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Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes

in a Changing Britain

The Conservatives' Record on Compulsory education: spending, policies and outcomes in England, May 2015 to pre-COVID 2020

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Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes research programme

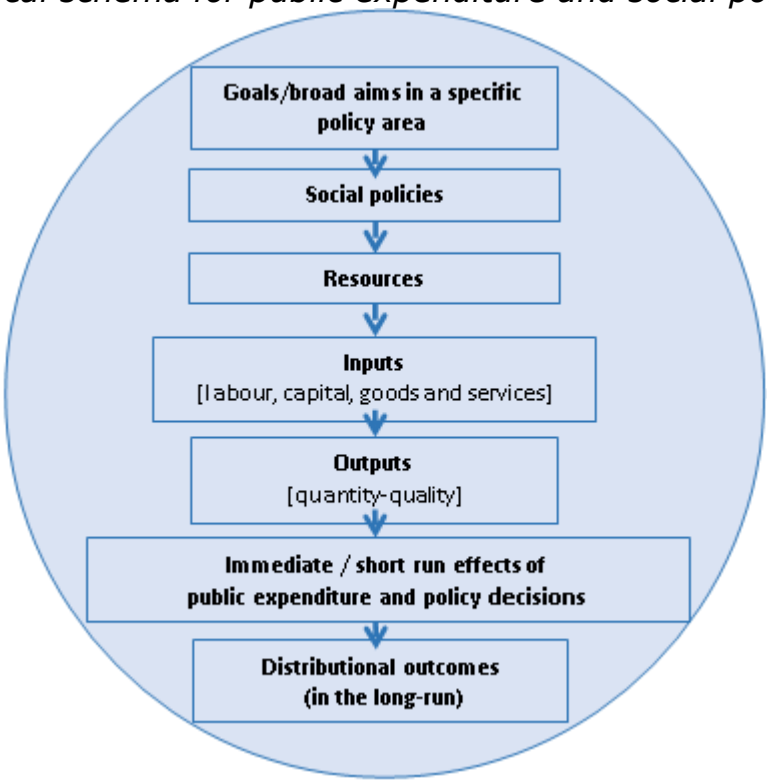
The central objective of the SPDO research programme is to provide an authoritative, independent, rigorous and in-depth evidence base on social policies and distributional outcomes in 21st century Britain. The central question to be addressed is: What progress has been made in addressing social inequalities through social policies? The research programme is ambitious and comprehensive in scope, combining in-depth quantitative analysis of trends in social inequalities and social divides with detailed and systematic public expenditure and social policy analysis across ten major social policy areas over the period 2015-2020, together with broader reflection on the changing nature of social policies and distributional outcomes over the 21st century.

The programme of research adds to (and will reflect on) the previous Social Policies in a Cold Climate (SPCC) research programme covering the period 1997-2015. The SPDO programme will update, extend and broaden our analysis of public expenditure, social policies and distributional outcomes using the most recent datasets available, resulting in a unique evidence base on trends in social inequalities and social policies going back to 1997. Innovative extensions included within the SPDO research programme include: coverage of additional areas of social policy (e.g. physical safety/security and complex needs/homelessness); emphasis on the new context for social policy making (e.g. devolution and

BREXIT); assessment of a broader range of multidimensional outcomes within our quantitative analysis; and the inclusion of additional breakdowns (e.g. migration status). This programme will also have a forward looking component, identifying the key challenges for social policy in the 2020s.

The current paper is part of work-package 3 of the broader programme, which provides in-depth and cross-cutting analysis of trends in social policies over the period 2015-2020. The work-package will include analysis within and across ten major social policy areas (social security and general housing; health; social care; early years; compulsory school age education; higher education; employment; safety and security; social mobility; and homelessness / complex needs). The analytical schema for the social policy analysis undertaken within the programme is set out in Figure A below. The figure shows the structure of the analysis, which will address (1) broad policy goals for each policy area; (2) the actual policies and measures adopted in each area; (3) public expenditure trends (including where feasible and meaningful per capita and in relation to demand / need); (4) inputs and outputs (how resources were spent and what was produced from this); (5) overall outcomes achieved.

Figure A: Analytical schema for public expenditure and social policy analysis



Source: adapted from Lupton et al. (2013). Note: Arrows denote steps in the analytic chain but not causality through the chain. The background circle denotes the broader universe of other policies, the economy and society, which shape all stages.
More information and other publications in the series are available at the project webpage: http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/_new/research/spdo/default.asp

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1. Introduction

This paper sets out to evaluate policy in relation to compulsory education in England[1] since the election of Conservative Government under David Cameron in 2015. Written in early 2020, it covers the period up until late 2019. It seeks to answer the central research question of the SPDO programme: what progress has been made in addressing inequalities through social policies?

The December 2019 election illustrated that in the case of compulsory education, the answer to that question is highly contested. The Conservatives claimed that they had raised standards and improved behaviour, and restated their commitments to equality of opportunity (Conservatives, 2019). Opposition parties claimed that inequalities had widened for children from lower income homes and for those with other disadvantages and vulnerabilities. Labour claimed that "those most in need have lost out"; the Liberal Democrats that "the attainment gap between rich and poor is widening". They also complained about under-investment in the system (both capital and revenue) and about the nature of education, which they claimed was too narrowly focused and dominated by tests (Liberal Democrats, 2019; The Labour Party, 2019).

Beyond increasing spending, which was pledged by all parties, the party manifestos revealed widely diverging proposals for how education policy should be approached in the next parliament. The Conservatives pledged to continue their programme of system reform, school improvement and accountability, while adding more arts, music and sport and expanding alternative provision for excluded pupils. Opposition proposals were radically different, including scrapping tests, broadening curriculum, replacing the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), giving more power to local authorities, preventing the expansion of grammar schools, taking steps to bring private schools into the state system, and reintroducing funding to support students to remain in education and training post-16. In a situation in which views of what has happened and what should happen in education are so opposed, the paper aims to provide a systematic and objective appraisal.

'Compulsory education' in England is harder to define than it used to be. Until 2013, it finished at age 16. From 2013, all young people were required to stay on until age 17, and from 2015, until age 18, although this can be work-based learning (such as apprenticeship) or employment with part-time accredited learning as well as full-time education. For the purposes of this paper, we include all education and training from age 5 to 18. Adult education and training are not considered here. Policies, outputs and outcomes in relation to early years and

[1] Education is a devolved responsibility in the UK, so it is no longer possible to talk of UK education policy or analyse inputs, outputs or outcomes using common datasets. This paper focuses mainly on England. Section 1.4 points to some key comparisons with other parts of the UK.

Higher Education are covered in the companion papers in this series (McKnight and Obolenskaya, forthcoming; Stewart and Reader, forthcoming).

The paper follows the standard SPDO analytic framework outlined above. We start with a review of the situation in 2015 and the broader policy context. We then describe the policies enacted, before looking at spending and at system resources. The final section analyses trends in educational outcomes and differences between population groups and areas, and draws some conclusions about the relationships between policies, spending and outcomes in this area of social policy.

2. Policies

2.1. Inheritance

The education policy landscape that the Conservative government took on from its Coalition predecessor had five key features that influenced what was to come next.

The first was that the previous period of policy-making had initiated large-scale reform of almost every aspect of the education system: the structure of the school system – Academies and Free Schools; curriculum; assessment and accountability measures both pre- and post-16; and teacher education (Lupton and Thomson, 2015). The sheer scale of these changes was so great that, even had a government of a different hue been elected in 2015, it would have been difficult to countenance further large-scale policy changes. The new Conservative government, with the same Secretary of State (Nicky Morgan) and a Schools Minister previously in post under Michael Gove (Nick Gibb), was effectively finishing and finessing the programme it had begun. Some of the changes were bedding down, such as the new primary and secondary school curricula, the new teacher education and training system, and the mechanisms for managing a school system made up of thousands of autonomous schools overseen by multiple different federations and trusts and each notionally responsible directly to the Secretary of State. Other changes were still coming through, for example proposals for a new school funding system, new GCSE and 'A' Level curricula and assessment modes, and a new Careers and Enterprise company to support careers advice (now delegated to schools) and build links between schools and employers. A quiet period in policy was to be expected, at least in respect of the school system.

Second, this was the first government to see the full effect of the Labour government's Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) policy, first announced in 2008. The cohort of young people sitting their GCSEs in summer 2014 were the first to have to remain in education and training until their 18th birthday. The post-16 stage of education was already coming under more scrutiny, given

recognised weaknesses in the system compared with international competitors. A slimming-down of vocational qualifications and new requirements for 16-18 year olds to resit English and maths GCSEs had already been set in train by the Coalition government, along with the development of new apprenticeship standards and the introduction of degree-level apprenticeships and the introduction of pre-apprenticeship traineeships for 16-23 year-olds. Reform of funding for apprenticeships was underway. Further focus on this area could be expected, particularly to address the issue of apprenticeship for young people (most apprenticeships had been taken by over-25s). The issue of the state of the UK's skills base would prove to come under increasing scrutiny following the 2016 vote to leave the European Union.

Third, the new government inherited a school system which had been very largely protected from the large budget cuts affecting most areas of social policy in the period 2010 to 2015. Real-terms revenue spending on schools had remained broadly constant, enabling teacher:pupil ratios to be maintained (Lupton and Thomson, 2015). However, even despite the protection of schools vis-à-vis other areas of government spending, headteachers were arguing that their budgets were not keeping pace with rising costs, rising pupil numbers (see Appendix 2), and other pressures arising from cuts to the incomes of low-income families and to other services supporting children and families. Capital spending had been cut by over half under the Coalition. So spending on schools looked likely to be a key focus after 2015. Additionally, while wanting to continue with post-16 education reform, the new government inherited a post-16 system that had not been protected from cuts, even though pupil numbers had been rising (Britton et al., 2019; R Lupton et al., 2016).

Fourth, although the government was keen to downplay difficulties, there were concerns about teacher recruitment and retention, as the return to economic growth made teaching relatively less attractive and the new school-led teacher education routes were under-recruiting, while pupil numbers were rising (Foster, 2019). International comparisons showed teachers in England were working longer hours than those in many other countries, not because they were teaching more but because of more time spent planning, marking, assessing and reporting (Sellen, 2016). These 'audit culture' burdens were also reported in Department for Education (DfE) surveys and qualitative research commissioned as part of the 'Workload Challenge' announced late in 2014 (CooperGibson Research, 2018a, 2018b; Sellen, 2016), and concerns about workload emerged as the most important factor influencing teachers to leave the profession. Recruitment of suitably qualified teachers in further education (FE) also remained an issue, especially given the requirement for GCSE re-sits from 2013 and the proposed introduction of 'T' Levels.

Fifth, and of particular importance for our inquiry, progress in reducing educational inequalities had been slow, despite this being a strong focus for the Coalition. The main policy intervention had been the establishment of the Pupil Premium - per capita funding for schools to spend on raising the attainment of

disadvantaged children and young people. The Pupil Premium did have a redistributive effect on school funding, although it was not until 2013/14 that it exceeded the value of the grants it replaced, so an immediate effect would not have been expected. Over the Coalition period, disadvantage gaps in attainment at the end of primary school continued to close slightly, as did gaps at GCSE until 2014 – the first year of changes to the GCSE curriculum and assessment regime – when they widened. Our analysis at the time suggested that the changes to curriculum and assessment seem to have particularly affected lower attainers from poorer families, although it was impossible to untangle effects of factors outside the school (such as rising child poverty) from those within. It was evident, in any case, that the effects of the changes would not be fully evident for several years, as they worked through to more subject areas and schools and students adapted to the changes. It remained to be seen whether a new Conservative government would continue to prioritise 'closing the gap' and, if so, how.

