Pupil Progress?

Analysis from the Education Endowment Foundation

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/eef-support-for-schools/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-impact-of-school-closures-on-the-attainment-gap/>

There is a growing evidence around the impact of school closures on the learning outcomes of pupils. Research shows a consistent pattern:

- *Pupils have made less academic progress compared with previous year groups*
- *There is a large attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils, which seems to have grown*

Studies from NFER, Department for Education and GL assessment show a consistent impact of the first national lockdown with pupils making around 2 months less progress than similar pupils in previous years. The studies from NFER and RS assessment both show large gaps for disadvantaged pupils, which seem to have grown since the start of the pandemic.

While many studies show similar learning effects between English and mathematics learning, some recent studies - including the analysis commissioned by the DfE does indicate some increased learning loss for mathematics. Most studies have taken place in primary schools. Where studies have examined older pupils (DfE and GL Assessment), the results are inconsistent with one study showing similar impacts and the other showing a smaller impact for pupils in secondary schools.

All current studies only measure the impact of the first national lockdown and do not take into account the potential impact of subsequent national restrictions. The study by GL Assessment also collected data towards the end of Autumn term, which suggests some successful recovery during this term. None of the studies in England use national assessment data due to the cancellation of testing.

The research is consistent with surveys of parents and teachers on access to education during the pandemic, which indicates disparities in access to technology and levels of parental support - one potential explanation for why gaps might open up between groups of pupils. The recent evidence is also consistent with prior research, which shows differential learning loss during summer holidays and other school closures, which is summarised in the EEF rapid evidence assessment on school closures.

International evidence from Belgium, Holland and the USA is consistent in showing overall progress gaps and attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils.

The GL assessment study

Autumn 2020

In November 2020, BESA conducted the GL Progress Tests with children from Year 1 to Year 9. We are therefore able to provide a direct comparison between pupil attainment at BESA and the findings mentioned in the EEF analysis on the previous page.

The figures in table 1.1 identify the change in the average standardised score in tests taken during the 2020 Autumn Term. I would note that at that point, many of the children at schools in locations such as the UK, China and the Middle East would have been attending school in person again for a number of weeks.

School type	Progress Test in Maths	Progress Test in English	Progress Test in Science
England State Primary	-6.6	-3.4	-5.5
England State Secondary	-4.0	-2.9	-3.0
England Independent	-2.6	-2.7	-5.3
International Schools	-4.9	-3.0	-6.2
BESA Primary	-1.2	-2.2	-4.0
BESA Secondary	-3.8	-2.7	+0.4

Table 1.1

Whilst the average standardised scores BESA students achieved did see a decline (with the exception of secondary maths which was the same as that in English independent schools) this drop was smaller than all comparable institutions.

How do we measure progress at BESA?

Teachers use two key forms of assessment to measure the progress that children are making, formative and summative.

Explained simply, formative is the information that teachers acquire about children on a day to day basis through observation of the children and the written outcomes of their learning. This allows teachers to see how a child is improving and to quickly identify what their next steps need to be.

Summative is the information gathered in a specific test. This provides a snapshot of a child's level of attainment at a particular time and in relation to a specific curriculum.

Distance learning has made teachers more reliant on summative assessments because, even when the children are in class, their ability to work closely with individuals and groups has been more limited by the COVID restrictions we have put in place.

The GL assessments the children complete in school provide us with standardised information that helps us to understand both the progress individual children are making and how this relates to their peers in a variety of different settings internationally and in the UK.

What do the GL Progress Tests tell teachers?

The progress tests provide teachers with a wealth of information about individual children and the children as a group. For individuals, they are an indicator of the progress a child is making and of their attainment against other children the same age.

Teachers also receive a breakdown of the different curriculum aspects being assessed and how successful each child has been in completing tasks and questions related to it.

This information is also provided about the class as a whole.

As a result, teachers can use this information to plan the next steps for the class and can respond to individual needs. It helps to identify specific gaps children might have.

You can find out more if you like at the web address below:

<https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/assessments/progress-test-series/>

What do the GL Progress Tests tell parents?

An individual report will be provided to parents for all the children who have taken a GL Progress Test (please be aware that these have to be conducted in school so these reports will not be available to children who have continued with the distance learning program).

The content of the reports is explained within. Of particular note however are the standardised scores and the indication of progress.

