

Are specialist schools effective for
secondary-aged pupils with
language impairments? Language
and educational achievements at
Moor House School.

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Nature of school

- Specialist residential school for children with SLI
- 85 children aged 7-16 years
 - KS2 (7-11 years): 7 pupils
 - KS3 (11-14 years): 45 pupils
 - KS4 (14-15 years): 33 pupils
- 10 classes

Key Stage	Time with class teacher	Time with specialist teachers
2	80%	20%
3	50%	50%
4	30%	70%

Admissions criteria

- Pupil's primary disability is in the area of speech, language and communication
- Pupil can access the specialist curriculum and educational provision provided
- There is an appropriate peer group
- The pupil requires intensive speech and language therapy
- The provision will enable the pupil to have a complete and successful experience of school in preparation for a fulfilling independent future.

Staffing

- 105 staff
- including full-time equivalents in following departments
 - SLT: 13 + 1 therapy assistant
 - OT: 3 + 1 assistant
 - Teachers: 12 + 9 STAs
 - Residential care staff: 17
- External consultants
 - Counsellor: 1 day per week
 - Art psychotherapist: 1 day per week
 - Educational psychologist
 - Paediatrician

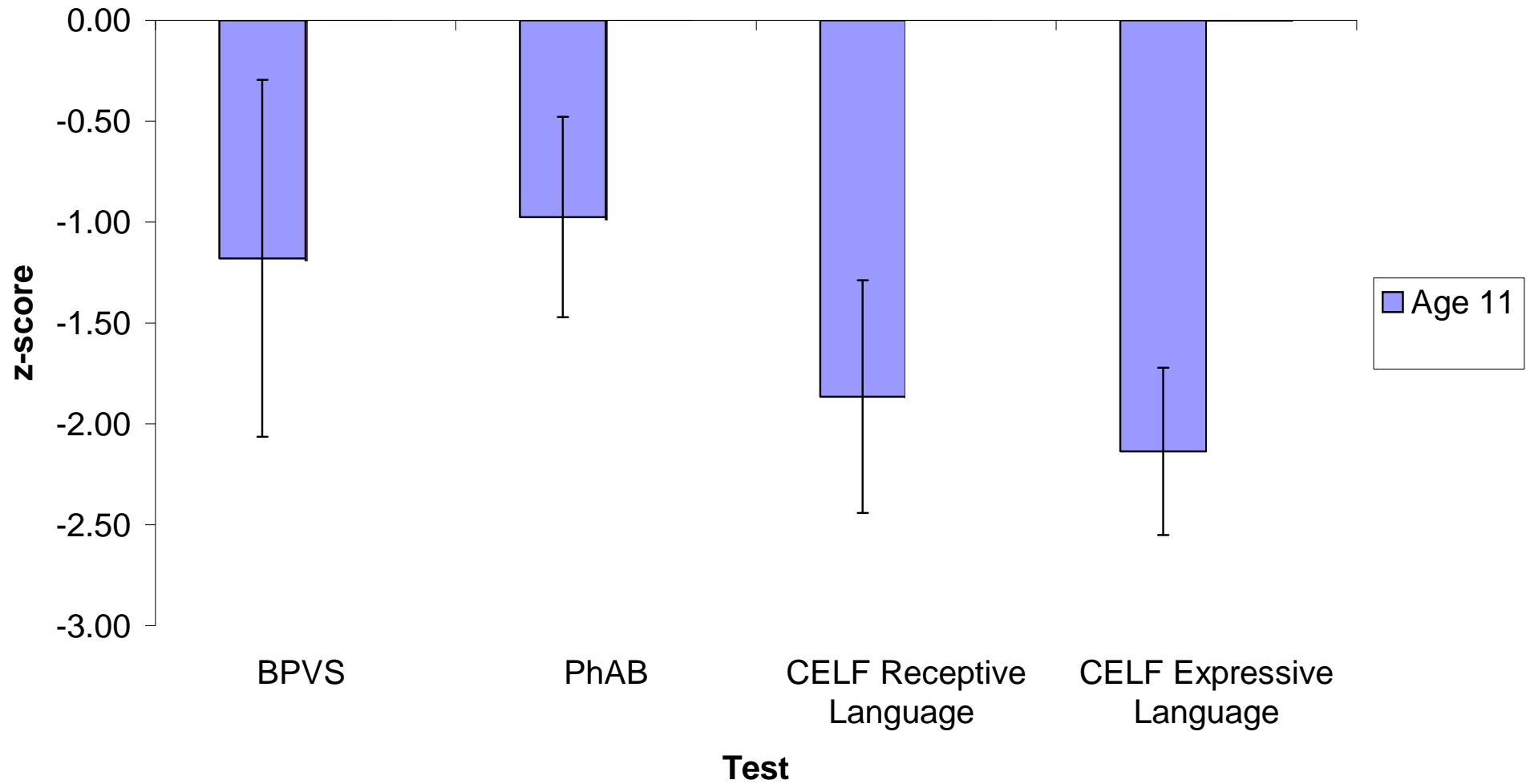
Evidence currently collected

- Language scores for all children over last seven years
- 34 pupils have scores from age 11-16
- **11 & 13 years**
 - CELF-3 (Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals) – 6 subtests (3 receptive language, 3 expressive language)
 - PhAB (Phonological Awareness Battery) – we did subtests focussing on alliteration, rhyme and non-word reading
- **14 & 15 years**
 - TOAL-3 (Test of Adolescent & Adult Language) – 8 subtests (2 on each of Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing)
- **11, 13, 15 years**
 - BPVS (British Picture Vocabulary Scale) forced-choice picture selection