2.2. Policy Overview: Manifestos, Ministerial Priorities and Broad Policy Directions

The Conservative manifesto for the 2015 general election, signalling its proposed response to this context, very much reflects the intention to continue what had been started under the Coalition. It signalled further expansion of the Academies and Free Schools programmes and an extension of the school improvement/takeover programme to so-called 'coasting schools'. School funding and the Pupil Premium would be protected, and the anticipated reforms to the school funding formula would be enacted to 'make school funding fairer'. In a continuation of the moves towards greater 'rigour' and higher standards, expectations around the take-up of the EBacc[2] combination of academic subjects at GCSE and standards in English and maths at primary school were to be ratcheted up. In the post-16 phase, qualifications reform was to continue with more reductions in lower level vocational courses. Issues with teacher recruitment and retention were recognised in commitments to a range of initiatives on workload, pay and professional development (see Appendix 1).

These manifesto commitments were developed through a White Paper in March 2016 entitled 'Education Excellence Everywhere' and through a new five year departmental strategy published in May 2016. The strategy additionally highlighted intentions to: reform the inspection system to improve its reliability and utility while reducing burdens and perverse incentives; support schools with children's mental health; and facilitate access to high quality careers support and work experience. Actions to embed and develop aspects of previous policies, such as continuing reforms to initial teacher education, were also pledged. A Post-16 Skills Plan was published in July 2016, and the transfer in summer 2016 of responsibilities for further and higher education and skills from the Department

[2] The 'Ebacc' was introduced by the Coalition government. It comprises GCSEs in English, maths, science, a language and history or geography – capturing the notion of a broad academic education.

for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS) into DfE emphasised the latter's increasing focus on skills as well as academic education, and on school-to-work transitions.

In broad terms, the policy agenda set out in 2015/16 was what was enacted in the years that followed. As in many areas of social policy, however, the events following the EU Referendum in June 2016 slowed the pace of policy enactment and development, especially where new legislation was needed, and brought about changes in personnel and priorities at the top of the department.

Following the Conservative leadership election, Nicky Morgan was replaced as Secretary of State for Education in July 2016 by Justine Greening, astonishingly the first comprehensive school educated individual to hold that position. Greening brought a new focus on equality of opportunity and social mobility (including through technical education and employment), and on spatial inequalities. Theresa May's 'burning injustices' speech on her election as Prime Minister also pointed to issues of education and social mobility, framed in terms of access to higher education and to the professions. Stronger commitments to invest in FE, introduce new technical qualifications, and help young apprentices with the costs of travel were included in the Conservative manifesto for the 2017 election – although in other respects this looked very much like a continuation of the existing programme. Greening's agenda was further developed in December of that year in a new plan for 'improving social mobility through education' (Department for Education, 2017a). This had the overarching ambition 'No Community Left Behind' and real emphasis on the places where resources and additional targeting were needed most, including 12 new 'Opportunity Areas'. Action was to be taken at four life stages, from closing early years 'word gaps' and attainment gaps at school to expanding high quality post-16 choices, connecting young people from low income backgrounds to advice and work experience, and supporting adults to retrain and upskill during their careers. Greening's revised departmental plan had social mobility at its heart, stating that *"Our purpose is to help create a country where there is social mobility and equality of opportunity by providing excellent education, training and care, and to help everyone reach their potential, regardless of background"* (Department for Education, 2017b). It refined plans for teacher development and school improvement to emphasise the needs of 'challenging' areas, and developed strategies for improved careers advice and guidance.

Greening's tenure was, however, short. She left the front benches in January 2018 citing her disappointment at not being able to follow through with her commitments to improving social mobility, after the Prime Minister proposed to move her from education. Under her replacement Damian Hinds, the intention to prioritise the 'left behind' and to provide world-class education for everyone whatever their background remained, but with a lower profile. Departmental plans for 2018 and 2019 retained their focus on curriculum rigour, the continuing reform of the school system (including strengthening support in an increasingly fragmented system), addressing teacher recruitment and retention issues,

making progress with the move to a national funding formula for schools, and reforming technical education. Building children's well-being, character and resilience also featured as a key principle. The 2019 Conservative leadership election brought Gavin Williamson into office as Secretary of State. In the 2019 Conservative manifesto, there appeared to be a concession to concerns about curriculum narrowing with commitments to an 'arts premium' and primary physical education, alongside a continuing emphasis on core subjects, but a new departmental plan was not in place at the time of writing.

Overall, then, this was essentially a period of continuty, completing, extending and developing the programme of the previous government. Technical education was perhaps the biggest area of new policy development. We now look in more detail at specific policy developments before turning to spending – the issue that was most prominent politically in the months running up to the 2019 election and prompted new funding pledges from all the major parties at that time.

2.3. Specific Policies

School and College System Reform

In respect of the school system, the key ambition, as set out in the 2016 White Paper, was that all state-funded schools should either be Academies or in the process of conversion by 2020.

The main legislative tool was the 2016 Education and Adoptions Act which gave the government new powers to intervene more rapidly in schools rated by Ofsted as "inadequate". Under the legislation, the Secretary of State, through the eight Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs), became duty-bound to issue an Academy Order to any such school, whereas previously this had been expected but optional. The Education Policy Institute estimated that these changes would immediately bring 117 maintained schools rated as inadequate into the Academy pipeline, and that 1,000 failing schools would eventually be reached by this measure (Andrews, 2016). The legislation also brought 'coasting' schools under the scope of intervention, not necessarily to be turned into a sponsored Academy, but for the RSCs to determine appropriate intervention, which could include additional support or challenge, additional governors or an Interim Executive Board (IEB) or a new sponsor. An intention signalled in the White Paper to require all schools to become Academies was not followed through, nor was a subsequent plan for legislation to trigger area-wide conversion in certain circumstances. However some schools subsequently opted to convert voluntarily and establish a multi-Academy trust (MAT) rather than risk this being forced on them (Greatbatch and Tate, 2019).

Extending the number of Free Schools remained a priority. Free Schools are legally Academies, but are newly established, rather than replacing existing schools. DfE's 2015-2020 strategy set the aim of establishing 500 new Free

Schools, or around one hundred new schools a year, via two main routes: the central mainstream Free Schools programme and the 'presumption process'. Under the former, government invited potential providers to submit applications to set up new schools, in a series of waves of applications targeting different criteria and areas. Capital and land was provided by DfE. The latter operationalised the terms of the 2011 Education Act that where a local authority needed to establish a new school in order to meet demand for school places, the presumption should be that this would be a Free School. Capital costs were met by the local authority, using basic needs capital funding. The University Technical College (UTC) programme also continued, with the aim of estabishing a 14-19 college specialising in technical subjects and business skills within reach of every city, and in 2017 new measures were put in place to support UTCs, including encouraging them to join MATs. In 2018, a new programme was opened to establish specialist 16-19 maths schools, sponsored by universities, and a specific new wave of the Free School programme was announced for special and alternative provision schools.

Proposals to lift the ban on new selective schools, supported by Prime Minister Theresa May, were consulted on in 2016, and finally dropped in a government response nearly two years later. However, provision was made for existing selective schools to expand, through a new £50m (capital) Selective Schools Expansion Fund, provided there was a need for new places and plans to attract more disadvantaged students (Department for Education, 2019a). A new capital scheme for new voluntary aided faith schools (which can admit 100% of students on faith grounds) was also given the green light. The wider review of admissions policy promised in the 2017 manifesto, in order to tackle *"the unfairness of selection by house price, where ordinary, working class families find it difficult to access the best schools because they cannot afford to live in the catchment area"* (The Conservative Party, 2017, p. 50) did not happen.

At the same time as expanding and diversifying the system, DfE also had to continue to find ways to manage it effectively, given the much larger number of provider organisations, and the declining role of the 'middle tier' of the system - local authorities. The role of RSCs had been created in 2014 to approve new Academies and tackle underperformance in Academies in their area. From July 2015 that role was expanded to include approving Academy conversion and deciding on sponsors. It was again expanded in 2016 following the Education and Adoption Act, with the RSCs exercising the Secretary of State's new powers of intervention. An Education Committee inquiry in 2016 argued that the RSCs were beginning to provide an intermediate structure between Whitehall and individual schools, but also that they were part of an increasingly complicated system of oversight, accountability, and inspection that needed to be clarified. Concern about the varying sizes of the RSC regions, and the fact that they did not map onto other administrative regions, including those of Ofsted, was also expressed (House of Commons Education Committee, 2016). In 2017 further support (but also further complexity) was added with the establishment of 32 Sub-Regional Improvement Boards (SRIBs), drawn from teaching school councils, local

authorities and diocesan boards of education. As well as identifying how best to use school improvement funding, the SRIBs would also explore issues across groups of schools and monitor the delivery and impact of other DfE initiatives. The government-supported charity the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) also moved into a regional role in school improvement, with the establishment of regional leads and an expanded research school network.

Funding to support school improvement was increased following the social mobility action plan which recognised that the new arrangements for school support put in place since 2010 had not reached all areas equally and that coverage tended to be weakest in areas of greater disadvantage and outside major cities. A £53 million MAT Development and Improvement Fund was put in place for areas of weak capacity. The existing Maths Hub network was extended, and a new national network of English Hubs established, targeted in areas of weak early language and literacy development. Most significantly, at the time, an extra c£140m Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF), administered with the support of the SRIBs, was announced for 'underperforming' schools, drawing on evidence of effective practice. The SSIF closed in 2018 with only £56m allocated.

Ofsted underwent continuing change. A new common inspection framework working across early years provision, schools and FE and skills came into operation in 2015, and at the same time short (one-day) inspections were introduced for schools adjudged good at their last inspection. After a change in leadership at Ofsted (Amanda Spielman taking over from Sir Michael Wilshaw in 2017) there were further significant changes. Spielman criticised schools for 'teaching to the test' and 'gaming the system', leading to narrower curriculum. Following a curriculum review, a new inspection framework was introduced in 2019 with a reduced focus on attainment outcomes and an increased focus on the quality of education (including curriculum), behaviour, attitudes and personal development. At the same time, inspections for previously 'good' schools were re-extended to two days. Following an Ofsted survey and a House of Commons Education Committee report drawing attention to 'off-rolling' (the practice of excluding students whose academic results would not contribute positively to school performance data), Ofsted inspectors are also expected to be vigilant to this practice. All of these changes for Ofsted's practice could well have impacts on inequalities in educational experiences and outcomes, but their full impact is yet to be seen.

A further tidying up exercise in the new system concerned careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). The previous government had abolished Labour's 'Connexions' service for young people, leaving responsibility for CEIAG with schools and colleges, a move which led to inconsistent quality of provision. In 2014, the government partly filled the hole with the establishment of the Careers and Enterprise Company, which provided 'enterprise co-ordinators' to support schools and colleges, and networks of 'enterprise advisers' to broker links with employers. This was followed in 2017 with a Careers Strategy which tightened expectations and scrutiny of schools and colleges, and extended

support for careers leaders in schools. £5m was invested in 20 careers 'hubs' to support activity linking across schools, colleges and universities.

In the post-16 system, the financial sustainability of some colleges was a key concern and led to a series of 37 'area reviews', conducted between 2015 and 2017, to identify scope for greater collaboration and efficiency, overcoming a 'college by college' response to meeting the needs of local areas. Area reviews also provided an opportunity for sixth form colleges (SFCs) to become Academies. The review process led to a substantial reduction in the number of institutions, mainly through mergers or conversions: from 93 to 54 SFCs and 241 to 193 general FE colleges (GFECs). They did not, however, include school sixth forms which make a up a large component of the post-16 market in some areas.

