Non-native speakers of English in the classroom: What are the effects on pupil performance?

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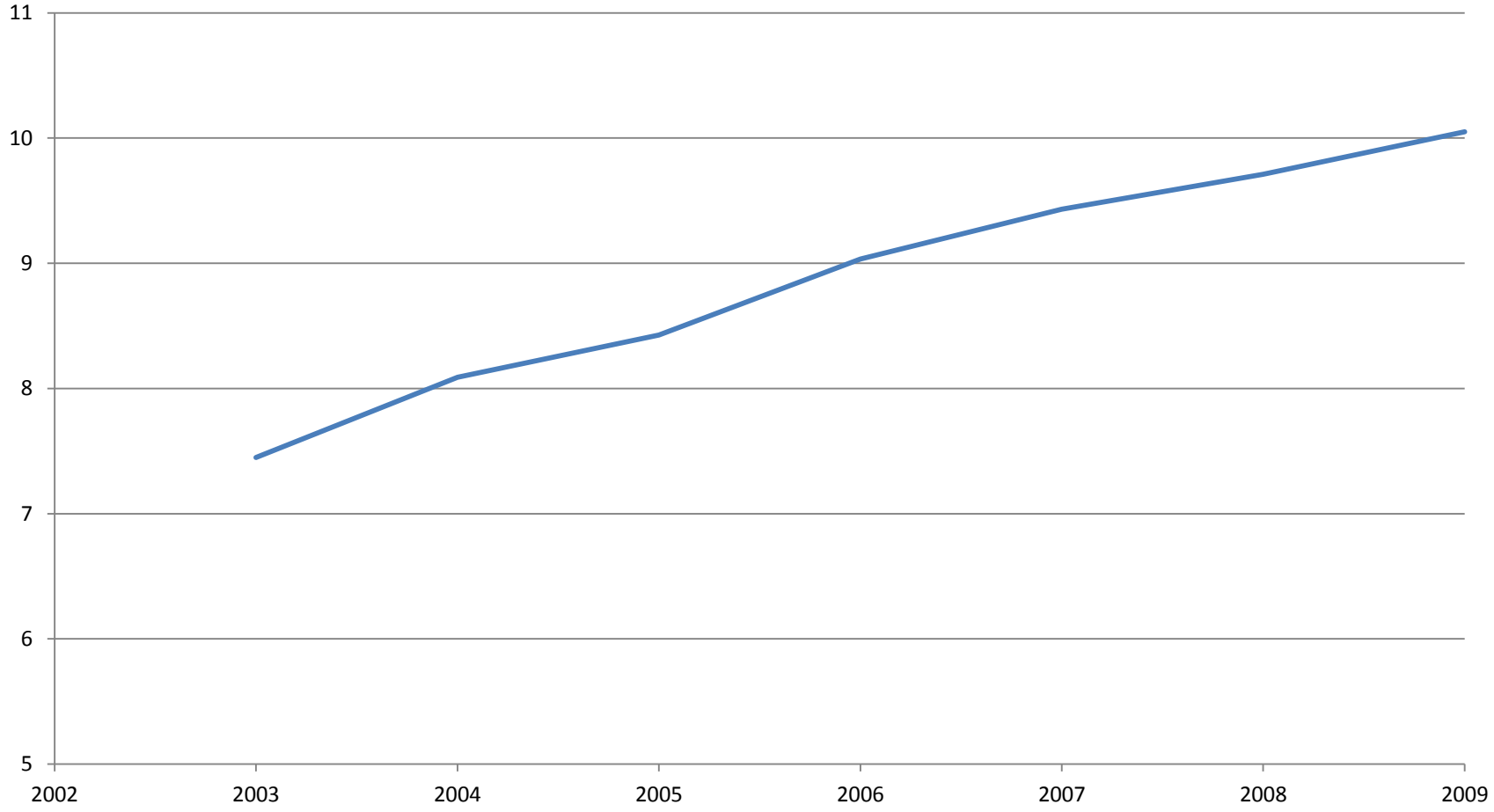
http://cee.lse.ac.uk/ceedps/ceedp137.pdf

Research Issue

- In England, 12% of primary school students do not speak English as a first language (‘non-native speakers’)
- The number has increased by 1/3 between 2003 and 2009
- Does this matter for the educational attainment for ‘native English speakers’ at the end of primary school?