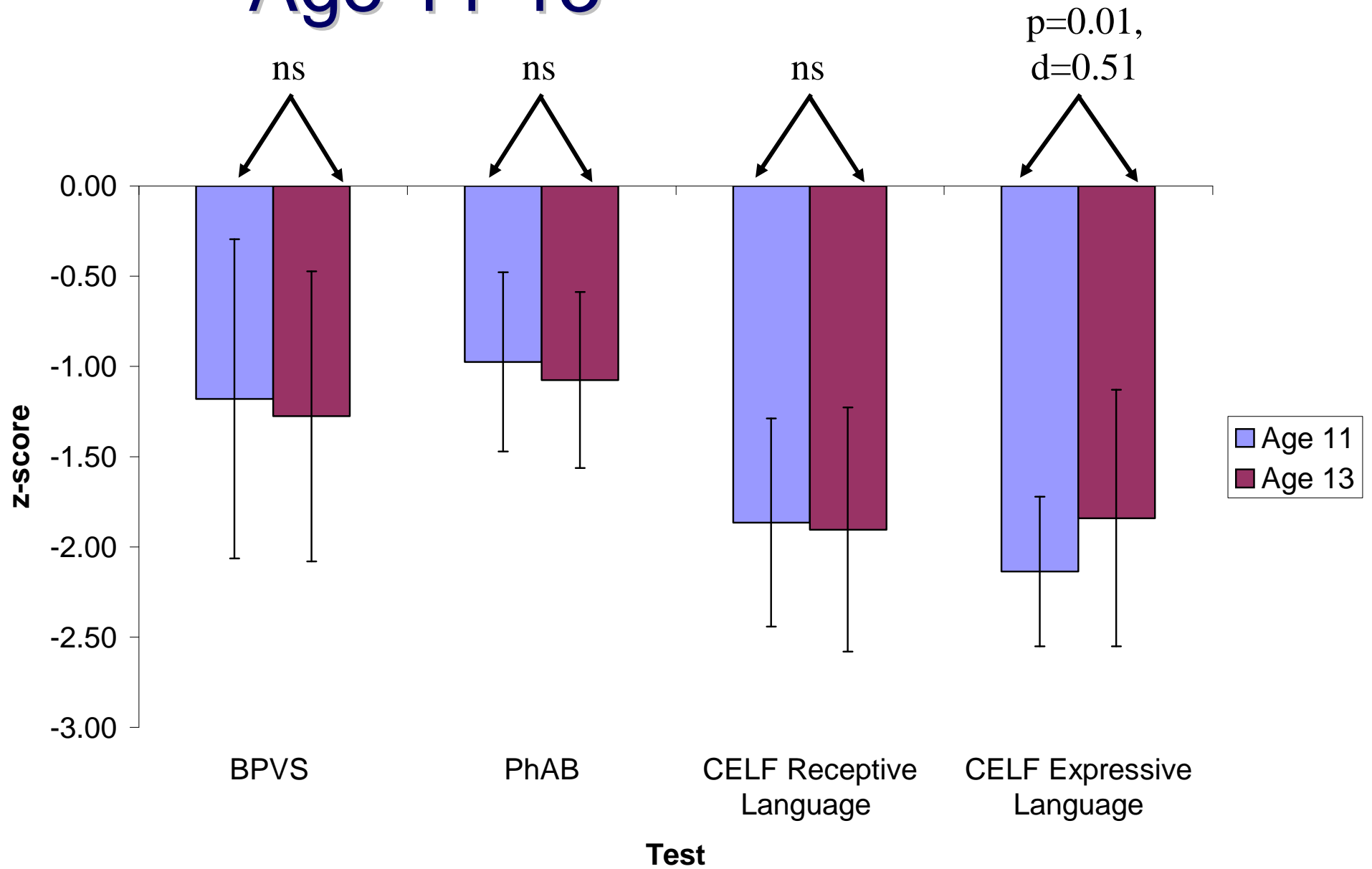
Change in scores

- Pupils made highly significant progress in raw scores on all tests at all ages
- More important to know if they are catching up with typically developing peers
- Therefore, look at standard or z-scores