Funding reform: A National Approach and Employer Involvement

Prior to 2015, the Coalition government had begun explorations into overhauling the school funding system, historically structured via allocations to local authorities who could determine allocations to schools within their own area (Perera et al., 2017). The move to a system in which most schools were not under local authority control obviously demanded a new approach, and reports prior to 2015 had highlighted considerable variation in levels of funding per pupil, which came to be seen as based on over-complex and opaque critera and 'unfair', although it might equally be argued that in the main they were due to adjustments to the contexts in which schools were operating. Certainly allocations were based on historical patterns, and, no doubt, greater simplicity and transparency would facilitate the operation of a market in which school providers (Academy chains and federations) were operating across local authority boundaries.

After a period of consultation, a new 'national funding formula' (NFF) was announced in December 2016, and implemented from April 2018. The NFF is primarily pupil-led – over 90% of funding is allocated based on pupil characteristics, such as age (whether they are primary or secondary pupils), eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM), area deprivation, low prior attainment and English as an Additional Language (EAL) (Table 4.1 in Perera et al. (2017)). Area cost adjustments account for different costs in running schools in different areas. However, in order to ensure that no school would initially lose out, a transition period was announced (initially till 2020, subsequently delayed until 2021), in which local authorities would continue to use local formulae while attempting to move closer to the NFF criteria. The transition arrangement included a minimum funding guarantee of 1.5% in cash terms and a cap of 3% on gains in 2018-19 and 2.5% the following year (Belfield et al., 2018). In the period under observation here, therefore, we cannot see the actual impact of the formula, only the expected impact based on the changing criteria. The government committed to maintaining the Pupil Premium, which is in addition to the main funding formula, for the life of the parliament.

Funding reform also took place in the post-16 phase with two main developments: one the merger in 2017 of the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), bringing all post-16 funding under one umbrella; and the other the long-trailed reform of apprenticeship funding, with the intention of securing greater employer involvement. 2017 saw the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, applicable to all employers with a pay bill of £3 million per year. Such employers now pay into a Levy Fund from which they can reclaim apprenticeship training costs. An online 'Apprenticeships Service' was made available to allow levy-paying employers (and some smaller companies from 2019) to choose and pay for apprenticeship training more easily. Non-training costs, for example the salaries of new apprentices, are not claimable, thus incentivising employers to train existing staff and also perhaps to re-badge existing training programmes as apprenticeships in order to reclaim the costs, rather than taking on a wide range of apprentices, including 16-18 year olds. In contrast to the previous system which had included a 'disadvantage uplift', the new system does not incentivise employers to take on disadvantaged groups (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018a). For non-levy payers (smaller businesses), a 'co-investment' model brought in the requirement for businesses to pay 10% towards the cost of training and assessing their apprentices, reduced to 5% in the October 2018 budget to encourage greater participation.

Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability

By 2015, most of the curriculum changes in pre-16 education set in train under the Gove administration had already been implemented, but they were still working their way through the system. In primary schools, summer 2016 would see the first new tests at Key Stage 2, based on the new curriculum and with 'scaled scores' rather than levels of achievement. In September 2015, students started studying the new GCSEs, graded 9-1, in English and maths, for first examination in 2017. Further subjects followed in September 2016 for 2018 examination, and September 2017 for 2019 examination. Thus by 2019 all the new GCSE subjects had been examined. New A and AS levels in thirteen subjects (including English but not maths) were also taught for the first time in September 2015, with further subjects following in 2016, 2017 and 2018, so that all new 'A' Level subjects will have been examined by 2020.

The new changes in this period were not changes to curriculum policy but to performance measures, through which the government could influence the curriculum and examination entry choices of schools. In 2016, 'Progress 8' was introduced as the leading performance measure for secondary schools. This measure captures the progress made through school of each student, based on their prior attainment. Maths and English are double weighted. The measure was designed to ensure that schools focus equally on the progress of all students, rather than on getting a certain percentage over a threshold. However, as critics have argued (Leckie and Goldstein, 2017) it similarly disadvantages schools with high proportions of disadvantaged students, since the factors influencing their

prior attainment are likely to continue to disdadvantage them in the secondary years. To counter this problem with the headline measure, performance tables also indicate the performance of disadvantaged pupils and differences in the performance of students with different levels of attainment at the end of primary school. The proportion of students entering and succeeding in the Ebacc subjects continued to be reported. From 2016, the longstanding measure of the proportion of students passing five good GCSEs (at A*-C, later 9-4) including English and maths was dropped in favour of the proportion passing at these grades in English and maths, and from 2017, a 'good' pass was interpreted as a new grade 5 not grade 4. This bundle of changes can be seen as internally contradictory to some extent. It measures progress and destinations for all students and covers a range of subjects, but also focuses increasingly on English and maths and on the Ebacc. Towards the end of the period, an interesting tension appeared between DfE's tightening of performance measures and Ofsted's declining focus on such measures, on the grounds that too much effort was going into teaching for school performance and not enough on ensuring a high quality and appropriate curriculum for all. DfE's main intitiative to take on board concerns about curriculum narrowing was a new c£8m 'curriculum fund' announced in 2017 with the purpose of involving a range of arts and cultural organisations in developing school curricula.

In the post-16 phase, the 2015-2019 period saw major qualifications reform. In November 2015, the government commissioned an independent panel chaired by Lord Sainsbury to advise on how to improve the quality of technical education in England and, in particular, how to simplify the system while ensuring it could provide skills most needed for the 21st century (Independent Panel on Technical Education, 2016). All the recommendations of the panel were accepted by the government and formed the basis of its Post-16 Skills Plan published just a few months later (Department for Education and Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016). The central principle of the plan was the development of distinctive, prestigious, high-quality 'technical education' routes, which would be seen as equal to academic qualifications and provide clear pathways to employment with advanced skills. Its main result was a new Level 3 qualification, the 'T' level, which would be equivalent in rigour to 'A' levels and including longer teaching hours than most current technical qualifications, as well as a three month work placement. 'T' levels, however, are not due to start until 2020, with a small subset of three courses offering construction, digital and education & childcare programmes, along with a new transition programme to help move students through to 'T' levels if not ready to start them at 16. The remainder of courses currently under development are set for release in September 2021.

At the same time, the government continued to review and reduce the number of vocational qualifications on offer, both pre and post-16: a process begun under the last government, as part of a broader programme to develop pathways to work in different occupational areas. The Skills Plan began the process of consolidating qualifications (both classroom based and employment based) into fifteen broad occupational pathways. In relation to apprenticeships, a new

employer-led body, the Institute for Apprenticeships, was established in 2017 to regulate quality. The government also invited the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) to review and reform maths and English Functional Skills qualifications to ensure they were stretching and relevant to employers' needs, with teaching of the reformed qualifications beginning in September 2018.

Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Development

DfE's response to concerns about teacher supply evolved over the period. Between 2015 and 2018 it comprised a range of specific programmes including 'return to teaching' schemes, a national teacher vacancy website, early-career retention payments for maths teachers and a student loan reimbursement scheme for science and language teachers in shortage areas. A 'National Teaching Service' to place teachers in underperforming schools in areas that struggle to recruit teachers was dropped after a pilot. In early 2019, a new Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy was launched, centred on a new Early Career Framework - a package of support and reduced workload for teachers in their first two years of teaching. Other changes included changing bursary schemes to a phased retention payment approach, encouraging flexible working and jobsharing, and introducing a one-stop application service to try to simplify the now complex entry process for initial teaching education and training.

In parallel, the government renewed efforts to address workload issues. Following reports of three advisory groups (on data, planning and resources, and marking) in 2016, DfE set in train a multi-pronged action plan including: changing its guidance; developing a toolkit and other resources for school leaders; developing new systems to make it easier for schools to access and analyse data; giving grants to groups of schools to conduct their own workload reviews; and providing greater curriculum support particularly in maths. Specific guidance was developed for providers of initial teacher education given concerns about the high numbers of teachers leaving the profession within five years of training. Efforts were also made to strengthen professional development opportunities for teachers, including a new Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund and the establishment in 2017 of a new professional body for teachers, the Chartered College of Teaching, and the introduction of Chartered Teacher status.

Teacher pay also saw two above-average uplifts in 2018 and 2019 – of 2.75% and 3.0% respectively. However, in its 2019 report, the School Teachers' Review Body was clear that these were not enough to tackle a worsening recruitment and retention situation nor to reverse a decade of relative decline which had made teachers' pay too low in relation to the graduate labour market amd the wider economy (School Teachers' Review Body, 2019).

Efforts to address workforce issues in FE included the "Teach Too" scheme, run by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), designed to encourage industry professionals to spend some of their time teaching, and the "Taking Teaching Further" programme which aims to attract experienced industry professionals into

part-time or full-time FE teaching. The ETF's Mathematics Graduate Recruitment Incentive Award provided funds to FE organisations enabling them to explore innovative ways of recruiting and retaining specialist graduate mathematics teachers. In order to get providers ready for 'T' Levels, £8 million was allocated to a 'T' Level Professional Development programme. School teacher pay rises do not apply to teachers and lecturers in FE and sector bodies continued to report falling pay (Education and Training Foundation, 2019).

The effect of Brexit has not yet been particularly prominent in discussions of teaching shortages. DfE acknowledges that increasing pupil numbers and the demands of the Ebacc, particularly the foreign language element, make the recruitment of overseas teachers a sensible strategy for meeting workforce requirements, at least in part (Department for Education, 2017c). However, the Migration Advisory Committee (2017) concluded that there is not an overall shortage of teachers, and teaching has a relatively low rate of employment of migrant workers. Around two per cent of primary and four percent of secondary teachers currently are EU nationals (DfE 2017), although this is substantially higher in modern foreign languages (estimated at around a third) (Whittaker, 2018). Two fifths of EU teachers work in London and around one third in the East of England or the Midlands, so there would clearly be regional effects in any change to recruitment patterns. Currently teachers from outside the EEA need to find a school sponsor, paying £30,000 p.a. or more, and only teachers of maths, physics, general science, Mandarin and computing are currently on the Migration Advisory Committee's shortage list. Trainees from outside the EEA who require a visa can only train through a higher education route, not one of the school-based routes which are now the way into the teaching profession for more than half of entrants.

Inequalities and Distribution

Throughout this period, the Conservatives articulated their goals in respect of educational inequalities in terms of a commitment to equality of opportunity, which was a consistent theme in high level statements and departmental plans. The primary means to this end was to raise the standard of education across the board (including ensuring access to academic subjects and qualifications, eliminating bad schools and enabling choice) along with the provision of additional investment through the Pupil Premium to help schools raise attainment for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. There were some tweaks and bends to other mainstream policies to ensure they reached the most disadvantaged students, perhaps most particularly in the Careers Strategy, where the work of the Careers and Enterprise Company and Careers Hubs, as well as new programmes for primary schools, were particularly to focus on areas of highest need.

Alternative provision (AP) was also an area of increasing priority. Following a report on effective practice and post-16 provision (Tate and Greatbatch, 2017) the government published a vision paper, C*reating opportunity for all*

(Department for Education, 2018a), which signalled the £4 million Alternative Provision Innovation Fund and a new wave of commissioning Free School provision, as well as new primary research on experiences of post-16 transition. A House of Commons Education Committee report a few months later welcomed these measures but emphasised the urgent need for changes to policy and practice (2018b).

At various points, additional place-based approaches appeared to be of interest but these were not sustained, nor were they the beneficiaries of substantial investement. These included the announcement in 2016 of a £70m fund for Northern schools to support the Northern Powerhouse initiative. Leading Academy head Sir Nick Weller was commissioned to undertake a review, but no programme followed. Instead, in 2017, Justine Greening announced the 'Opportunity Areas' (OA) programme which targeted 12 local authorities identified as 'social mobility coldspots', typically not in big cities but peripheral areas and small industrial towns, such as Blackpool, Doncaster and Hastings[3]. A share of a £72m overall three year funding pot was allocated to each area, under the direction of newly formed local boards, to resource a local action plan. While the evaluation of OAs has not yet been published, a short review by the House of Commons Education Committee argued that the approach (adding new independent boards and administrative structures on top of existing local arrangements) was not the best way to achieve the desired outcomes (Halfon, 2019).

