



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2016/0076, 15 April 2016

Educational attainment in Yorkshire and the Humber

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Summary

On Monday 18 April MPs will take part in a debate on educational attainment in Yorkshire and the Humber. The debate was scheduled by the Backbench Business Committee and will be opened by Jo Cox MP.

Text of the motion

'That this House notes that Yorkshire and the Humber was the lowest ranked region in England in 2013-14 for education attainment; further notes that the January 2016 report from the Social Market Foundation entitled Educational Inequality in England and Wales found that geographical inequality was the most important factor in determining students' educational attainment; and calls on the Government to take action to address the underlying causes of these inequalities as a matter of urgency and to set out the steps it is taking to ensure that children in Yorkshire and the Humber are equally likely to achieve good school qualifications as children in London.'

Watch Parliament TV: [Chamber debate on educational attainment in Yorkshire and the Humber](#)

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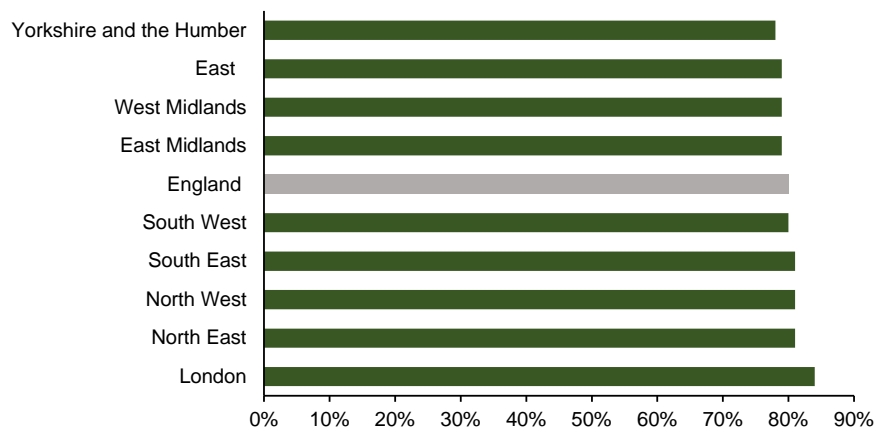
The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Educational attainment in Yorkshire and Humber-statistics

Key Stage 2

In 2015, 78% of pupils in Yorkshire and the Humber at the end of key stage 2 achieved at least a level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. This was the lowest percentage of any English region; the percentage across all state funded schools in England was 80%.

% of pupils achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics (2015)



The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals who achieved at least a level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015 was lowest in the East of England at 60%. The percentage across state funded schools in England was 66%, and the percentage in Yorkshire and the Humber was 62%.

Yorkshire and the Humber had the joint (with the East of England) largest percentage of schools below the key stage 2 floor standard (7%) of any English region in 2015.

Selected Key Stage 2 school attainment indicators for English regions, 2015

	% achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics			% of schools below the floor standard ^a
	Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	All other pupils	All pupils	
North East	67%	85%	81%	4%
North West	67%	84%	81%	4%
Yorkshire and the Humber	62%	82%	78%	7%
East Midlands	64%	82%	79%	6%
West Midlands	66%	82%	79%	6%
East	60%	82%	79%	7%
London	75%	86%	84%	2%
South East	61%	83%	81%	5%
South West	62%	83%	80%	5%
England	66%	83%	80%	5%

^a A school is below the primary school floor standard if (i) less than 65 per cent of pupils achieve level 4 or above in all of reading, writing and mathematics, (ii) less than the median percentage make expected progress in reading, (iii) less than the median percentage make expected progress in writing, and (iv) less than the median percentage make expected progress in mathematics.

Source: DfE, *National curriculum assessment at key stage 2, 2015*.

The percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 2 achieving at least a level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics was the lowest in Yorkshire and the Humber in 2012, 2013 and 2014. It performed better than at least one other region in terms of the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals who achieved this level of attainment in these years.

