

2021

# Tackling the Word Gap



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# Bridging the Word Gap at Transition



# What is the Word Gap and how many children does it affect?



# Why does the Word Gap matter?

Having a vocabulary that is below age-related expectations can lead to....

Difficulty working independently

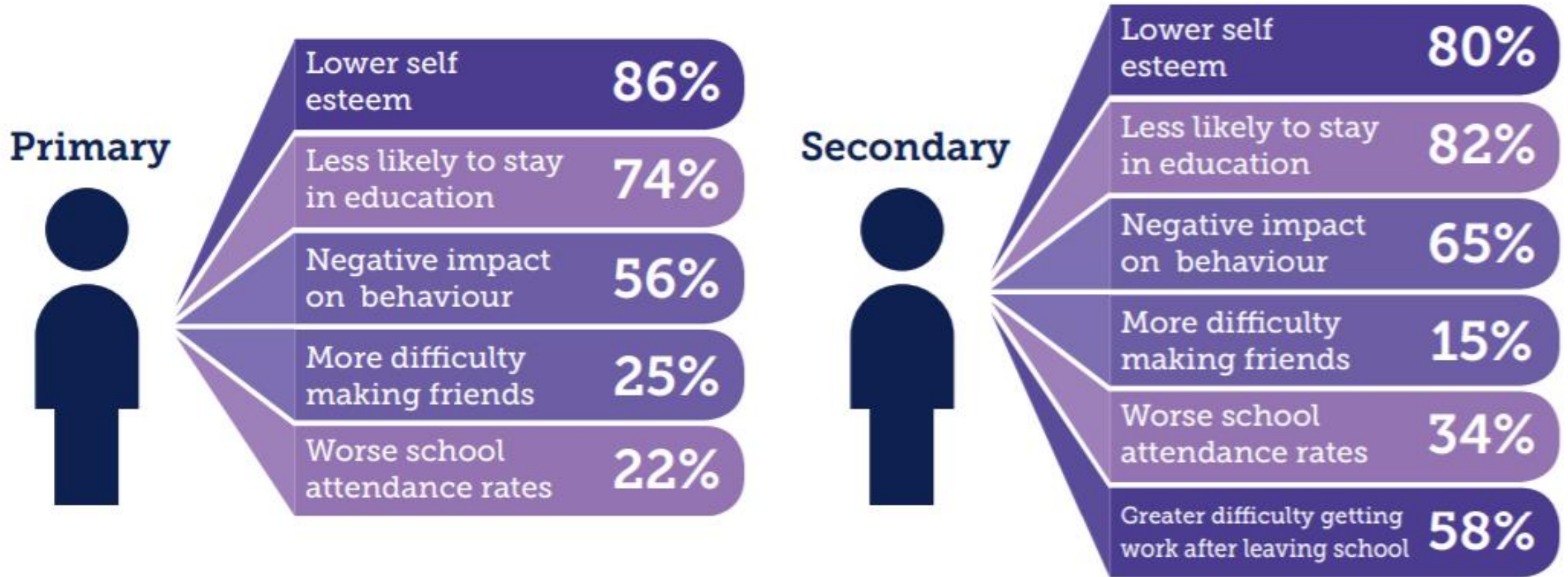
Difficulty following what is going on in class

Weaker comprehension skills

Slower than expected progress in both English and other subjects

Worse results in National Tests

# Why does the Word Gap matter?



Why Closing the Word Gap Matters:  
Oxford Language Report 2018

# Why does the Word Gap matter?

As a former English teacher I have seen the impact of the Word Gap first hand!

I often noticed a 'lag' in Year 7 pupils, where it took a little while for their writing skills to catch up with their ideas