In all of these initiatives the main focus was on socio-economic disadvantage. Disability had been a key issue for the Coalition government with the reform of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system in 2014, including the introduction of new integrated Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. While the intention of these reforms was widely supported, it became increasingly evident during the years that followed that they had not been successful (see later sections on funding, inputs and outputs). 2018 and 2019 saw a number of new measures, particularly the expansion of provision through the establishment of new special schools, new SEND training hubs and a review of staff qualifications, a large increase in training places for education psychologists and increases in funding. In September 2019, the government announced a wider-ranging review of the system, so further changes might be expected in the next parliament.

Action on other axes of inequality did not figure prominently in the 2015-2019 period, although the Race Disparity Audit established by Theresa May at least gave ethnic monitoring of educational outcomes more prominence, while not yet necessarily translating into new policies or practices.

[3] The full list is as follows: West Somerset, Norwich, Blackpool, North Yorkshire coast, Derby, Oldham, Doncaster, Bradford, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich, and Stoke on Trent

2.4. Country and City-region Level Devolution

Education systems and structures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland differ substantially from those in England and from each other, and differences have widened since devolution in 1998. The different jurisdictions of the UK have different school-leaving ages, school and college system structures, governance and inspection arrangements, examinations and curricula. They also have different approaches to early years and higher education, which bookend the phases described in this paper. For instance, Wales has a 'Foundation Stage' covering ages 3-7, based on a developmental, experiential and play-based approach to teaching and learning, while England's 'Foundation Stage' finishes at age 5 and assessment of development is increasingly dominated by English and maths.

To compare policies, spending and outcomes between UK jurisdictions in the period since 2015 without setting this in longer term or wider context would make very little sense, and a full-scale long-term four-country comparison is well beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to recognise that the English policy developments that we have just described are not typical of what has been going on in the rest of the UK. England is the only country which has been pursuing policies of school autonomy, with Academies, Free Schools, trusts and federations. Approaches to quality and improvement therefore also differ widely. Wales has restructured its approach to school improvement and accountability since 2012, setting up regional school improvement consortia and a Pioneer Schools Network, and developing a new categorisation system to identify schools in need of support and challenge, as well as introducing a raft of changes to professional development and teacher education. Scotland embarked on a similar path following an education governance review in 2016.

England's curriculum and assessment reforms also look very different to those elsewhere. Scotland's new 'Curriculum for Excellence' was implemented in schools in 2010−11: a broad-based curriculum aiming to address four purposes of education: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Following a major review in 2015, Wales is now also implementing a major programme of curriculum and assessment change based on a broad vision of the Welsh learner as being ready for lifelong learning, enterprising and creative, ethical, healthy, and confident. New exams are based, like the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), on understanding of concepts and ability to apply them in different situations.

Policy in the post-16 phase also differs. The RPA policy applies only to England. 'T' Levels are an English innovation. Wales has initiated a system of sector reviews to strengthen skills pathways. The apprenticeship levy applies across the UK but is being operationalised in different ways - Scotland allows employers to use it on any kind of training, not just apprenticeships. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all continued with the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) which was discontinued in England in favour of a 16-19 bursary for certain

vulnerable groups and discretionary bursaries administered by FE providers for others.

So while the 2015 to 2019 period represented 'business as usual' in England, it is very clear that England is following a different path from the other UK jurisdictions, incorporating very different approaches to dealing with questions of equity and equality of opportunity and outcomes. Superficial comparisons of levels and trends in outcomes are unhelpful, because of course the systems also come from different positions in terms of resources, selectivity, workforce recruitment and development, and are dealing with different challenges in respect of wider economic, social and spatial divisions. But the stark differences in approach just over the border serve as a reminder that there are other ways of doing education policy and of evaluating outcomes, and that looking at English education policy in its own terms, against historical trends, provides only one angle on success. We try to reflect some of this in the work that follows.

Within England, it is notable that compulsory education has been missing from moves to city-region devolution, leaving schools and the 16-18 phase of education one of the only areas of social policy in which there has been no attempt to devolve powers, funds or local coordination (Lupton et al., 2018). The jurisdictions of Regional Schools Commissioners (established in 2014) do not correspond to city-region boundaries.

3. Spending

3.1. Total public spending on education in the UK

To give an idea of the broad spending context, we report first spending data for education in the UK as a whole, which covers a wider range of activity than 'compulsory education' i.e. pre-primary education on under 5s, schools, further and higher education[4].

These data, drawn from Public Expenditure Statistical analyses (PESA) expenditure framework figures[5], broadly show a picture of very little change in this period. Real terms spending fell each year between 2014-15 and 2017-18, rising again in 2018-19 to leave it 1.9% below its 2014-15 level. Putting this in longer perspective, Table 1 shows that this real terms figure was roughly at the level it was 13 years previously (2005-06), having fallen substantially since the Conservatives returned to government in 2010. As a proportion of GDP, education spending was at its lowest level since 2000-01.

[4] Total spending on under 5s, including spending on education, is discussed in the companion paper in this series on early years (Stewart and Reader, forthcoming). Higher education is covered in McKnight and Obolenskaya (forthcoming)

[5] This spending includes most expenditure by public sector, including central government spending combined with the actual spending by local government and public corporations.

Table 1 Total public spending (current and capital) on education, UK (2018-19 prices)

	Total spending on Education (nominal)	Total real spending on Education	GDP (2018-19 prices)	% GDP	Public sector expenditure on services	% Public sector expenditure on services	Annual growth in real total spending on education
1997-98	38.6	57.1	1,419	4.0	456.7	12.5	1.4
1998-99	40.0	58.4	1,465	4.0	465.2	12.6	2.3
1999-00	42.2	61.4	1,520	4.0	482.4	12.7	5.1
2000-01	45.9	65.3	1,564	4.2	502.4	13.0	6.4
2001-02	51.2	72.2	1,608	4.5	530.1	13.6	10.6
2002-03	54.7	75.2	1,650	4.6	553.6	13.6	4.2
2003-04	61.0	82.2	1,708	4.8	591.5	13.9	9.3
2004-05	65.1	85.4	1,741	4.9	618.1	13.8	3.9
2005-06	69.8	89.2	1,805	4.9	641.4	13.9	4.4
2006-07	73.0	90.6	1,846	4.9	650.2	13.9	1.6
2007-08	78.7	95.3	1,887	5.0	672.9	14.2	5.2
2008-09	83.0	97.9	1,843	5.3	712.4	13.7	2.7
2009-10	88.5	102.9	1,798	5.7	744.1	13.8	5.1
2010-11	91.5	104.5	1,833	5.7	753.7	13.9	1.6
2011-12[1]	*86.5*	*97.5*	*1,859*	*5.2*	*746.4*	*13.1*	*-6.7*
2012-13	84.1	92.9	1,889	4.9	735.5	12.6	-4.7
2013-14	84.7	91.9	1,931	4.8	733.4	12.5	-1.1
2014-15	85.1	91.1	1,986	4.6	737.3	12.4	-0.9
2015-16	84.9	90.2	2,031	4.4	746.1	12.1	-1.0
2016-17	84.9	88.2	2,066	4.3	738.1	11.9	-2.2
2017-18	85.9	87.5	2,104	4.2	746.5	11.7	-0.8
2018-19	89.4	89.4	2,131	4.2	756.2	11.8	2.2

Source: Figures from Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.5 from Chapter 4 tables in HM Treasury (2019); GPD deflators from Annex F of the same publication

Notes: (1) From 2011-12 onwards the 'grant-equivalent element of student loans' is not part of the Total Expenditure on Services (TES) framework and has therefore been removed from the Education function. Therefore figures are not directly comparable between 2010-11 and 2011-12. A full explanation of this decision can be found in PESA 2016 Annex E (HM Treasury, 2019).

Comparing public expenditure on education in the UK to other OECD countires, its position changed from being just above the OECD average in 2014 (5.4% in the UK and 5.3% OECD average) to just below the OECD average in 2018 (4.8% and 5.1%) (authors' calculations calculations using an arithmetic average of proportions for each 2014 and 2018 or nearest available year from OECD (2019a)). If we look at the total governemtn and non-government expenditrue on education, the UK appreas among the highest spending countires across OECD. Data for 2017, the latest available at the time of writing, shows that UK spent 6.3% of its GDP on primary to tertiary education institutions, and was the third highest across all OECD countries; higher than all other European countries. The UK's relatively high private component of total spending on education meant that it was high in international ranking for total (public and private) spending but was much lower in ranking for government spending (Table C2.2 in OECD (2020))

3.2. Spending on Compulsory Education in England

Current Spending on Schools

Turning now to England (rather than the whole UK), to the under-16 phase specifically, and to current (revenue) spending, we see a slightly different picture. Rather than being at a historic low, total spending on schools stood at its highest ever level in 2018-19, as stated repeatedly by the government in debates over school funding in 2018 and 2019. An increase since 2009-10 was largely accounted for by the new Pupil Premium (Table 2). However, there was virtually no change in the period considered in this paper (since 2014-15). Thus while school spending continued to be protected from the cuts affecting other areas of education spending (and other social policy spending) it was not on an upward trajectory.

Table 2 Breakdowns on current spending on schools, 2009-10, 2014-15 and 2018-19, England (£ billion, in 2018-19 prices)

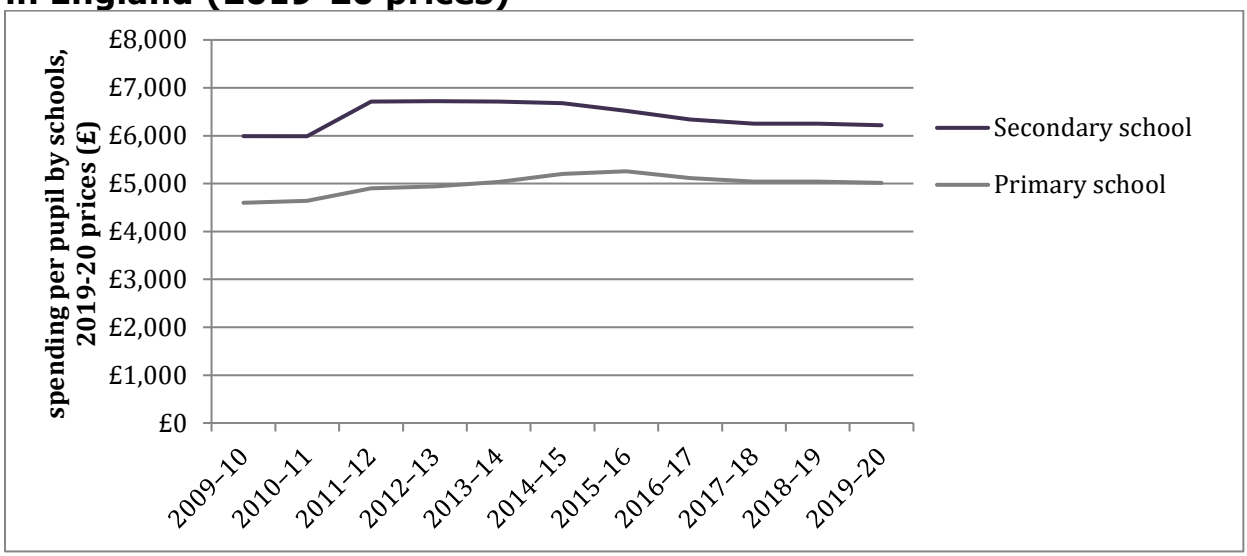
Resource grants/programme costs	**2009-10**	**2014-15**	**2018-19**
Dedicated Schools Grant[1]	34.49	30.24	26.18
Pre 16 - Academies	1.48	13.38	17.66
Standards Fund	3.79		
School Standards Grant	1.81		
Pupil Premium		2.58	2.42
Area Based Grant	1.53		
Total: Core school funding	**43.09**	**46.21**	**46.26**
Other funding streams	2.51	3.05	2.96
Total: current funding (core & other)	**45.60**	**49.26**	**49.22**
Excluding Pupil Premium	**45.60**	**46.68**	**46.81**

Source: Authors' calculations using nominal figures: 2009-10 figures are from DfE (2012); 2015-16 figures are from DfE (2016a); 2018/19 figures are from DfE (2019b), Pupil Premium allocations are from EFA (2019).
Notes:
1. Dedicated Schools Grant allocations figures do not separate out 'Early Years block' for 2009/10, these amounts were therefore included within the Dedicated Schools Grant in this table for consistency, including in later years.