Selected Key Stage 2 school attainment indicators for English regions, 2012 - 2015

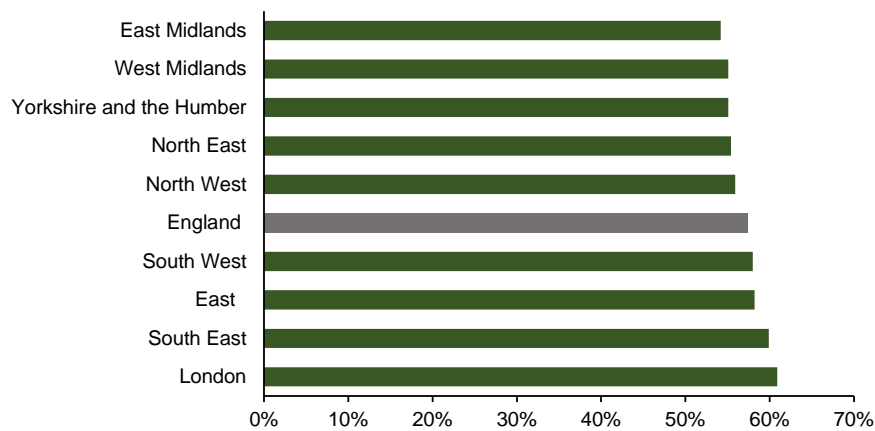
	% achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths				% known to be eligible for free school meals achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths			
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2012	2013	2014	2015
North East	75%	78%	79%	81%	60%	62%	65%	67%
North West	76%	77%	80%	81%	61%	62%	65%	67%
Yorkshire and the Humber	72%	73%	76%	78%	54%	55%	60%	62%
East Midlands	75%	75%	78%	79%	56%	57%	61%	64%
West Midlands	74%	74%	77%	79%	59%	59%	63%	66%
East	73%	74%	78%	79%	53%	54%	59%	60%
London	77%	79%	82%	84%	67%	69%	72%	75%
South East	75%	76%	79%	81%	53%	55%	60%	61%
South West	75%	76%	79%	80%	55%	56%	59%	62%
England	75%	76%	79%	80%	59%	60%	64%	66%

Sources: DfE, *National curriculum assessment at key stage 2, various years*

Key Stage 4

55.1% of pupils in Yorkshire and the Humber achieved 5+ GCSEs at A*-C including English and mathematics in 2015. The region ranked joint seventh of nine regions, with the East Midlands ranked ninth with 54.2%. The equivalent percentage across state funded schools in England was 57.3%.

% of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics (2015)



The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals who achieved 5+ GCSEs at A*-C including English and maths in 2015 was lowest in the East Midlands at 27.8%. The percentage across state funded schools in England was 33.3%, and the percentage for Yorkshire and the Humber was 28.5%.

Selected Key Stage 4 school attainment indicators for English regions, 2015

	% 5+ A*-C GCSE and equivalents, including English and mathematics			% of schools below the floor standard ^a
	Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	All other pupils	All pupils	
North East	30.5%	60.6%	55.4%	12.6%
North West	30.4%	60.7%	55.9%	13.7%
Yorkshire and the Humber	28.5%	59.9%	55.1%	12.5%
East Midlands	27.8%	57.9%	54.2%	18.3%
West Midlands	33.4%	59.2%	55.1%	12.3%
East	31.0%	61.2%	58.2%	10.1%
London	45.8%	64.7%	60.9%	3.8%
South East	29.2%	63.0%	59.9%	11.1%
South West	29.5%	61.1%	58.0%	8.4%
England	33.3%	61.2%	57.3%	11.0%

Notes

^a A school is below the 5+ A*-C and expected progress floor standard if less than 40% of pupils achieve A*-C including English and mathematics and the expected progress between key stage 2 and key stage 4 is less than the median of 73% in English and less than the median of 68% in mathematics. Schools that did not opt-in to the Progress 8 floor standard continue to be held to account under this floor standard. A school that has opted in to the new accountability system is below the floor standard if its progress 8 score is below -0.5, unless the confidence interval suggests that the school's underlying performance may not be below average.

Source: DfE, *GCSE and equivalent results in England 2014-15 (revised)*

Of the English regions, the percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4 achieving 5+ GCSEs at A*-C including English and maths was lowest in Yorkshire and the Humber in 2014 and 2012. The West Midlands was the worst performing region on this measure of attainment in 2013.