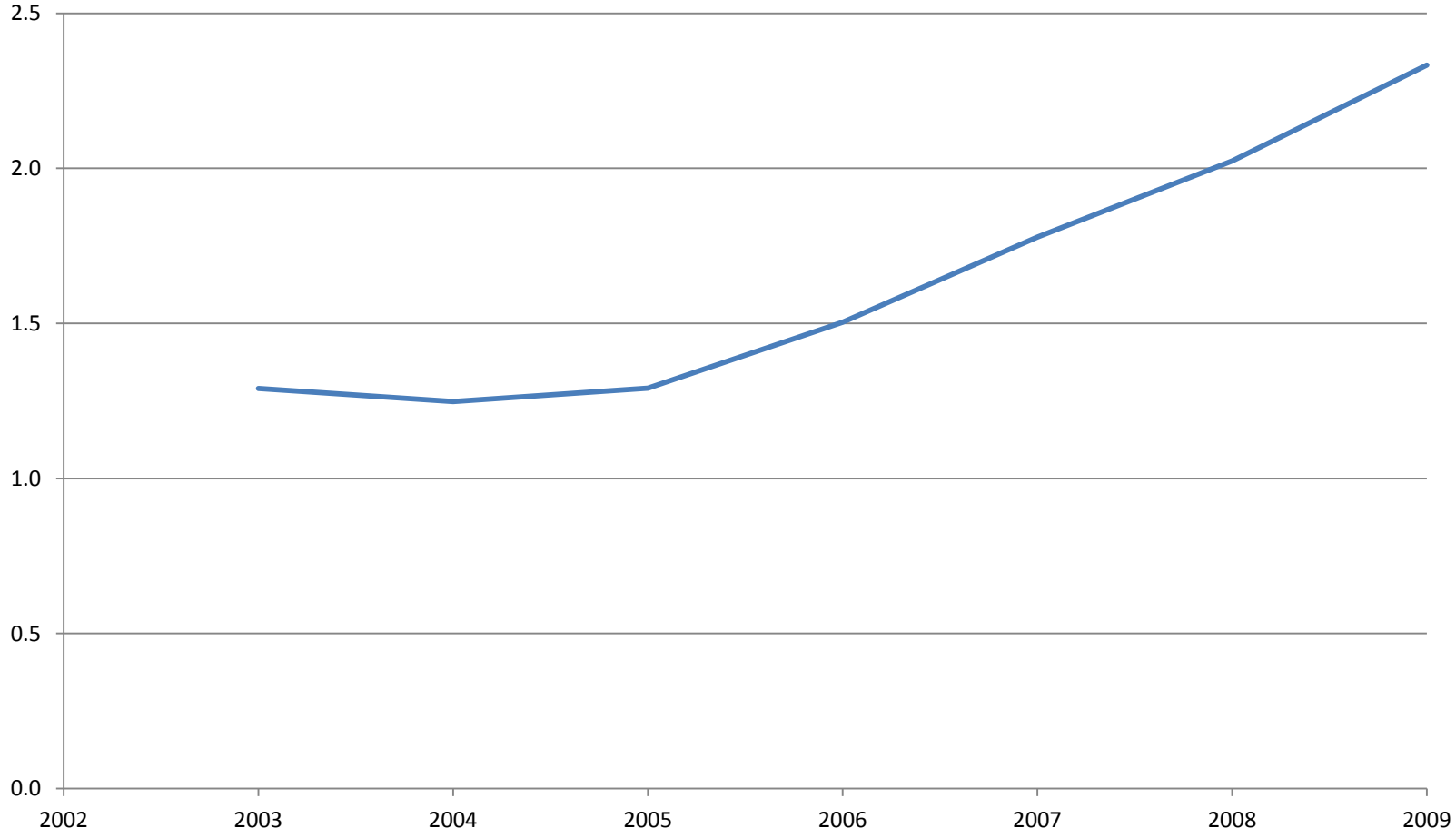
Percentage of children (Year 6) who are non-native speakers of English and of non-white ethnic origin