Combined with a rise in pupil numbers (see Appendix 2) this stability in real terms spending mean that spending per pupil fell. IFS estimates that between 2014-15 and 2018-19, spending per pupil in primary schools fell from £5,200 to £5,040 (3.1%). In secondary schools, including sixth forms, it fell from £6,677 to £6,251 (6.4%), with a further small decline estimated for the following year (see Figure 1) (Britton et al., 2019). Furthermore, expenditure on education per pupil by Local Authorities, which includes such spending as transport, educational psychology and central spending on pupils with SEN, decreased even more

sharply than spending by schools, falling by 16% since 2014-15 (authors' calculations using underlying data for Figure 3.1 in Britton et al (2019)). In other analysis, including LA spending but excluding spending on sixth forms, IFS estimates that total spending per pupil on education of under-16 year olds began to decline earlier than Figure 1 suggests – falling by almost 8% between 2009/10 and 2019/20 and by 2% since 2014/15 (see Figure 3.8 in Britton et al. (2019)). In tandem with growing pressures from increasing staff wages, contributions to pensions and National Insurance, this led to what was reported as a 'school funding crisis', to which all political parties felt they needed to respond in 2019.

Figure 1 Spending by schools per pupil in primary and secondary schools in England (2019-20 prices)



Source: Figure reproduced from Figure 3.2 in Britton et al. (2019)
Note: The hike in per pupil spending amounts in 2011/12 in this trend is likely to be due to some of the funding moving from LAs to schools, increasing funding for schools. Additionally there is some inconsistency in the data on Academies which is only available from 2011-12 onwards (Britton et al., 2019)

In the September 2019 spending round, the government allocated an extra £4.3 billion (in today's money, 2019-20 prices; or £4.6bn in 2022-23) to the schools budget in England for 2022–23, aimed at 5 to 16 year olds education. If delivered, this amount represents a real-terms increase in spending per pupil of 7.4% between 2019–20 and 2022–23 which IFS deems sufficient to almost reverse the cuts to total school spending on under 16s of 8% since 2009–10 (Britton et al., 2019).

While this was very welcome news for schools, the limitations of the new settlement also need to be recognised. While it reverses the cuts since 2009-10, it does no more than that, leaving school spending per pupil in England about the same level in 2022–23 as it was in 2009–10. As IFS remarks "No real-terms growth in spending per pupil over 13 years represents a large squeeze by historical standards" (Britton et al., 2019, p. 8), leaving a cohort of children educated in a period of funding restraint.

Furthermore, the new funding announced in 2019 will be distributed according to the new national funding formula (NFF). IFS has undertaken work to demonstrate the likely impact of the NFF to 2019-20, identifying potential winners and losers (Belfield and Sibieta, 2017). Their analysis and that of EPI (Perera et al., 2017) suggests that the changes would to some extent offset the redistributive effect of the Pupil Premium, since:

- LAs with highest levels of funding pre-NFF are more likely to experience falls in funding (particularly the case for Inner London);
- Regions which contain historically underfunded LAs would experience the largest increases;
- Schools with high proportions of pupils eligible for FSM are set to lose (or gain only slightly) in cash terms from the NFF, while the largest gain is actually in schools with a middling proportion of FSM pupils.

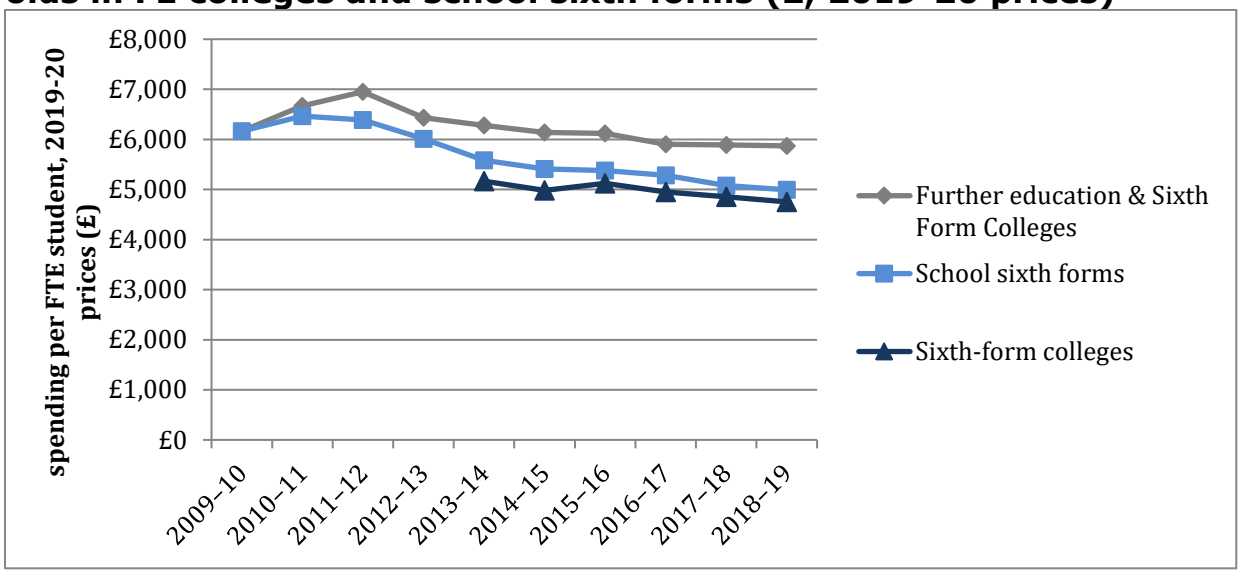
Current Spending: Post-16

For the post-16 phase, the situation remains even less bright. Levels of funding had already been falling pre-2015 while school funding was protected. Total spending on FE and skills for 16 to 18 year olds then fell again between 2014-15 and 2018-19: from £4.26bn to £3.70bn in FE colleges and sixth form colleges, and from £2.47bn to £2.03bn in sixth forms in schools, which corresponds to a proportional fall of 13% and 18%, respectively (Britton et al., 2019).

The result of this was that despite a decline in student numbers in this age group (see Appendix 2)[6], there were per pupil real cuts, particularly sharp for school sixth forms (see Figure 2). IFS analysis suggests that the additional £400m (or £300m in real terms) of funding pledged by the government to 2022/23 in the September 2019 Spending Round, will not be enough to catch up with the growth in number of students. To completely reverse the cuts since 2010/11 would require a further £1.1bn of funding (in real terms, over and above the current plans) with more of it going to school sixth forms (Britton et al., 2019).

[6] IFS attributes the decline in the number of pupils in FE and sixth forms between 2010-11 and 2018-19 to be due to the fall in the size of the population of 15 to 19 in England rather than reduction in participation (Britton et al., 2019)

Figure 2 Per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) student spending on 16-18 year olds in FE colleges and school sixth forms (£, 2019-20 prices)



Source: reproduced by authors using underlying data for figure 4.1 in Britton et al. (2019). Notes: spending on FE and Sixth form colleges was combined for pre-2013-14. So from 2013-14 highest per pupil funding was to FE colleges, followed by school sixth forms, and then sixth form colleges

Spending on apprenticeships (for all ages) had been increasing before 2014-15 and did so again in nominal terms between 2014-15 and 2018-19 (from £1.2 billion to £1.7bn) (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2019). However, as IFS points out, the level of real terms spending on apprenticeship in 2018-19 was still at the level of 2016-17 (Britton et al., 2019). Moreover, spending on apprenticeships for 16 to 18 year olds has not changed in real terms since the 2000s, standing at £800million in 2017–18 (2019–20 prices) (Britton et al., 2019). The shift to the apprenticeship levy has also been problematic, with far too few employers using the funds available to them. In 2017/18, only 9% of the levy-paying employers used the available apprenticeship funding meaning that only £191 million out of almost £2.2 billion was used. According to the National Audit Office this is part of the reason that DfE had an underspend of £400 million on the new apprenticeship programme for that year (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2019). More recently, using a Freedom of Information, the BBC reported that £401m of the money made available to employers for apprenticeships was returned back to the government between May 2019 and December 2019, increasing amounts each month (Rosenbaum, 2020). However, with increasingly larger number of employers choosing higher level of apprenticeships which tend to cost much more, the forecast for 2019-20 in the 'high-spending scenario' could be a £72 million government overspent on the budgeted figures of just under £2.6m (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2019).

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Funding of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has come under serious pressure since the reforms to the system in 2014, and remains so despite an injection of funding during the 2019 Spending Round (Britton et al., 2019; National Audit Office, 2019a). NAO (op.cit) concluded that DfE had not fully

assessed the financial consequences of the reforms and that the system is not financially sustainable.

The largest funding stream for SEND is the 'High Needs block' within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which mainly goes towards pupils with EHC plans in maintained schools and pupils in special schools (National Audit Office, 2019a). This stream of funding increased steadily between 2014-15 and 2019-20, growing by 10.8% in real terms from £5.67 billion to £6.28 billion, with a sharper increase planned between 2019-20 and 2020-21 due to the extra funding announced in the 2019 Spending Round (Roberts et al., 2020). However the increase in the number of pupils with SEND statements / EHC plans between 2014-15 and 2018-19 was 16% (national tables accompanying DfE (2019c)), a faster rate of increase than the High Needs block funding for the period, leading to a per pupil fall in funding. Additionally more such pupils are attending special schools, including independent schools. LAs have been using DSG reserves and transfers from the schools block to address high needs block deficits (National Audit Office, 2019a).

Additionally, all state funded schools receive money towards SEND pupils within the 'schools block' of the DSG – estimated at around £3.8m in 2018-19 (National Audit Office, 2019a). This is intended to be used to cover the first £6,000 of support per pupil with SEND, but is not ringfenced, so cannot be directly attributed. Despite a real-terms increase in total funding, per-pupil funding in the schools block also fell over this period due to rising numbers of pupils with identified needs.

In December 2018, DfE announced an extra £100m of capital funding for SEND provision and in autumn 2019 a £700m revenue funding increase (11%) for 2020/21 for pupils with the most complex needs as well as a review of the SEND system. According to the Local Government Association, this will only go part way to meeting what it estimates as a £1.8bn funding shortfall. Britton et al. (op cit) also estimate that given the growth in need, the extra funding might only be enough to keep spending per pupil constant in real terms. Thus the review will need to address the financial sustainability issues that have beset the post-2014 system.

Capital Spending

Capital spending on education has been broadly stable since 2014/15 at around £5.1bn in each year (Table 1.9 in HM Treasury (2019)) – substantially lower than in 2009-10 when it stood at £8.8bn in 2019-20 prices (Long and Danechi, 2019). Departmental budget data for schools (Table 3) show the same picture of stability over this period, following a big reduction 2009/10 to 2014/15.