Selected Key Stage 4 school attainment indicators for English regions, 2012 - 2015^a

	% of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs including English and maths				% of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE including English and maths			
	2012	2013	2014 ^a	2015	2012	2013	2014 ^a	2015
North East	59%	59%	55%	55%	33%	35%	30%	31%
North West	59%	60%	56%	56%	34%	36%	31%	30%
Yorkshire and the Humber	57%	60%	54%	55%	31%	34%	28%	29%
East Midlands	58%	59%	54%	54%	32%	33%	29%	28%
West Midlands	59%	60%	55%	55%	38%	40%	34%	33%
East	58%	60%	57%	58%	32%	32%	30%	31%
London	62%	65%	62%	61%	49%	51%	47%	46%
South East	60%	62%	59%	60%	30%	33%	29%	29%
South West	58%	60%	57%	58%	31%	32%	29%	30%
England	59%	61%	57%	57%	37%	38%	34%	33%

Notes

^a A new methodology was introduced for the GCSE results in 2014 which means they are not comparable to earlier figures. The 2014 data exclude many equivalent qualifications, reduced the value of others equivalent qualifications and exclude retakes. Performance on this, tougher, measure dropped in 2014 as a result.

Sources: DfE, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, various years

2. Educational inequality in England and Wales

Report: [Educational inequalities in England and Wales](#), Social Market Foundation's [Commission on Inequality in Education](#), January 12, 2016

This Initial research by the SMF for the commission examines inequalities in educational attainment at age 16 and age 11 and how these trends in inequality have evolved over time. The research reveals marked regional disparities in educational outcomes:

Region

- GCSE performance at age 16 across England and Wales shows variations between regions, with over 70% of pupils in London achieving 5 good GCSEs compared to 63% in Yorkshire & Humber.
- The SMF finds that regional differences in attainment are already apparent by the end of primary school and they are observable even when you control for other factors such as ethnicity and income.
- Analysis across different cohorts of children sitting exams at age 16 shows that regional inequalities have remained stubborn and in some cases worsened over the last three decades. Areas such as the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands and the East Midlands have persistently under-performed, behind whilst London's performance has surged.
- Comparing the performance of 11-year olds born in 2000 with those born in 1970 reveals that the geographic area a child comes from has become a more powerful predictive factor for those born in 2000 compared to 1970.

The SMF's new analysis for the commission also looks at other aspects of inequality and how these affect school results, including family income, gender and ethnicity:

Income

- The commission's initial research also shows that a very low proportion of pupils who receive Free School Meals achieve 5 A* to C grades at GCSE level (40%) compared to those not receiving Free School Meals (70%).
- The performance gap between the richest and the poorest has remained persistently large between the mid-1980s and the mid-2000s.
- When using the measure of '5 A* to C grades', the attainment gap between FSM pupils and non-FSM pupils is observed to narrow over the last decade.
- However, when more demanding measures, such as '5 A* to C including English and Maths' are applied, this progress is no longer observable.

Ethnicity

- Educational performance varies significantly across different ethnic minority groups.

- For instance, while over 85% of Chinese pupils get five good GCSEs, only around 59% of Black Caribbean pupils achieve this benchmark.
- Ethnic differences are important in their own right – as distinct from income, region or other factors – with the performance of a Chinese child at age 11 higher than for a white child of the same age.
- Over the last three decades, ethnic inequalities have altered radically but a similar level of unevenness remains. While Asian students born in 1970 performed poorly, Chinese, Indian and Bangladeshi born in 1997/98 were the best performers. White students have fallen from over-performers to under-performers on average over the three decades.

3. The London Challenge

Overview of the London Challenge

In December 2010, Ofsted published an [evaluation of the London Challenge](#), which set out the programme's purpose as follows:

The London Challenge school improvement programme was established in 2003 to improve outcomes in low-performing secondary schools in the capital. Primary schools were included in the scheme from 2008. The programme uses independent, experienced education experts, known as London Challenge advisers, to identify need and broker support for underperforming schools. The advisers are supported by a small administrative team based in the Department for Education (DfE). The cost of the support and the services brokered comes directly from the DfE and is spent as the adviser directs. Many of these advisers are also National or Local Leaders of Education.

The London Challenge programme was expanded in 2008 to Greater Manchester and the Black Country, in the 'City Challenge'.

The original [DfES programme](#) for the London Challenge, from 2003, gives more detailed information on the programme's intent and the approach taken.