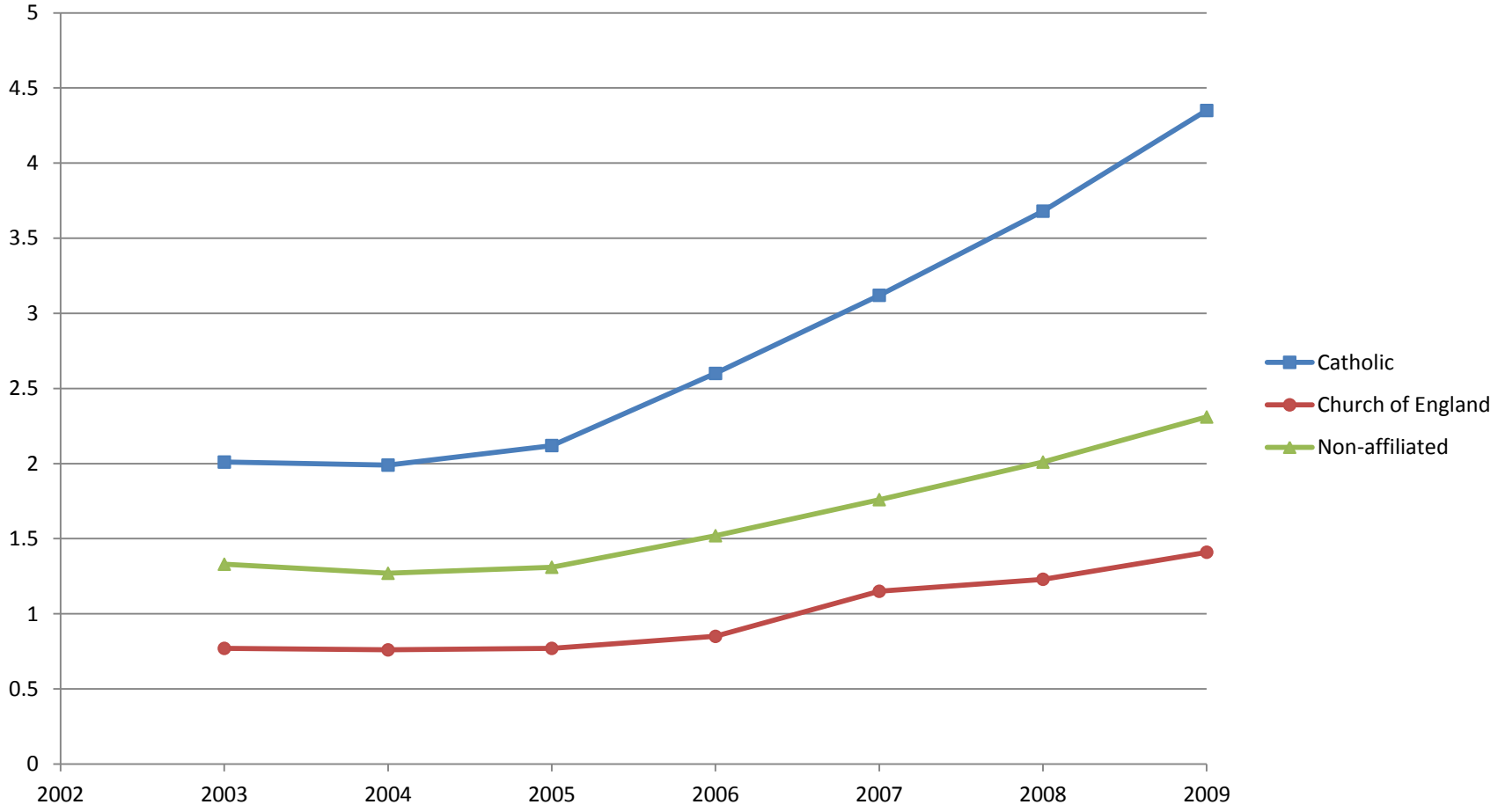
Minority ethnic origin of Native English Speakers and non-white ‘non-native’ speakers