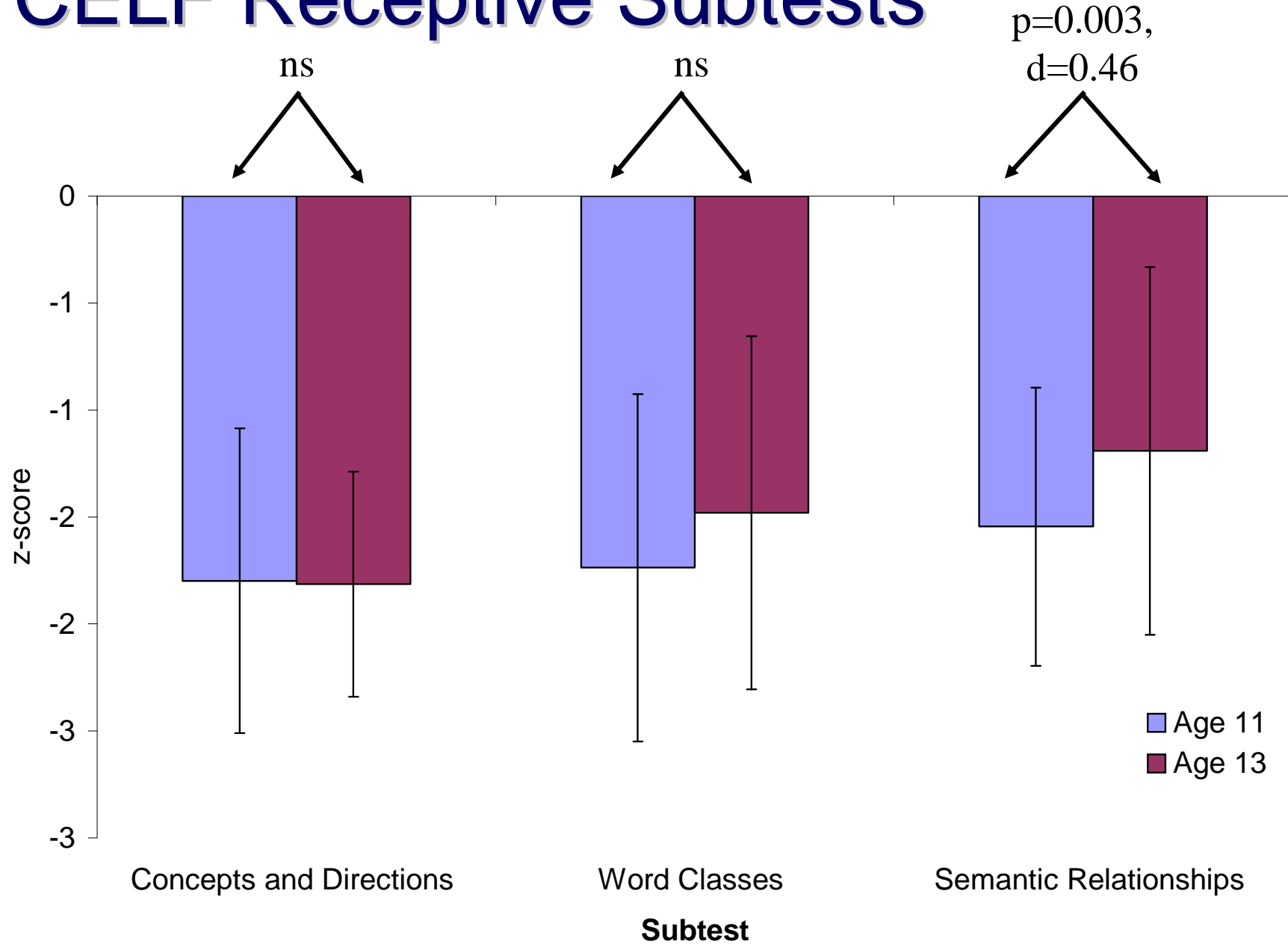
Age 11



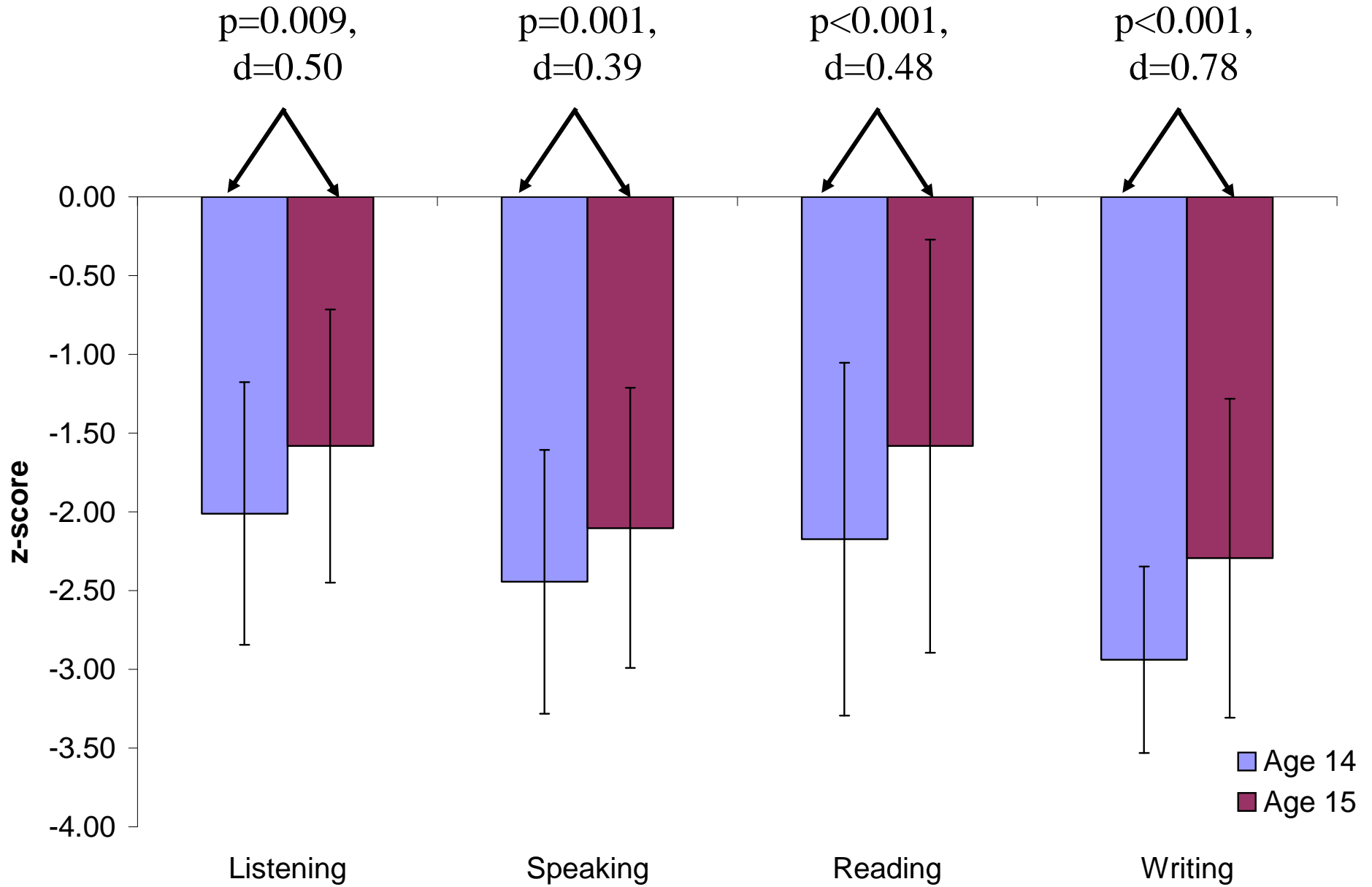
Age 11-13



CELF Receptive Subtests

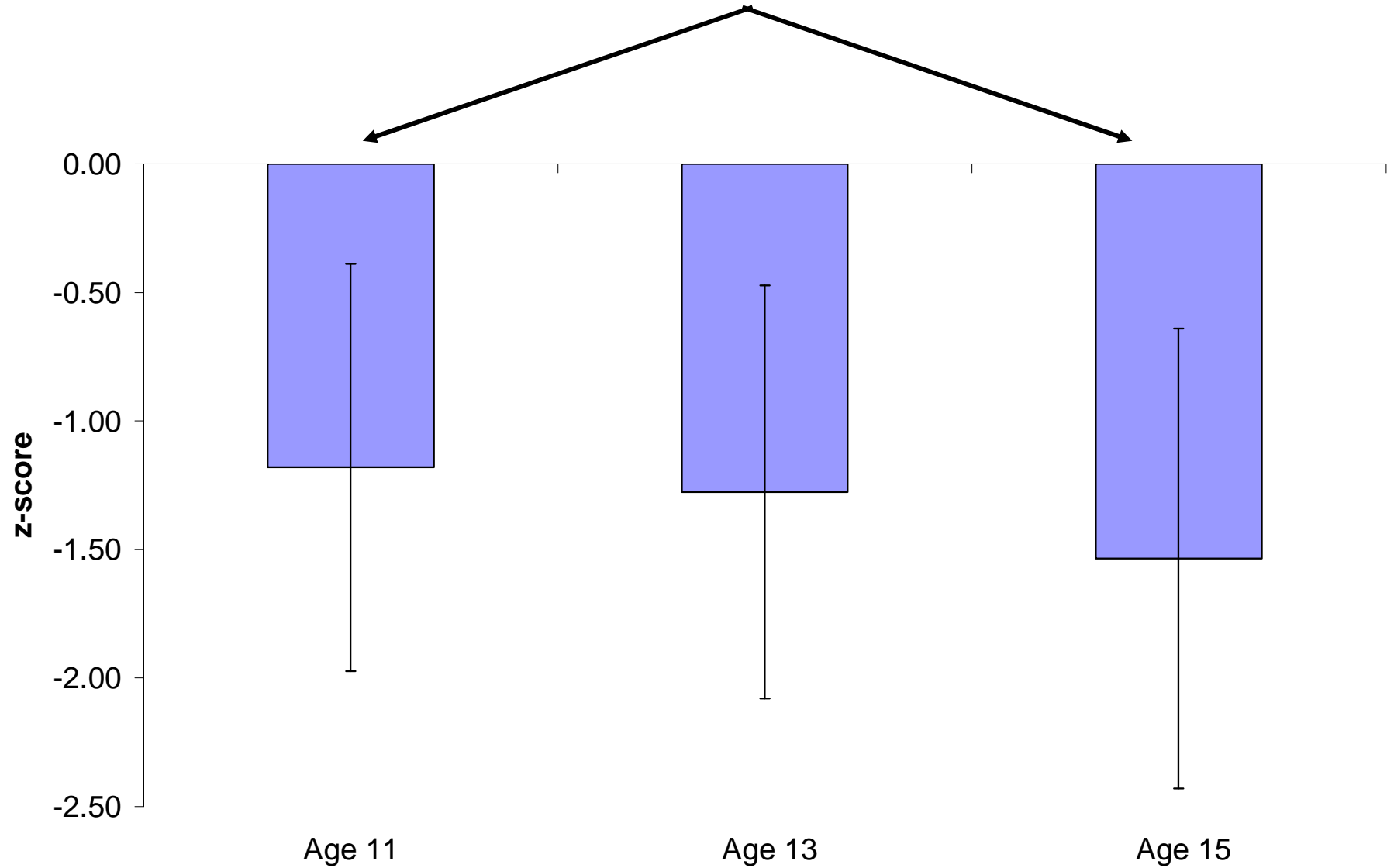


Age 14-15

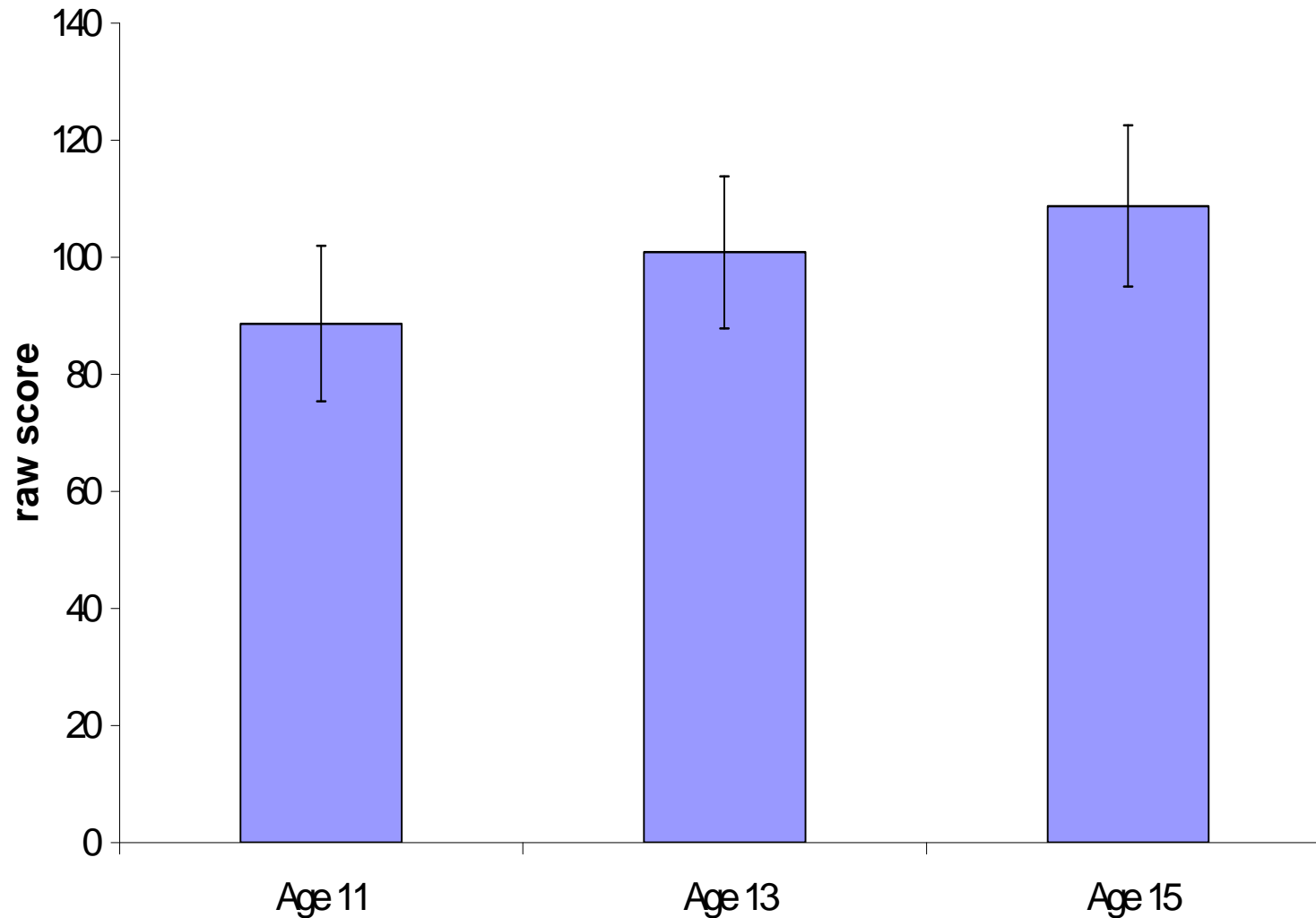


Vocabulary

$p=0.007$, $d=-0.42$



Vocabulary raw scores



All pairwise
comparisons
 $p < 0.001$

Therefore,
vocabulary
size is still
increasing
significantly,
but not as fast
as typically
developing
peers.

Summary of language results

- Expressive language – highly significant progress in z-scores at all ages in spoken language and 14-15 years also in written language
- Receptive language –
 - 11-13 years, sig progress only on one subtest of CELF
 - 14-15 years, sig progress with both listening and reading
- Vocabulary –
 - Significant drop in z-scores from 11-15 years
 - Raw scores improved significantly, therefore vocabulary size is still increasing (but TD peers' vocab is growing faster!)
- Phonological awareness – no significant differences (z-scores stable)

Other specific evidence

- **Published**

- Comprehension and expression of morphology and syntax (Ebbels & van der Lely, 2001; Ebbels, 2007)
- Use of verb argument structure (Ebbels, van der Lely & Dockrell, 2007)