End of the London Challenge

The following PQ response from April 2011 sets out the then Government's belief that the City Challenge programme, while effective, was too expensive and over-centralised:

Nick Gibb: Last year, the Secretary of State approved an evaluation of the City Challenge programme, to enable its effectiveness to be assessed. This will report towards the end of the 2011 and copies will be placed in the House Libraries. Our initial view, however, is that, while the programme has been effective in helping to raise school standards it was expensive and adopted an approach that was too centralised. The recent Schools White Paper: *'The Importance of Teaching'* set out our view that the primary responsibility for school improvement should rest with schools. The wider system should be designed so that our best schools and leaders can take on greater responsibility, leading improvement work across the system. We are putting the building blocks of a self-improving school system in place, increasing the numbers of Teaching Schools and National and Local Leaders of Education and intervening only where schools are under-performing.

[HC Deb 26 Apr 2011 527 c290W]

The following PQ response from David Laws in late 2012, as well as discussing the effectiveness of these programmes, provides some relevant Government thinking on how to proceed in furthering the achievement of disadvantaged children:

Mr Laws: The Department published its "Evaluation of the City Challenge Programme" report in June 2012, and it is available at

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR215>

The report sets out the findings of a mixed methods evaluation of the City Challenge programme in London, Greater Manchester and the Black Country, and retrospectively reviews the London Challenge.

Concerning the latter, it is clear that between 2003 and 2011, secondary pupil attainment in London improved more rapidly than that in other parts of the country. The percentage of London secondary pupils achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics was below the national figure until 2004, but from 2005 on, was above the national figure.

In the City Challenge, which built on the success and lesson of the London Challenge, the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) increased by more than the national figure in all areas, with the exception of Greater Manchester primary pupils. The attainment gap between pupils eligible for FSM narrowed for London primary and secondary pupils, and Greater Manchester primary pupils. The proportion of good and outstanding schools increased in all three areas.

The Government are determined to narrow attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in all parts of the country, and that is why we have introduced the pupil premium. This investment currently stands at £1.25 billion and will rise to £1.875 billion in 2013-14. We believe that head teachers and school leaders should decide how to use the pupil premium, as they are the professional experts who know their own pupils' needs. This means that we also expect schools to take the lead responsibility in assessing and accounting for their use of the premium.

The Government have commissioned an external evaluation of the premium's first year, and also asked Ofsted to study how effectively schools are using their premium funding to close the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Ofsted published their interim study in September 2012, and they will publish further findings early in 2013. In addition to this, they have an increased focus on the performance of pupils who attract the premium, and on how it is used to remove barriers to learning for premium pupils. Since September 2012, as part of routine school inspection, Ofsted have been holding school leaders to account for how schools have spent their pupil premium and what difference this is making to the learning and progress of the pupils concerned. Their judgments on schools' leadership will consider the use of both the premium and other resources to overcome barriers to achievement for their pupils.

[\[HC Deb 17 Dec 2012 c596W\]](#)

The following PQs may also be of interest:

Ian Austin: I agree with the Secretary of State that many state schools do not stretch their brightest pupils enough to allow them to compete with pupils from private schools. In my constituency, only two out of seven schools reached the national average in GCSEs last year. I do not think there should be a school in the country in which fewer than 70% or 80% are getting five good GCSEs, including English and maths. Will he consider bringing back the black country challenge to boost standards in Dudley in the way the London challenge improved them in London?

Michael Gove: That is a very acute point from a Member of Parliament who, I know, is passionate about education. I will do

everything I can to ensure that all the elements that made the London challenge and black country challenge a success apply to schools in his constituency through collaboration and a culture of excellence. I look forward to talking with him about how we can work together to ensure that his championing of high educational standards can be extended across the black country.

[\[HC Deb 24 Jun 2013 c17\]](#)

And

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): One of the ways in which the last Government sought to address this issue was the London Challenge, which, as the Minister will know, had a very positive impact on the achievement gap in London. What lessons does he think can be drawn from it for the rest of the country?

Mr Laws: There are certainly a great many lessons to be learnt from the London Challenge. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of reports which have been published over the last few months and which seek to draw those lessons. One lesson that I would draw is that it is important for us to provide the opportunities that the London Challenge helped to create for every part of the country, and not just for areas that have been selected by Ministers.