The standardised score is how your child's attainment relates to all the other children who have taken the assessment. The Standard Age Score (SAS) is the most important piece of information derived from the assessment. The SAS is based on the student's raw score which has been adjusted for age and placed on a scale that makes a comparison with a standardisation sample of students of the same age. The average score is 100. The SAS is key to benchmarking and tracking progress and is the fairest way to compare the performance of different students within a year group or across year groups.

The progress category is more individual and communicates your child's personal learning journey. If your child has made expected progress this is an indication that during the past year they have continued to make age-appropriate progress despite the onset of distance learning.

Summary of Pupil Progress at BESA in June 2021

The following data presents information about the impact on standardised scores and the individual progress students have made between 2019 and 2021. This is based on GL assessments administered in May 2019 (our last full year in-school), November 2020 and June 2021.

Primary Pupil Progress

The data in table 1.2 and 1.3 below relates to the average standardised scores in the primary classes in line with the analysis GL conducted in December 2020.

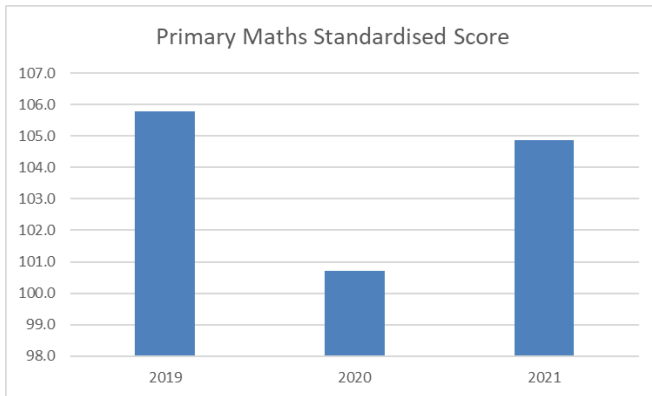


Table 1.2

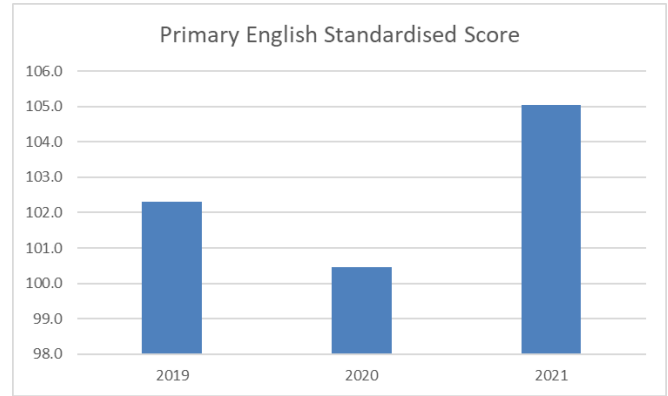


Table 1.3

The data in table 1.4 and 1.5 below identifies the number of children in each progress category. This data is only available for children who have done the assessment more than once.