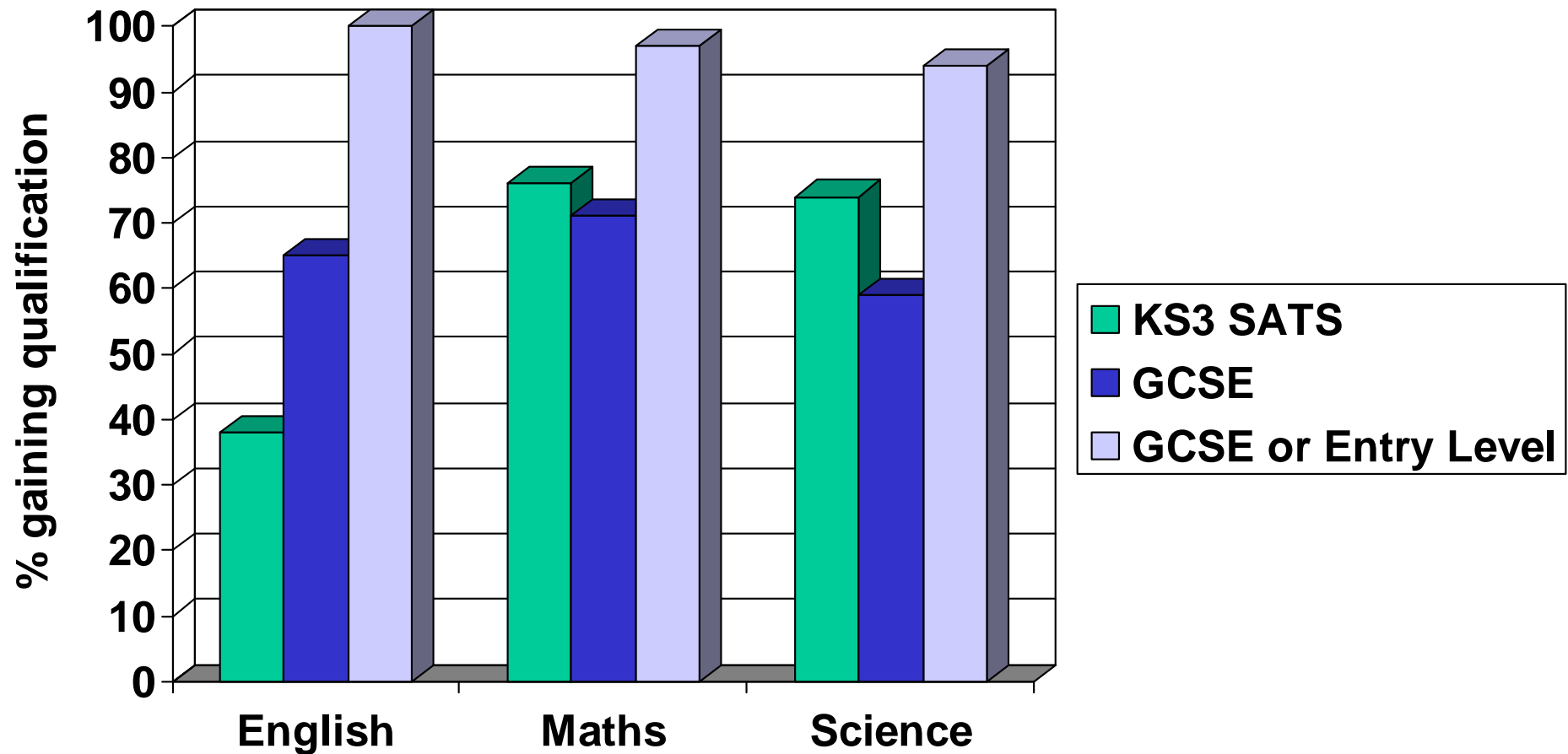
- **Completed**

- Word finding difficulties (Ebbels et al., in prep)
- Text comprehension (Turner et al., in prep)

