Children starting school were less likely to meet the expected levels of development in 2021 than before the pandemic, new research suggests.

The study, commissioned by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and conducted by a team from University of York, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) and the Education Policy Institute (EPI), was based on almost 100 schools and more than 3,000 children.

The study found that the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels of development has fallen sharply, with parents and schools reporting that children’s personal-social and emotional development, language, literacy, and numeracy skills had been affected.

Dr. Louise Tracey, from the University of York's Department of Education and one of the study authors, said: "Our report suggests that a smaller proportion of children who started Reception in September 2020 were meeting at least expected levels in all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile compared to their pre-pandemic peers. These findings are troubling, given the importance of the early years in children's development, and echo the concerns of teachers and parents. We would like to see mitigating measures in place to support schools, children and their families."

Professor Becky Francis, CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), added: "The early years are such a crucial time for children's development, both in terms of their attainment outcomes and their social and emotional well-being. So it is particularly concerning that fewer children reached the expected levels of development by the end of Reception class."

"Today's new report adds to a growing body of research that gives us a more robust understanding of how children and young people have been affected by the pandemic, and the measures that will need to be taken to facilitate their recovery and move learning forwards."
More information: Best evidence on impact of COVID-19 on pupil attainment:
educationendowmentfoundation.org -on-pupil-attainment

Provided by University of York

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