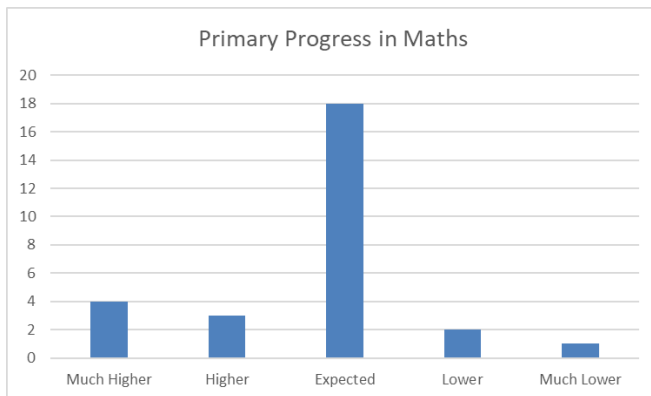


Table 1.4

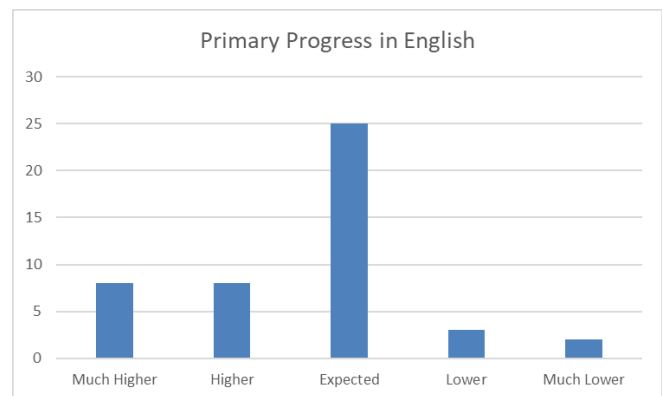


Table 1.5

- In terms of average standardised scores, the BESA standardised score has remained above average throughout the 2019 to 2021 period
- The second half of the period of distance learning has seen a recovery in both Maths and English to levels either close to those of 2019 or ahead of them
- In terms of individual progress, fewer than 11% of children in English and Maths have made lower than expected progress. 27% and 35% of children in Maths and English respectively made better than expected progress.

Middle Years Pupil Progress

The data in table 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8 below relates to the average standardised scores in the middle years classes in line with the analysis GL conducted in December 2020.

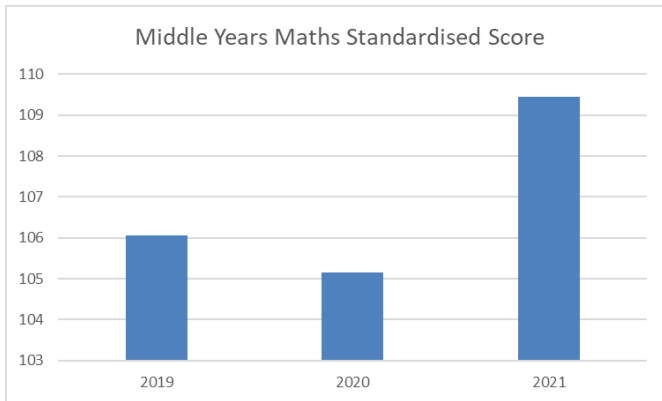


Table 1.6

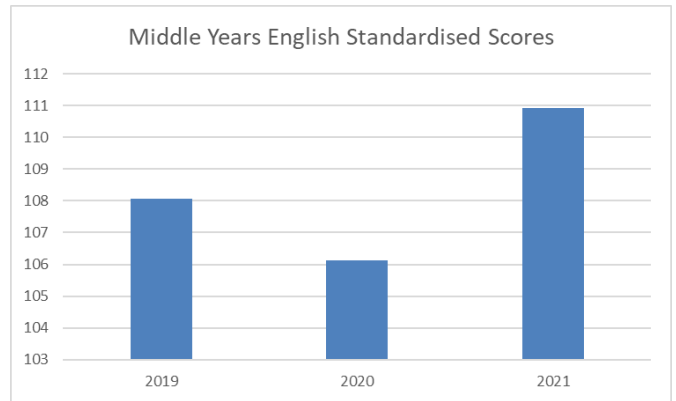


Table 1.7

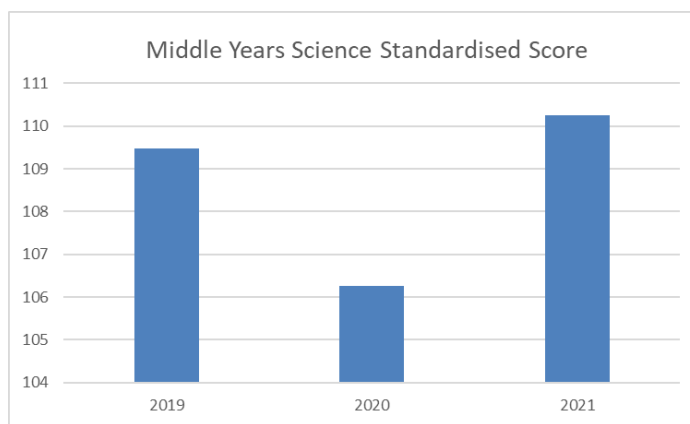


Table 1.8

The data in table 1.9, 1.10 and 1.11 below identifies the number of children in each progress category. This data is only available for children who have done the assessment more than once.