[\[HC Deb 21 Jul 2014 c1128\]](#)

Impact of the London Challenge

The key findings of the Ofsted evaluation [report](#) of the London Challenge in December 2010 (see page 6) set out the main achievements of the programme as Ofsted saw them.

The Government's [evaluation](#) of the City Challenge programme, including an evaluation of the London Challenge 2003-08, was published in June 2012. The briefing setting out [key findings](#) may be of particular interest.

Section 7.6 of the Library standard note on [Support for Disadvantaged Children in Education in England](#), SN/SP/7061, discusses relevant reports on the performance of London schools, which include discussion of the significance of the London Challenge.

A [report](#) by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Institute for Government stated that the London Challenge had a positive impact on London schools. A [February 2014 article](#) by one of the report's authors on the IoG website may be of further interest.

The following article discussed the closure of the London Challenge in 2011:

TES, [The challenge now is to hang on to this success](#), 28 March 2011

The NUT's [website](#) provides material from the National Education Conference 2014, including the following:

- [Keynote](#) - 'How London Schools Rose to the Challenge' (Professor Tim Brighouse)
- [Keynote](#) - 'The Legacy of the London Challenge' (Professor Merryyn Hutchings)

4. Press articles

TES, 23 February 2016

[Sir Michael Wilshaw: Northern Powerhouse will 'splutter and die' unless schools in the region improve](#)

The Guardian, January 13 2016

[Geographical inequality in education has grown over 30 years, study finds;](#)

For children born in 2000, where they live is a more powerful predictor of academic success than it was for those born in 1970, report claims

TES, 12 January 2016

[Inequality in education is worse than 30 years ago, research suggests](#)

The Guardian, December 1 2015

[Use 'golden handcuffs' to keep teachers in state schools - Ofsted chief;](#)

Michael Wilshaw calls for urgent action over teacher shortages and highlights north-south divide in English secondaries

The Guardian, November 21 2015

[George Osborne to end 'arbitrary and unfair' school funding formula;](#)

Ministers urged to end system that causes regional funding disparities of as much as £3,000 a pupil

The Guardian, 11 December 2013

[How London Challenge turned capital's schools around](#)

5. Press release

Institute for Fiscal Studies

[Disadvantaged pupils perform better in London due to earlier improvements in primary schools](#)

23 June 2014

The research for this report was carried out jointly with the Institute of Education.

Disadvantaged pupils have higher academic attainment in London than in other regions in England and have pulled even further ahead over the past decade, particularly in inner London. This has often been referred to as the 'London effect'. In new IFS research published today, we show that this higher level and improvement in performance is unlikely to have been driven by improvements in secondary schools. Instead, we argue that the roots of the London effect lie much earlier, with rapid improvements in pupil performance in London's primary schools in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

These are amongst the findings a new report "*Lessons from London schools for attainment gaps and social mobility*" written by Ellen Greaves, Lindsey Macmillan and Luke Sibieta. This was commissioned by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty (SMCP) Commission, with support from the ESRC through the Centre for the Microeconomic Analysis of Public Policy at IFS.

Following on from rapid improvements over the previous decade, disadvantaged pupils in London currently achieve substantially better exam results than those elsewhere in England:

- In inner London in 2012, 54% of pupils eligible for free schools meals (FSM) achieved 5 or more GCSEs (or their equivalent) at A*-C (including English and Maths), compared with 47% in outer London, 40% in the West Midlands and 30-35% in other regions outside of London.
- Disadvantaged pupils in inner London are also substantially more likely to achieve high results, with 13% of pupils eligible for FSM achieving 8 or more A*-Bs (including English and Maths), compared with 3-6% in regions outside of London.
- This higher level of attainment is then translated into higher levels of participation in post-compulsory education.

To date, many commentators have argued that the roots of London's success and improvements at GCSE lie in a range of policies and initiatives targeted at London over the past decade, such as the London Challenge. In fact it looks like London's better and improved performance reflects two key factors: differences in the mix of pupils attending London's schools compared with other areas of the country; and, improvements in the results achieved by pupils in London when they were in primary school.