Table 3 School spending (capital) 2009-10 to 2018-19, real terms 2018-19 prices (£bn)

	2009/10	2014-15	2018-19
Basic need school grant		1.44	1.23
School Condition allocation grant / School capital improvement grant		1.06	1.87
Building schools for the Future/Priority Schools Building Programme	0.43	0.39	0.52
Partnership for schools	7.09		
Academy capital grants and Free School programme / Free Schools		1.35	0.98
PFI grant			0.004
Life skills, disadvantages and SEND			0.16
Other capital grants	0.10	0.30	
Total capital grants	7.62	4.55	4.77

Source: Authors' calculations using nominal figures: 2009/10 figures are from DfE (2012); 2015-16 figures are from DfE (2016a); 2018/19 figures are from DfE (2019b)

There have however, been some shifts in the nature of spend. Spending fell on 'Basic Needs School Grant', which provides support for increasing pupil spaces by either creating new schools, Free Schools, and Academies or expanding existing ones (down 15% in real terms 2014-15 to 2018-19). It rose both for 'Conditions Allocations Grant' and "Priority Schools Building" – funds for maintenance and repair (up 65% in real terms 2014-15 to 2018-19). This followed a period of falling expenditure on maintaining the existing stock of schools between 2010-11 and 2014-15, while more money was spent on new schools (NAO (2017)).

While we cannot unravel the expenditure on Free Schools from the above figures, other sources suggest that this has been much higher than the government anticipated. Reporting for *Schools Week*, Jess Staufenberg (2018) reveals the figures shared with her by the ex-Department for Education adviser Tom Richmond, which show that the average cost of every Free School which opened between 2010 and 2017 was almost three times the amount which the government originally estimated (£8.6 million instead of £3 million per school). This meant in the period 2010 to 2017 "the government has spent £3.6 billion setting up 422 schools – with a quarter of that money going on "hidden costs" of around £900 million for lawyers, whose true cost has been rolled up into overall capital costs until now" (Staufenberg, 2018). At the same time, there remain concerns about the cost of maintaining existing stock, some 60% of it built before 1976 (National Audit Office, 2017). Using DfE's property data, NAO estimated that it "would cost £6.7 billion to bring all school buildings to satisfactory or better condition […] [and] it would cost a further £7.1 billion to bring parts of school buildings exhibiting minor deterioration from satisfactory to good condition" (2017, p. 29).

4. Inputs and Outputs

School Numbers and Types

The effects of the government's drive to further Academisation is evident in Table 4 and Figure 3, which document a transformation of the school system.

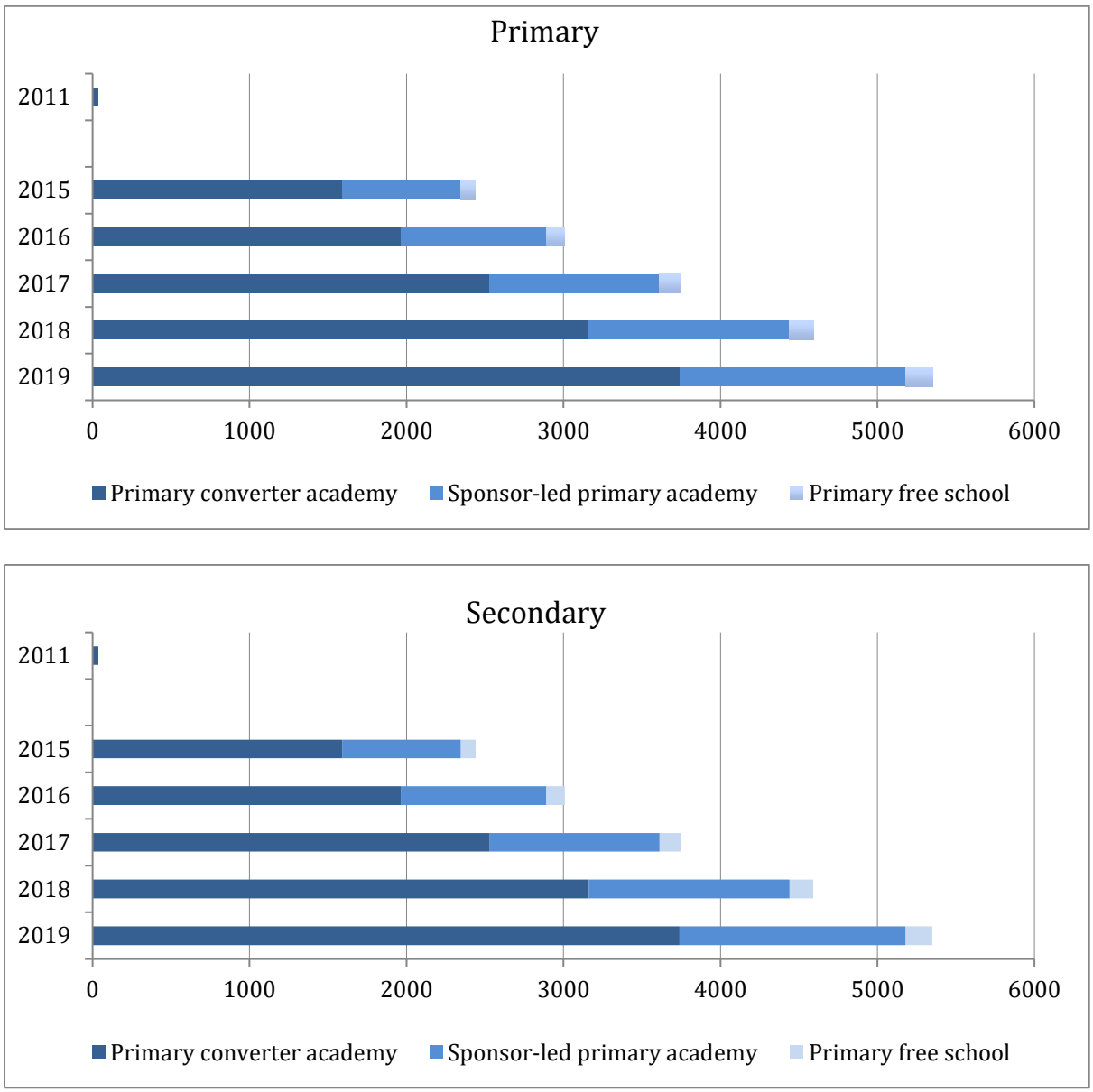
Between 2015 and 2019, the number of mainstream primary Academies more than doubled and the number of mainstream secondary Academies increased by 25%, so that by 2019 Academies formed 32% of all mainstream state funded primary schools and 75% of secondary (Table 4). Both in the primary and secondary phases, 'converter' Academies accounted for the majority of new Academies (Figure 3), but the 2015-2019 period also saw a marked increase in the number of 'sponsor' Academies, in response to the 2016 Act. Within the Academy category, the number of Free Schools also expanded rapidly. In January 2019 there were 367 mainstream Free Schools, up from 212 in January 2015. Together, these changes meant that the total number of secondary schools overall continued its rapid rate of increase while the number of primary schools stabilised (see Appendix 3).

Table 4 Number and percentages of mainstream schools by type, 2010, 2015 and 2019, England

	Community	Voluntary Aided	Voluntary Controlled	Foundation	City Technology Colleges	Academies (incl. Free Schools)
Primary Schools, Numbers						
2010	10,318	3,706	2,516	431	0	0
2015	8,124	3,270	2,233	699	0	2,440
2019	6,274	2,778	1,797	570	0	5,350
Primary Schools, Percentages						
2010	61%	22%	15%	3%	0%	0%
2015	48%	20%	13%	4%	0%	15%
2019	37%	17%	11%	3%	0%	32%
Secondary Schools, Numbers						
2010	1,706	540	102	779	3	203
2015	657	301	43	302	3	2,075
2019	395	241	34	186	3	2,589
Secondary Schools, Percentages						
2010	51%	16%	3%	23%	0%	6%
2015	19%	9%	1%	9%	0%	61%
2019	11%	7%	1%	5%	0%	75%

Sources: DfE SFR 09-2010 (Table 2b), and SFR 16-2015 (Table 2b) and Main Tables, Table 2a and 2b in (Department for Education, 2019d). Data as at January in each year.
Note: Only mainstream schools shown i.e. does not include special and alternative provision schools. Free Schools, UTCs and studio schools included in Academy total.

Figure 3 Growth in number of mainstream Academy schools by type, 2011 and 2015-2019, England



Source: 2011 data taken from Lupton and Thomson (2015). Figures for 2015 to 2019 are from DfE reports on Schools, pupils and their characteristics (2019d, 2018b, 2017d, 2016b, 2015).
Notes: Data as at January in each year.

School Quality

Headline data show a modest improvement in the quality of schools, a key government objective. In 2015, 82% of schools were deemed good or outstanding in their Ofsted inspection, increasing to 86% by 2019 (accompanied by an increase in the number of pupils attending these schools). On the other

hand, the proportion of schools deemed 'inadequate' also increased, from 3% to 4% (Table 5).

Table 5 Number of children attending schools by school's Ofsted grade

	Good/outstanding overall effectiveness		Inadequate overall effectiveness	
	% providers	number of children	% providers	number of children
2015	82	6,153,638	3	298,483
2019	86	6,906,049	4	309,703
change 2015 to 2019	4	752,411	1	11,220
change 2015 to 2019 (%)		12.2%		3.8%

Source: Ofsted dataview
Notes: Data for 31 Aug in each year

There are a number of reasons to be circumspect in drawing implications from this data. First, what counts as quality changes over time, with different Ofsted inspection frameworks. The 2019 inspection framework, with its focus on curriculum quality not on outcomes data, may lead to quite different results. Second, institutions learn to perform to the perceived requirements of the inspectorate, in ways which may sometimes produce lower real quality of teaching and learning, while getting them through inspection hoops (see later sections). Third, data for some schools is very old. The changes to Ofsted inspection introduced in 2012 meant that some previously good/outstanding schools escaped being inspected for a decade or more (Andrews, 2018). A continual increase in the proportion of outstanding institutions is an almost inevitable by-product of a system in which outstanding performers keep their grade, while others are re-inspected.

There is little evidence that the new schools introduced into the system have contributed significantly to its quality, nor have the potential to do so as they expand their system share. Mainstream Free Schools were rated similarly to schools in general. 85% were good or outstanding in 2019 compared with 86% for all schools, although more were outstanding (32% compared with 20%). University Technical Colleges had particularly low quality ratings. 1 in 5 were rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted – twice the national average – and 2 in 5 were deemed to require improvement. UTCs have also suffered from high drop-out rates and low progress and success rates (Robinson and Dominguez Reig, 2018), and many have struggled to survive. Of 58 UTCs opening since 2011 (mostly between 2013 and 2017), ten had closed by 2019, and the remainder were

operating at around 45% capacity on average, with one-third facing financial uncertainties (National Audit Office, 2019b).

Quality of Further Education Institutions and Skills Providers

2019 data shows that 14% of FE institutions and skills providers were judged as outstanding and 67% as good at their latest Ofsted inspection. These figures remained broadly unchanged since 2015, when they were 13% and 68% respectively. At the other end of the scale, 3% per cent of FE insitutions were judged as inadequate in 2015 and 4% in 2019.

The picture is more nuanced when looked at by type of institution and number of students. Most types of providers improved their effectiveness ratings between 2016[7] and 2019, including colleges (attended by more than half of all 16-19 year olds in FE in 2017/18 (Foster, 2020)) and community learning and skills providers. Ratings for independent learning providers declined (82% of them were judged as good/outstanding in 2016 compared to 75% in 2019), but these institutions are typically smaller. Combined, these changes meant that a larger proportion of students were attending better rated institutions in 2019 than 2016 (Table 6).