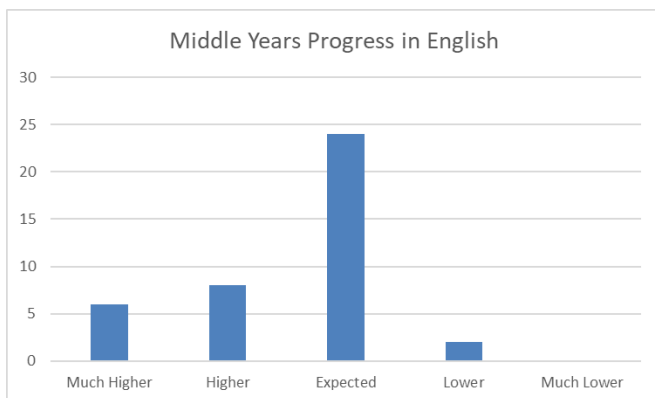


Table 1.9

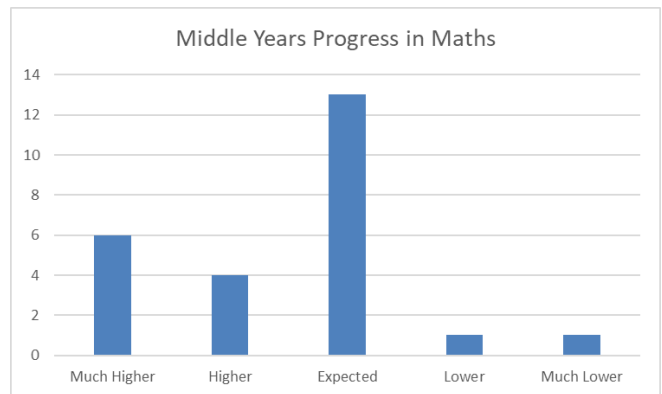


Table 1.10

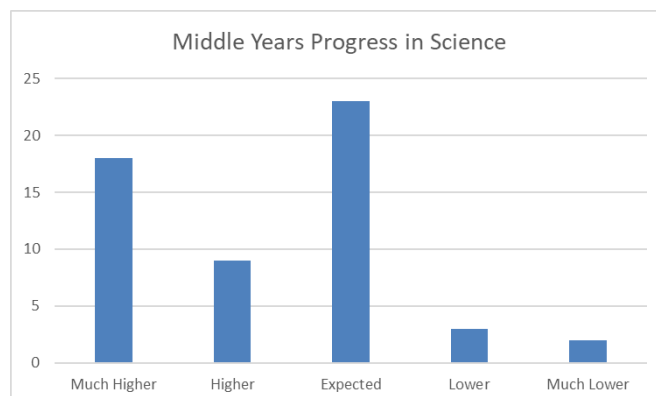


Table 1.11

- In terms of average standardised scores, the BESA standardised score has remained above average throughout the 2019 to 2021 period
- The second half of the period of distance learning has seen a recovery in Science, Maths and English to levels ahead of those in 2019
- In terms of individual progress, fewer than 5% of children in English, 8% in Maths and 9% in Science have made lower than expected progress. In Maths, English and Science 32%, 42% and 50% of children respectively made better than expected progress.

What next for 'Catch-up'?

There is a strong indication from the assessments we have conducted that in Maths, English and Middle Years Science the majority of children have continued to make expected progress or better. This is a credit to the resilience and adaptability of the children, their teachers and everyone at home who has been supporting them. It is also an indication that the distance learning provision for those subjects has been effective.

However, within any set of averages there are stories that do not fit the usual patterns and, in a school, this means we are talking about the needs of individual children. The pupil progress categories are very encouraging but when we return to school in September we will be addressing these needs at different levels.

Some of the children who have made lower than expected progress have actually achieved high levels of attainment. For them there needs to be an appropriate level of challenge both within the class and additionally. We are already aware of the specific learning needs that other children in these categories have and our Student Support Team have identified specific intervention programs to support them. To support this the Board of Governors has supported a temporary expansion to our Student Support team so that we can meet the needs of children in small groups or on a one to one level. Research has shown that this type of support is highly effective and this has been indicated in our own assessment results where 50% of children receiving either SEND or More Able support made better than expected progress.

Teachers have been conducting transition meetings to discuss the children's academic, social and emotional needs and have a wealth of information available to them from the assessments. This will inform the provision that children are offered through great teaching in class and through additional support groups where necessary.

In the primary school we are aware that maths and English learning has been prioritised during the distance learning period. It is important that we return a breadth to the curriculum for the children in these classes through their IPC and specialist lessons.

As we end what has been a challenging year for all involved, I believe that we can be assured that, despite the challenges, our children have continued to achieve well. The vast majority continue to make good progress and are well equipped to join their new classes in September. Where there are children who need help we will continue to do so, where they need challenge we are committed to ensuring that is in place.