



Primary school outcomes for children in contact with child protection during early childhood:

Findings from the *NSW Child Development Study*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

QUT acknowledges the Turrbal and Yugara, as the First Nations owners of the lands where QUT now stands. We pay respect to their Elders, lores, customs and creation spirits. We recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching, research and learning.

QUT acknowledges the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play within the QUT community.

Aims:


What is the relationship between children's contact with child protection services and their:

- *Academic attainment (reading and numeracy) at 3rd and 5th grades?*
- *Exclusion from school (out-of-school suspensions) between 3rd and 6th grades?*

NSW Child Development Study (nsw-cds.com.au)

- A population-based longitudinal study conducted via waves of record linkage:
 - Australian Early Development Census (kindergarten) and Middle Childhood Survey (6th grade) data
 - Child health, education, child protection, and justice records (n=91,635)
 - Parent health and justice records (n=72,920)
- Today, focusing on early childhood child protection contacts (to end 2011) and education outcomes in primary school (between 2012-2015)

Child protection services contact



Level of contact	%
Out-of-home care	~ 1.5
Substantiated ROSH report	~ 2
Unsubstantiated ROSH report	~ 11
Non-ROSH report	~ 3.5
No report	~ 82

ROSH = Risk-of-significant harm

Other covariates

- **Sociodemographic variables** (male gender, socioeconomic disadvantage, geographic region, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, English as second language)
- **Perinatal factors** (maternal age at child's birth, exposure to smoking in utero, no/delayed antenatal care)
- **Parental factors** (criminal offending, mental illness)
- **Early childhood developmental vulnerability** (AEDC language and cognitive skills, and social, emotional, physical, and communication functioning); **disability** (AEDC physical disability, learning impairment, emotional/behavioural problem); **emergency department presentations for physical injury**

Academic attainment

Attainment	Reading %	Numeracy %
Below average (lower two NAPLAN bands)	~ 12	~ 16
Average (middle two NAPLAN bands)	~ 36	~ 50
Above average (upper two NAPLAN bands)	~ 52	~ 34

Publications



<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213419305022>

Reading and numeracy attainment of children reported to child protection services: A population record linkage study controlling for other adversities



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<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/analysis>

What is the relationship between childhood maltreatment and early educational outcomes?

Findings from the NSW Child Development Study

CRICOS No.00213J



Below average reading/numeracy

Relative to children without a child protection report,



Children with an OOHC placement were

3-4x as likely

to achieve **below average** literacy and numeracy attainment



Children with a substantiated ROSH report were over

3x as likely

to achieve **below average** literacy and numeracy attainment



Children with an unsubstantiated ROSH report were over

2x as likely

to achieve **below average** literacy and numeracy attainment



Children with non-ROSH reports were around

2x as likely

to achieve **below average** literacy and numeracy attainment

Below average reading/numeracy (with covariates)

Relative to children without a child protection report,



Children with an OOHC placement were

1.3 x as likely

to achieve **below average** literacy and numeracy attainment



Children with a substantiated ROSH report were over

1.5 x as likely

to achieve **below average** literacy and numeracy attainment



Children with an unsubstantiated ROSH report were over

1.4 x as likely

to achieve **below average** literacy and numeracy attainment



Children with non-ROSH reports were around

1.3 x as likely

to achieve **below average** literacy and numeracy attainment

Out-of-school suspension

Suspension reason	%
Any	4.0
Aggressive behaviour	2.7
Continued disobedience	1.9
Physical violence	1.0
Persistent or serious misbehaviour	0.5
Use or possession of weapon or illegal substance	0.3
Criminal behaviour in relation to school	0.1

Fully adjusted model

Very large effects (odds ratios >4.0)

- Male gender (84% of suspensions)
- Out-of-home care (26% suspended)
- Substantiated CP report (19% suspended)

Large effects (odds ratios 2.5 to 4.0)

- Unsubstantiated CP report (11% suspended)
- Aggressive behaviour (18% suspended)

Medium effects (odds ratios 1.5 to <2.5)

- Indigenous status (from very large effect)
- Exposure to maternal smoking in utero
- Subthreshold CP report (6.2% suspended)

- Socioeconomically disadvantaged
- Parental criminal offending
- (Low) Responsibility and respect
- ≥ 2 ED presentations for injury

Small effects (odds ratios 1.0 to <1.5)

- Emotional or behavioural problem
- (Low) Language and cognitive skills
- Hyperactivity and inattention
- Young mother (≤ 25 years)
- Parental mental illness
- English as 2nd language (reduced risk)

CRICOS No.00213J

Publications

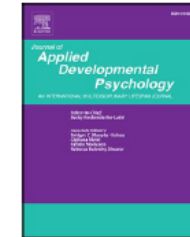
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Early childhood predictors of elementary school suspension: An Australian record linkage study

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<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0193397321001064>

(or request a copy at:
<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/226404/>)

Evidence to Action Note (in draft)

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/analysis>

CRICOS No.00213J



Policy and practice implications

- Can inform the delivery of *integrated* prevention and early intervention programs for at-risk students.
- Range of adversities and social problems suggest a *shared approach* across education, child protection, and health agencies required (inter-professional training, collaboration, and information sharing).
- Both universal and targeted interventions delivered by government and non-government agencies are needed to support vulnerable students and their families.
- Schools must be supported and resourced to implement individual education plans and alternative disciplinary strategies (dedicated staff, professional development, financial support, etc.).

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- Information and views reported using data from this study do not necessarily reflect the views held by these custodians.