# Bridging the Word Gap at Transition





# Bridging the Word Gap at Transition

## Supporting vocabulary at transition

**9** out of **10** teachers think transition between primary and secondary school highlights vocabulary deficiencies

**8** out of **10** primary school teachers describe vocabulary as a high, strategic priority

This drops to **5** out of **10** at secondary school

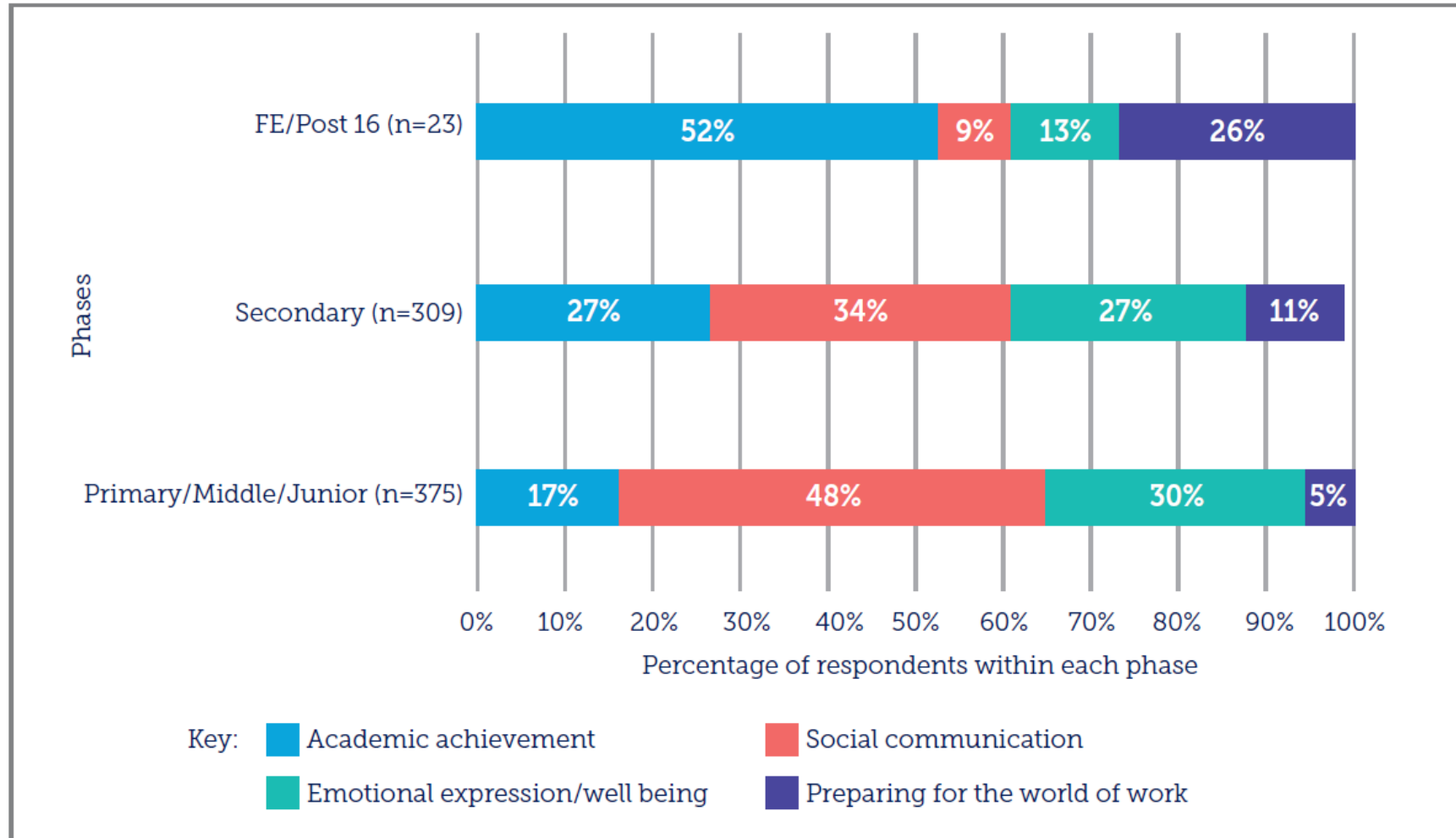
PRIMARY

SECONDARY



# Bridging the Word Gap at Transition

Responses to the question: In your opinion, what is a good vocabulary most important for? from OUP's Closing the Word Gap Survey



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**75%** of teachers think Year 7 pupils are more likely to struggle with subject and general academic vocabulary due to disruption to their time in Year 6.

**68%** of teachers think that vocabulary of children under 7 will be most affected by school closures.

**9** out of **10** teachers believe lack of vocabulary practice and reading for pleasure at home are key causes of the word gap.

**3** out of **4** teachers think supporting students with vocabulary will be a 'high priority' post lockdown.

More than **half** of teachers surveyed believed pupils spent less time reading during the 2020 lockdown.

**92%** of teachers think school closures will have contributed to a widening of the word gap.



# Bridging the Word Gap at Transition



2/3 of teachers say that a lack of time hampers efforts to improve pupils' vocabulary.

Only one in four teachers has access to training or CPD from external experts and language specialists.