Table 6 Number and proportion of learners attending FE institutions by overall effectiveness outcome at the their most recent inspection, 2016 and 2019

	Good/outstanding overall effectiveness			**Inadequate overall effectiveness**		
	% providers	number of learners	% of learners	% providers	number of learners	% of learners
2016	81.0%	2,672,976	79.1%	2.7%	107,030	3.2%
2019	80.9%	1,467,078	82.4%	3.8%	55,357	3.1%
change 2016 to 2019	0.07 ppts	-1,205,898	3.4 ppts	1.1 ppts	-51,673	-0.1 ppts

Source: Ofsted dataview
Notes: Figures are as at 31 August each year.

Equity in Access and Provision

Although the desire to equalise opportunity was strongly articulated in policy statements, there is no evidence that the actions taken in this period served to reduce socio-economic disparities in access to good schools.

One way of looking at this is to examine the evenness of the distribution of good schools by area and type. As Table 7 shows, in this period the least deprived areas saw a slightly greater increase in the proportion of the children attending

[7] The categorisation of the type of providers differed in 2015 data so comparison here is between 2016 and 2019.

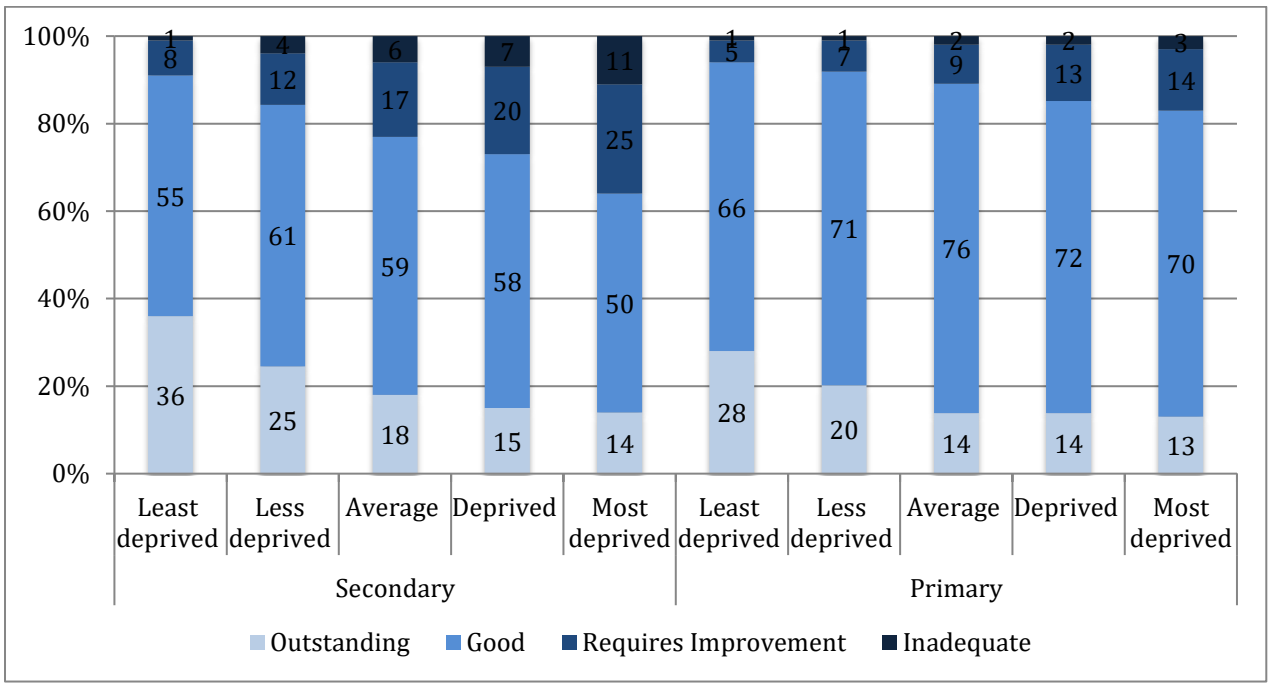
good/outstanding schools than the most deprived, partly a consequence of allowing good or outstanding schools (which are more common in less deprived areas) to expand. A pronounced socio-economic gradient in the spatial distribution of good or outstanding schools remained in August 2019 (Figure 4), and early evidence suggests that this picture is not looking particularly different under the new inspection framework (Roberts, 2019). Regional differences also persisted, with London remaining the highest performer in terms of Ofsted ratings (94% of its state-funded schools judged as good or outstanding compared to the worst performer – Yorkshire and the Humber – 81%). The proportion of outstanding schools in London was markedly higher at 31% than in any other region (21%). The East Midlands had the lowest proportion of outstanding schools (15%).

Table 7 Schools/pupils by Ofsted overall effectiveness grade and deprivation

	Good/outstanding		Inadequate	
	% providers	number of children	% providers	number of children
Schools in most deprived areas				
2015	78	1,310,610	3	73,902
2019	81	1,362,999	4	80,211
change 2015 to 2019	3	52,389	1	6,309
change 2015 to 2019 (% increase in number of children)		4.0%		8.5%
Schools in least deprived areas				
2015	91	1,235,772	1	6,444
2019	94	1,341,369	1	11,594
change 2015 to 2019	3	105,597	0	5,150
change 2015 to 2019 (% increase in number of children)		8.5%		79.9%

Source: Ofsted dataview
Notes: Data for 31 August in each year

Figure 4 Overall effectiveness grade of schools by level of deprivation, 31 August 2019



Source: Ofsted Dataview

Particular quality concerns also remained in relation to alternative provision (AP). Overall in August 2019, 85% of Pupil Referral Units were rated good or outstanding, but these numbers were a lot lower for AP Academies (34%) and somewhat lower for AP Free Schools (75%). The House of Commons Education Committee in 2018 found that there were 11 local authorities that had no good places in AP, and four where all Pupil Referral Units were 'inadequate' – a very worrying situation for those young people most likely to need the highest quality provision (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018b).

Another approach is to look at the intakes of different kinds of schools, and thus how expanding different parts of the system promotes more or less access for disadvantaged young people. Selective and faith schools typically have more advantaged intakes than the areas they serve so it might be expected that allowing them to expand would exacerbate social divisions in access to schools, unless admissions policies were altered at the same time – an intention of the government's scheme. It is too early yet to assess actual impacts. Prior evidence (Gorard, 2014; Thomson and Lupton, 2017) suggests that Academisation has neither increased nor reduced socio-economic segregation overall. 'Sponsor Academies' tend to serve disadvantaged populations, while 'converter Academies' have more advantaged intakes (Appendix 4) and make up about two-thirds of the academically top performing comprehensive schools which take very few disadvantaged students (van den Brande et al., 2019). Recent evidence on Free Schools, meanwhile, is mixed. Overall, Free primaries tend not to have as many pupils eligible for Free School Meals as would be expected given the areas they serve, although when they are in less disadvantaged areas, their pupil intake

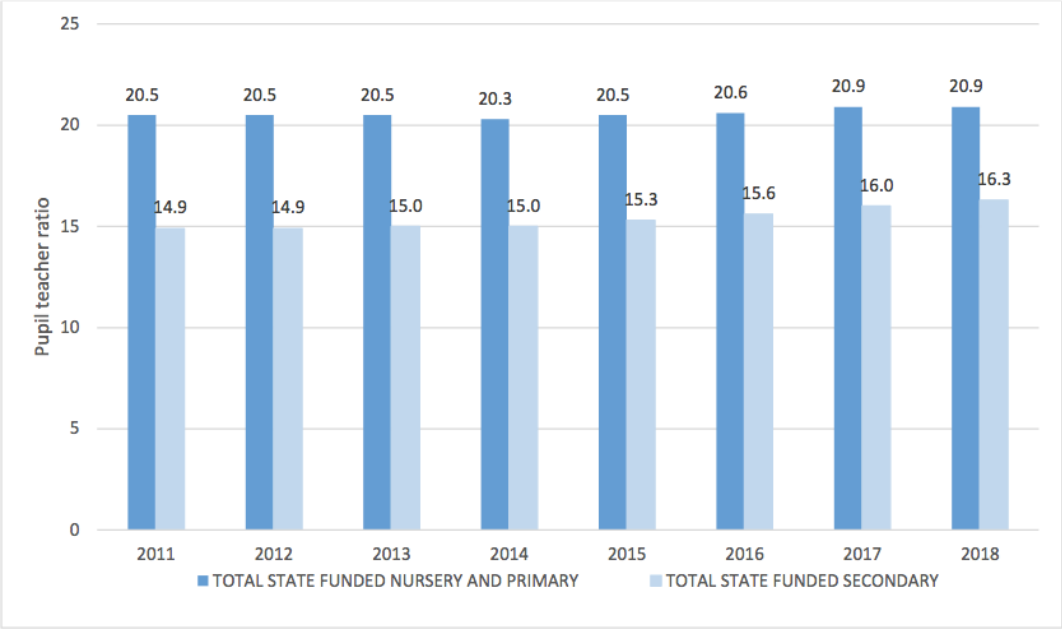
tends to be slightly more disadvantaged than average. Secondary Free Schools, on the other hand, tend to be broadly representative or slightly over-representative of disadvantaged pupils in the communities they serve, except when they are established in the most economically deprived areas (Mills et al., 2019).

The School Workforce

Despite the various initiatives to improve teacher recruitment and retention up to 2019, the situation in the period since 2015 period deteriorated slightly, with increasing concerns about the future.

One problem was that enrolments on initial teacher training courses continued, as it had done since 2011, to fall below the targets set by DfE based on its teacher supply model which takes into account pupil numbers and other factors. At the same time, the number of teachers leaving the profession after training continued to rise. Between 2015 and 2017 around 3,000 more teachers were leaving the profession than were joining it, although the trend reversed in 2018 (Appendix 5). The result of this was a slight fall in teacher numbers (Appendix 5), and a bigger rise in pupil-teacher ratios (Figure 5), since pupil numbers were rising at the same time as recruitment and retention pressures were increasing. The number of teacher vacancies also rose (Foster, 2019).

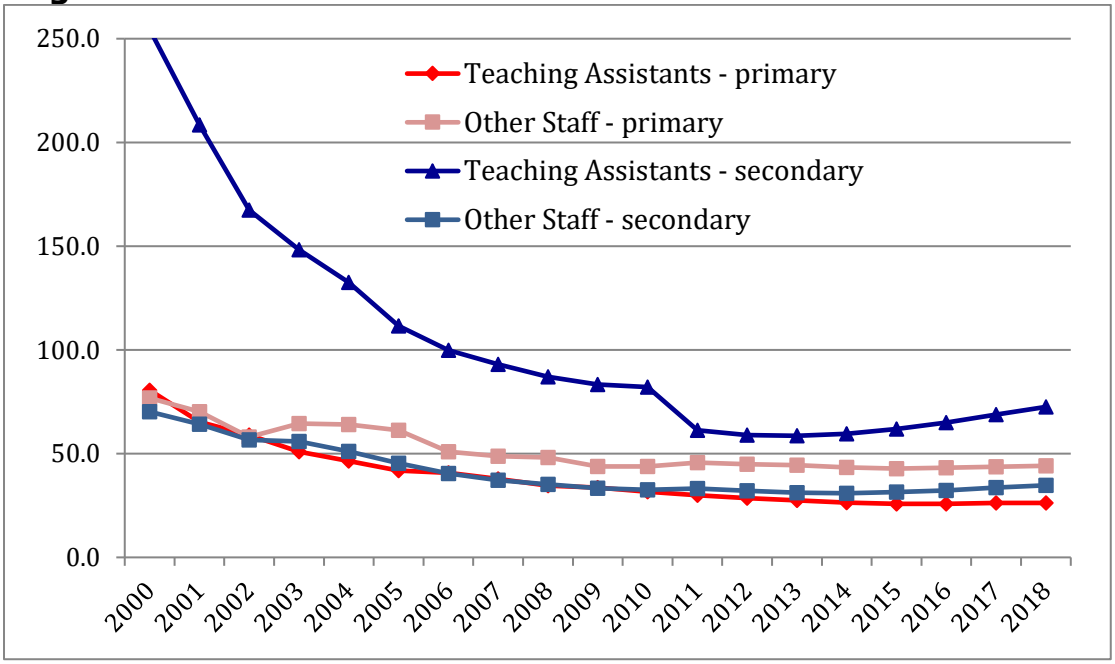
Figure 5 Pupil-teacher ratios, 2011 to 2018, England



Source: Chart 3 in (Department for Education, 2019e)

While the number of teaching assistants remained stable in primary schools, it fell in secondary schools (see Appendix 5), with the result that pupil to teaching assistant ratios started to rise in secondary schools after a long period of decline (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Pupil-teaching assistants and pupil-staff ratios, 2000 to 2018, England



Source: Authors reproduced figure 3.5b in (Britton et al., 2019) using underlying data in spread sheets

Note: Other staff includes teaching assistants, and other staff (including administrative, caretaking and pastoral staff).