The mix of pupils in Inner London and other large cities differs from that in the rest of England, with a greater number of pupils from ethnic

minority backgrounds. Part of the better and improving results can be accounted for by these differences. However, most of the higher level and improved performance of disadvantaged pupils in London can be explained by past achievements in primary schools. For example:

Director: Paul Johnson Research Director: Richard Blundell The Institute for Fiscal Studies Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England: 954616 7 Ridgmount Street London WC1E 7AE Registered Charity: 258815 VAT no: GB 394 5830 17

- In 2012, pupils eligible for FSM in inner London were 21 percentage points more likely to achieve 5 or more GCSEs (or their equivalent) at A*-C (including English and Maths).
- This falls to 17 percentage points after accounting for pupil characteristics and demographics.
- After accounting for prior attainment, this then falls even further to 6 percentage points.

London's secondary schools do still perform better than those elsewhere in the country after accounting for prior attainment and pupil demographics, but the majority of the higher level of performance can be accounted for by pupils entering secondary schools with higher levels of achievement.

At age 11 disadvantaged pupils in London, particularly Inner London, perform significantly better at Key Stage 2 in both English and maths than in other areas of England.

- There was a big improvement in Key Stage 2 English scores for disadvantaged pupils in London between 1999 and 2003. This is a key reason why Key Stage 4 results in London subsequently improved between 2004 and 2008.
- Key Stage 2 Maths results have remained consistently higher for London compared with the rest of the country.

Disadvantaged pupils in Manchester and Birmingham also have higher levels of attainment in secondary school and have seen substantial improvements over time relative to the rest of England. As in London, this is largely explained by higher attainment of pupils in these areas in primary schools. Higher levels of GCSE results in Manchester and Birmingham do not translate into higher levels of post-compulsory education, however, in contrast to London.

"The higher level and improved performance of disadvantaged pupils in secondary schools in London over the past decade is a remarkable success story. Our work suggests that specific policies focussed on London secondary schools, such as the London Challenge, may not be the main reason for this improvement. Instead, it appears to derive largely from improved performance in primary schools. Success at primary schools is clearly crucial."

says Luke Sibieta, Programme Director at IFS and an author of the report.

6. Parliamentary questions

[GCSE](#)

Asked by: Hodgson, Mrs Sharon

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many young people left school without a Grade C in GCSE English and maths in each region in each of the last five academic years.

Answering member: Nick Gibb

The number of pupils at the end of key stage 4 without at least a grade C in GCSE English and maths in 2014/2015 can be deduced from Table LA1 of the local authority tables published in the "Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England 2014 to 2015" statistical first release.[1] This table shows the percentage of pupils who achieved an A*-C in English and mathematics GCSEs including equivalents, including the total number of pupils at the end of key stage 4 in each local authority and region – from which the number and percentage of pupils not achieving a grade C in English and mathematics can be determined. Equivalent information for the previous four academic years is published in Table 15 in 2013/14[2] and Table 16 of the releases for earlier years.[3][4][5]

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2014-to-2015> (Local authority tables: SFR 01/2016)

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2013-to-2014> (Subject and LA tables: SFR 02/2015)

[3] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-academic-year-2010-to-2011> (Additional tables: SFR 02/2012)

[4] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-academic-year-2011-to-2012> (Additional tables: SFR 02/2013)

[5] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2012-to-2013-revised> (Subject and LA tables: SFR 01/2014)

09 Mar 2016 | Written questions | 29331

[Education: Bradford](#)

Asked by: Davies, Philip

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve educational standards in Bradford.

Answering member: Nick Gibb

This Government is committed to educational excellence everywhere. The new powers in the Education and Adoption Bill are designed to

help raise standards in underperforming areas such as Bradford, ensuring all failing maintained schools become academies with strong sponsors, and coasting schools are challenged to improve.

The Regional Schools Commissioner has already prioritised Bradford for the Northern Fund and brought two new sponsors into the area.

We have also significantly expanded School Direct and Teach First, to ensure schools in Bradford have access to high-quality teachers. The new National Teaching Service, which will place outstanding teachers and middle leaders into schools which most need additional support to improve their teaching, will begin with a pilot later this year; Bradford will be one of the areas eligible to participate in this pilot.

I recently had the pleasure of being able to see some of the excellent work that is already being done to raise standards in Bradford, when I visited the outstanding Beckfoot School in Bingley, where 46% of pupils achieve the E-Bacc combination of core academic GCSEs.