	2003			2009		
	Number	Native English speakers	Speak English ‘as an additional language’	Number	‘Native English speakers’	Speak English ‘as an additional language’
Bangladeshi	5,919	1.82	98.19	8,372	3.07	96.93
Black Caribbean	8,684	92.58	7.42	8,010	95.37	4.63
Black (Other)	11,365	37.50	62.50	17,989	34.04	5.96
Chinese	1,770	18.70	81.30	1,900	19.11	80.89
Indian	12,742	14.17	85.83	13,062	19.05	80.95
Pakistani	15,398	5.28	94.72	18,983	8.53	91.47
Other	18,927	85.36	14.64	26,211	79.53	20.47

Percentage of children (Year 6) who are non-native speakers of English and of white ethnic origin



The percentage of white non-native speakers by school type



Average characteristics of pupils in each group (Year 6 students, 2009)

	Native English speakers	non-native English speakers, white origin	non-native English speakers, non-white origin
Individual-level characteristics			
% Free School Meals	14.57	17.87	28.31
% Special Ed. Needs (with statement)	2.34	1.25	1.68
% Female	49.04	48.70	48.82
English score	50.35 (28.71)	41.43 (29.38)	44.21 (28.18)
Reading score	49.75 (28.44)	40.71 (29.21)	41.47 (27.89)
Writing Score	49.29 (28.87)	41.80 (29.04)	46.44 (28.16)
Maths score	50.12 (28.56)	47.05 (29.19)	47.66 (29.35)
% Level4+ English	82.07	65.15	76.11
% Level4+ Maths	80.27	72.95	76.43

Average characteristics of pupils in each group (Year 6 students, 2009)

	Native English speakers	non-native English speakers, white origin	non-native English speakers, non-white origin
Average characteristics of schools attended by pupils in each category (computed for all individuals within each category)			
Nb. of pupils in the schools where there is at least 1 student of the category	547,454	224,539	302,145
Average School size	323 (149)	370 (151)	371 (148)
Average % Free School Meals	15.47 (13.24)	17.81 (13.53)	18.15 (13.82)
Average Per pupil expenditure	£ 3,652 (723)	£ 3,731 (738)	£ 3,700 (737)
Average Pupil teacher ratio	21.71 (3.09)	21.76 (2.99)	21.80 (2.95)
% Catholic schools	9.71	12.63	10.01
% Church of England	19.65	14.14	13.99
% Non-faith	69.91	72.52	75.48
Average English score	49.59 (28.76)	48.58 (28.86)	48.60 (28.76)
Average Reading score	48.78 (28.53)	47.72 (28.68)	47.63 (28.62)
Average Writing Score	48.88 (28.83)	48.10 (28.85)	48.24 (28.73)
Average Maths Score	49.84 (28.66)	48.98 (28.93)	49.13 (28.88)
Average % Level4+ English	81.12 (39.13)	79.63 (40.27)	80.03 (39.97)
Average % Level4+ Maths	79.75 (40.19)	78.31 (41.21)	78.63 (41.00)
% London schools	13.37	28.60	23.02

Data and (brief) institutional detail

- National Pupil Database: 2002-2009. Census of all pupils in state schools. Linked to school-level data sets.
- Information on whether English first language, ethnicity, free school meal status, prior educational attainment, special needs status. School-level information on school type, pupil numbers; % disadvantaged; pupil-teacher ratio; expenditure.
- National tests in primary school take at age 7 and 11.
- No grade repetition

What we do…

1. We look at the association between the percentage of non-native English speakers in Year Group 6 and the KS2 attainment of native English speakers, while taking account of detailed characteristics.

2. We look at whether schools that experienced an influx of white non-native English speakers after enlargement had a change in the attainment of native English speakers, compared to other schools.

What we find…

1. There is a negative association between the percentage of non-native speakers and the attainment of native English speakers if we do not control for anything else.
2. This negative association goes away when we put in minimal controls for the characteristics of native English speakers.
3. Why? Because non-native English speakers go to more disadvantaged schools on average.

Interpretation of zero (or even positive) effect of more non-native English speakers in primary schools

1. Schools are well equipped to deal with increasing numbers of non-native English speakers. They organise things such that there is no negative impact on native English speakers.
2. Non-native English speakers may have less good language skills when they begin school but: (a) they catch up fast; (b) often their parents are very motivated that their children should do well at school.