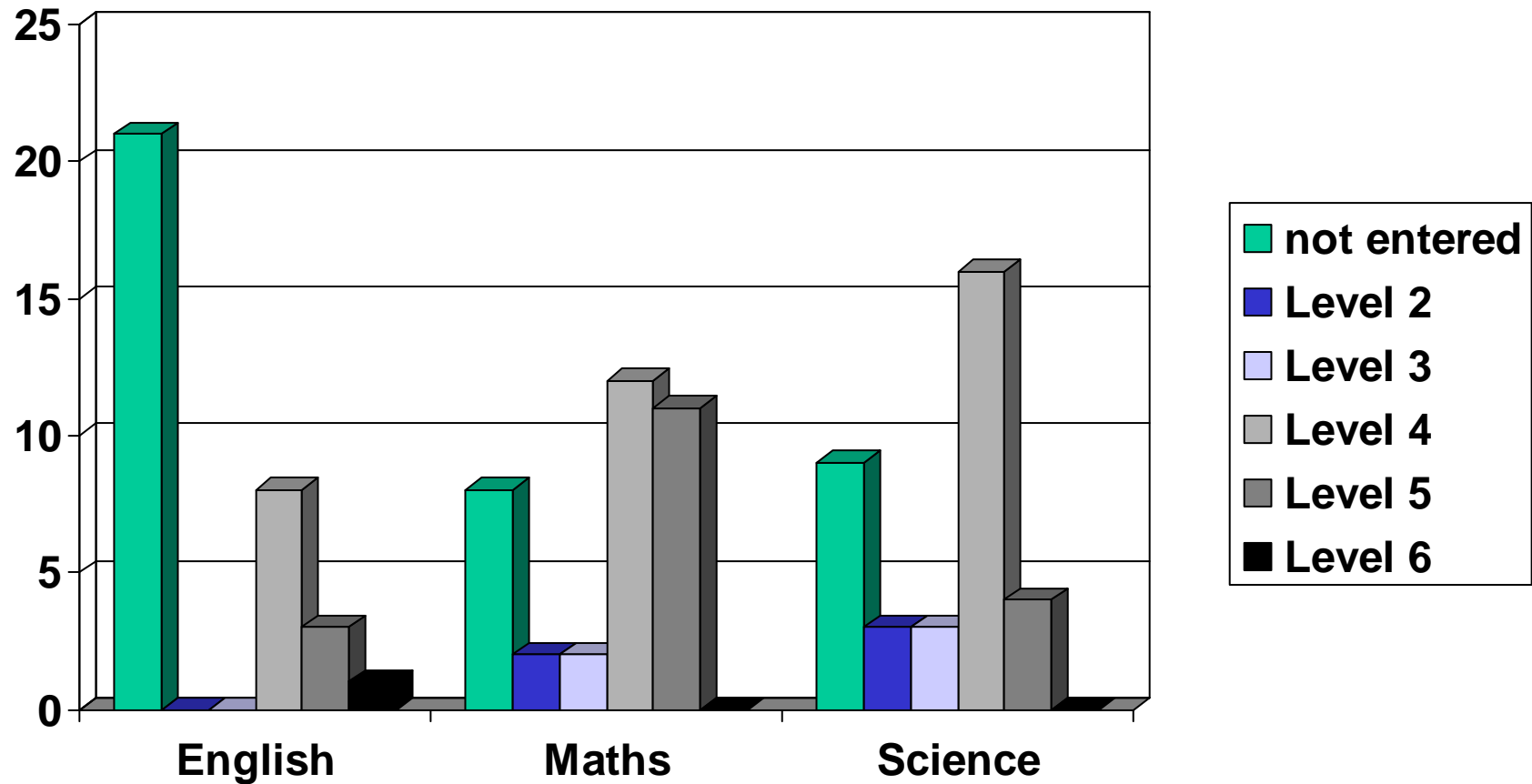
- **Planned**

- Text comprehension, especially inferencing

Educational attainments (English, Maths & Science)



SATs results at Age 14



GCSE/Entry Level attainments at age 16

- 100% of pupils gained at least 4 qualifications
- 88% achieved at least one GCSE
- 63% at least one A* to C
- 24% at least one A*, the highest possible grade (Fine Art, 3D design, History)

- 65% at least English and Maths GCSE
- 44% at least five GCSEs
- 0% at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C

Relationship between language & qualifications at age 16

- All language tests at all time points are significantly correlated both with total GCSE/Entry Level exam points and English points
- Highest correlation ($r^2 > 0.5$) with Total points:
 - Reading at 15 ($r^2 = 0.50$)
- Highest correlations with English are:
 - Reading at 15 ($r^2 = 0.64$)
 - Writing at 15 ($r^2 = 0.52$)
 - Expressive Language at 13 ($r^2 = 0.62$)

Overall conclusions

- Pupils close the gap with their TD peers in most areas of language, except vocabulary
- All pupils gain qualifications at 16 years
- English GCSE results at age 16 are better than would be expected from SATs at age 14
- Many pupils gain a Maths and English GCSE
- Many pupils are able to gain A* to C grades at GCSE, mostly in more practical subjects
- All language tests at all time points correlate with English and overall educational results at age 16

Future Work

- Establish which methods used during both therapy and teaching are responsible for the positive changes in language scores
- Investigate whether different methods of vocabulary teaching could improve z-scores
- Trial different methods of teaching receptive language aiming to improve this between ages 11-13
- Compare progress of pupils at Moor House with those with similar levels of difficulty in different settings