07 Mar 2016 | Written questions | 903901

[Teachers: Recruitment](#)

Asked by: Jackson, Mr Stewart

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve teacher recruitment in local education authority areas with poor educational attainment; and if she will make a statement.

Answering member: Nick Gibb

The Government is committed to achieving educational excellence everywhere so that children in every part of the country, regardless of their background and circumstances, have access to an outstanding education.

High-quality teachers are central to that ambition, and we have recently announced the establishment of a new National Teaching Service (NTS) that will second outstanding teachers and middle leaders into the schools that most need support, particularly in areas of the country that find it hardest to retain and recruit good teachers. Our ambition is that by 2020 there will be 1,500 NTS teachers/middle leaders in underperforming schools in areas of the country facing particular challenges in terms of teacher quality and recruitment. The NTS will begin with a pilot of 100 outstanding teachers and middle leaders in the North West from September 2016. Following the pilot the national programme will be rolled out from September 2017 where it will be extended into other regions.

We are also increasing the number of high-achieving graduates teaching in disadvantaged schools by supporting the geographical expansion of Teach First into every region of England. This gives Teach First the scope to reach 90 per cent of eligible schools by 2016, boosting the Government's commitment to recruit more top teachers throughout England, including in more rural, coastal and disadvantaged areas. We are continuing to increase the proportion of initial teacher

training that is led by schools, and our School Direct programme is giving more head teachers the ability to select, train and employ the teachers they need in their local areas.

The pay reforms that we have introduced since September 2013 give schools greater autonomy and more freedom to decide how much they pay teachers and how quickly pay progresses. Schools may also choose to use their pupil premium funding to attract or retain the best teachers. This increased flexibility gives schools in disadvantaged areas more scope to attract and recruit the high quality teachers that they need to deliver outstanding education in the most challenging circumstances.

22 Jan 2016 | Written questions | 23090

[Education: Standards](#)

Asked by: Dodds, Mr Nigel

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to ensure greater consistency in educational outcomes (a) from each stage of provision and (b) across all regions.

Answering member: Mr David Laws

This Government has introduced an ambitious, coherent programme of reforms to ensure greater consistency in educational outcomes across all stages and regions in England.

We are reforming assessment and the curriculum across the primary and secondary phases and general and vocational qualifications to ensure we have a system that prepares young people for life in modern Britain. We are reforming GCSEs and A levels to be robust and rigorous, to match the best education systems in the world and to keep pace with universities' and employers' demands. The new national curriculum, introduced from this school year, also sets out expectations for children at all four key stages that match the curricula used in the world's most successful school systems.

We are improving the accountability framework to improve standards across the country. In addition, Ofsted has implemented a more rigorous inspection framework, with performance data being used to target inspections on the weakest schools and a recognition that any school rated less than 'good' is not performing well enough.

Some schools are still not performing well enough. We issued revised statutory guidance^[1] to local authorities in May that makes very clear our expectations that they should take swift and robust action when maintained schools are performing poorly. This includes our expectation that their assessment should include the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that poorly performing schools should become sponsored academies.

In addition, the academies and free schools programmes are shifting power and responsibility to leaders of education, giving schools greater autonomy to drive improvements, within a strong framework of accountability. The growth in sponsored academies is raising standards

by turning around some of the most disadvantaged and worst performing schools in the country. Increasingly, high performing schools are taking the lead as sponsors, sharing their expertise and experience to benefit others.

Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) are responsible for overseeing the performance of academies, free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools in their region. RSCs, along with their headteacher boards, are helping to build the capacity of the Department for Education to pick up local and regional soft intelligence which will contribute to the ability of the Department to oversee academies and free schools and hold them to account. The RSCs will be able to take decisions on academy issues whilst being immersed in the local context. This will enable them to make decisions based on the circumstances of the school(s) and sponsor(s) in question.

All of these reforms will also help raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap with their peers at every phase and in every region in England. In particular, the Government introduced the pupil premium in April 2011 – worth a total of £6.25 billion to date – to give schools the resources to raise the attainment of mainly economically disadvantaged pupils and those in care.

[1] www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2

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7. Further reading

[Factors associated with achievement: key stages 2 and 4](#)

Department for Education

First published: 5 November 2015

[Ofsted Annual Report 2013/14: North East, Yorkshire and Humber report](#)

First published: 10 December 2014

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