# Bridging the Word Gap at Transition



# Recommendations

Increase the focus on academic vocab as pupils prepare for transition

Strengthen links between primary and secondary schools

Teach different styles of language, such as formal and informal

Plan vocabulary alongside the curriculum

# Recommendations

Promote independent reading

Model and promote complex, specialist vocabulary and encourage word swaps

Presenting a new word in a visually engaging way

Share word lists and associated activities with parents/carers

# Keep in touch!

Check out the Oxford University Press website for helpful resources and other research:

<https://global.oup.com/>

*Thank you!*

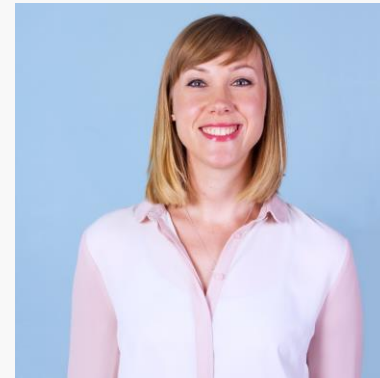
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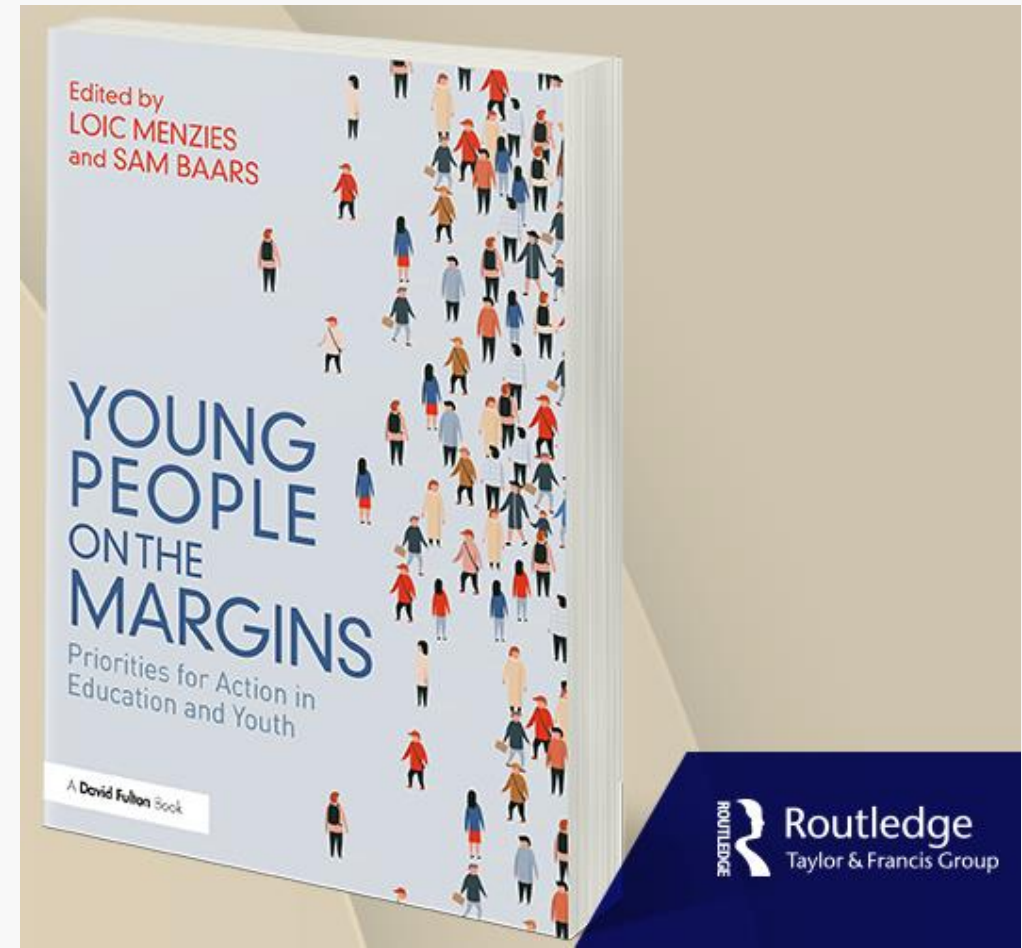
Thursday April 8<sup>th</sup> from 9-11am

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## Primary schools

- 1 Is there more that school leaders can do to ensure children's academic vocabulary (Tier 2 and 3 words) is developed across the curriculum, not just as part of whole-school literacy? Should we encourage all primary schools to identify lessons as 'science' or 'history' or 'geography' and to highlight explicitly where academic words and phrases are used in these subjects?
- 2 Is there more guidance and support that can be offered to the non-specialist primary workforce, so that teachers know the language that will benefit their pupils most in secondary school?
- 3 Is the reading for pleasure strategy within a school focused too heavily on the quantity of words children read? Are there enough opportunities to explore and discuss new words encountered in reading and to build and consolidate word webs?

## Things to consider:

### Secondary schools

- 1 What additional efforts can be made to understand vocabulary teaching and learning at primary schools in order to provide a more seamless transition when children start secondary school?
- 2 How can teachers ensure that vocabulary development remains a top priority?
- 3 Is there more that can be done to help connect home with school in relation to supporting children's vocabulary development?