Evidence of the effect of the DfE's Workload Challenge is mixed (Zuccollo, 2019). The government's own Teacher Workload Survey (TWS) found that secondary teachers' average term-time working hours fell from 53.5 each week in 2016 to 49.1 in 2019. Primary teachers' hours were found to have fallen even further, from 55.5 hours per week to 50 hours. Reductions in time spent were chiefly on lesson planning and marking, two of the key issues targeted by the DfE's workload measures. However, the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) showed an increase in teachers' working hours between 2013 and 2016. TALIS only covers lower secondary teachers, but it has a better response rate than the TWS. Both surveys indicate a continuing issue with teacher workload: high by international standards and a problem for teachers. Nearly 90% of secondary teachers in TWS reported that workload was a problem in their schools.

Participation in Education and Training

As a final set of indicators of what happened to the education system in this period we look at participation. Participation might equally be seen as an 'outcome' of education but we include it here as an indicator of the adequacy of the system and of its quality. Have the measures put in place to provide education and training for all young people up to the age of 18 ensured that they are all participating?

One indicator of participation is persistent absence from school, a problem which had been steadily declining since the middle of the 2000s until 2013/14, when it began to rise slightly. Looked at over the whole period of the Conservative government, this indicator was broadly stable, at 10.9% of enrolments in 2018/19, compared with 11.0% in 2014/15. The real trend is hard to determine, since both the threshold and method of calculation changed in 2015/16. A single year fall in that year (using comparable headline data) was followed by a subsequent rise, all accounted for by secondary and special schools and particularly for children eligible for Free School Meals, with SEND statements/EHC plans, Black Caribbean pupils and those living in the North East (Department for Education, 2017e, 2020a). These data give some cause for concern about marginalisation of particular groups of young people. However the recent change in methodology and a slight downturn again in 2018/19 makes it unclear whether any significant change has occurred.

Exclusions from school similarly had been on a steady downward trend in England till 2013/14, but rose thereafter. In state-funded secondary schools, the rate of fixed period exclusion rose from 6.6% of the school population in 2013/14 to 10.1% in 2017/18. Permanent exclusions rose from 0.06% of the school population to 0.1% in the same period. In primary schools, fixed period exclusions also rose, from 1% to around 1.4%. Exclusions continued to be experienced much more by some pupils than others, particularly pupils with special education needs (6 times as likely to be permanently excluded as the school population as a whole), those eligible for FSM (4 times) and Black Caribbean pupils (nearly three times as likely) (see Appendix 6) (Department for Education, 2019f). As we show in Appendix 6, the increase in exclusions has been disproportionately experienced by pupils eligible for FSM.

One reason for increasing exclusions could be worsening behaviour. Contrary to the government's claim that behaviour in schools had improved, evidence from the NASUWT annual teacher survey shows a steady rise in the proportion of teachers believing there is a widespread behaviour problem in their schools - from 37% in 2014 to 56% in 2019 (NASUWT, 2019). However, the Education Committee (2018b) was more persuaded that the problem is to do with school practice. It described the rate of exclusions as 'a scandal', and located at least part of the problem with the pressures on schools to raise standards.

The Committee particularly pointed to what it described as "lack of moral accountability" (p14) in the practice of 'off-rolling' – i.e excluding, or engineering a voluntary move, for students whose predicted academic performance in external examinations would not make a positive contribution to the school's league table performance. Increasing numbers of 'managed moves' and 'off-rollments' were also reported by the Education Datalab (Nye, 2017) and Ofsted (Ofsted, 2019), and by Hutchinson and Crenna-Jennings (2019), who looked at 'unexplained pupil exits'. The latter found that such moves (not initiated by parents) were concentrated in particular local authorities, MATs and schools. They also particularly affected vulnerable pupils, including those who had also been

excluded, looked-after pupils, those with mental health needs and/or special educational needs, as well pupils ever eligible for Free School Meals and those from black ethnic backgrounds. In a survey of teachers commissioned by Ofsted (Rowe et al., 2019), 24% had experienced off-rolling in their school and 66% of those said that the problem was increasing. Ofsted's revised inspection framework now requires inspectors to investigate off-rolling, with any school found to be doing it likely to be judged inadequate for leadership and management. In early 2018, the government responded to concerns about exclusions by commissioning a review led by Edward Timpson CBE (Timpson and Department for Education, 2019). Published in May 2019, this noted that 94% of state-funded primary schools and 43% of secondaries issued no permanent exclusions in 2016/17 but 0.2% of schools (all secondaries) issued more than ten. The review made multiple recommendations about training, guidance and practice, and also about making schools responsible for the educational outcomes of children they exclude and about stronger local monitoring, all of which were accepted in principle by the government.

The broader problem of exclusion and marginalisation in schooling was also raised by the Children's Commissioner in her report on home educated children (Children's Commissioner, 2019a), in which she noted that the number of home-educated children had doubled since 2013/14. While for some parents this was a choice, the report found that the growth in home education is related to the rise in children leaving school due to their needs being unmet. Over one-fifth of children withdrawn from school to be home-educated in the 2017-18 academic year had special educational needs. The report noted the difficulty that some children and young people have with harsh disciplinary regimes and highlighted how children were being let down by *"an unforgiving school system which appears to have lost the kindness, the skill or the patience to keep them"* (Children's Commissioner, 2019a, p. 2)*,* as well as the effects of cuts to support staff*.*

Broader difficulties for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities also appeared to increase as the new SEND system was implemented. The reforms had aimed to ensure earlier identification of need, greater involvement of families in decisions, and better integration of services. However, a series of reports in 2019 agreed that there were serious problems not only with under-funding but with implementation. There were long waiting lists for assessment, serious gaps in therapy provision, and too few high needs places (Children's Commissioner, 2019a; National Audit Office, 2019a; House of Commons Education Committee, 2019; Roberts et al., 2020). The interest group Special Needs Jungle reported that more than 8,000 pupils with special needs were without a school place, and the number of cases going to tribunal more than trebled in this period (Roberts et al., 2020). Additionally the proportion of children identified as having SEND fell sharply from 17.9% in 2014 to 14.9% in 2019, a fall wholly accounted for by a drop in the number with identified needs but no statement/EHC plan. This fall was greater (five percentage points) in secondary Academies, prompting claims that mainstream schools were becoming less inclusive and less likely to provide the support that children need. The House of

Commons Education Committee (2019) concluded that the 2014 reforms had *"resulted in confusion and sometimes unlawful practice, bureaucratic nightmares, buck-passing and a lack of accountability, strained resources and adversarial experiences, and ultimately dashed the hopes of many".*

The Raising of the Participation Age legislation means that from the summer of 2015, all young people should now be participating in education and training (including employment with training) until the age of 18. In 2014/15 there was a small increase in the proportion of young people recorded in a sustained education or employment destination[8] after the end of Key Stage 4, from 92 to 94% (continuing an upward trend). Since then, there has been no change with around six per cent of young people still recorded as not being in a sustained destination or not recorded in the data (Table 8).

Table 8 Destinations of students after Key Stage 4: 2010/11 to 2017/18

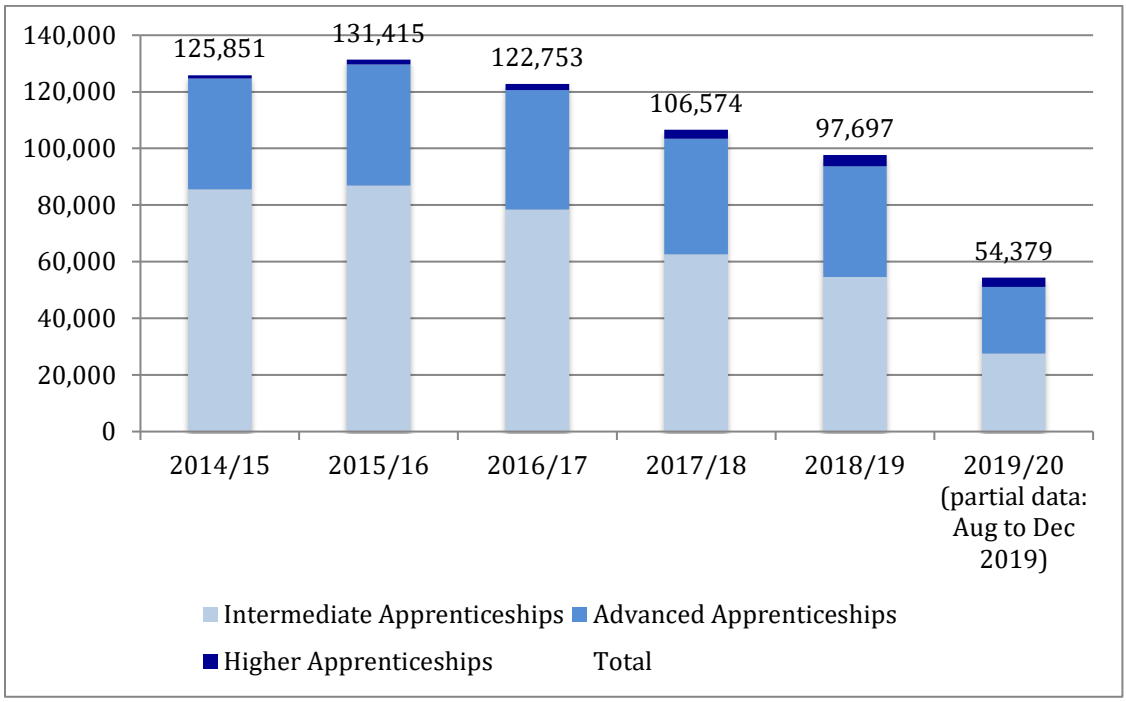
	2010 /11	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18
Any sustained education/employment	89	89	91	92	94	94	94	94
Any sustained education destination	82	83	85	87	87	87	86	86
Sustained apprenticeships	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4
Sustained employment destination	3	2	2	1	3	3	3	3
Not recorded as a sustained destination	9	9	8	6	5	5	5	5
No activity captured in data	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1

Source: Table NA10_(Time_series) accompanying DfE (2019g). Notes: Figures for employment prior 2014/15 are not directly comparable to those in 2014/15 onwards. Information on self-employment from HMRC has been inluded in the figures from 2015/16 onwards, accounting for a slight increase in employment destinations in 2015/16 (less than 0.5 percentage).

Following the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in 2017, there was a big decline in the number of apprenticeship starts overall. In 2014/15 there were 494,200 apprenticeships starts for all ages in England, falling to 389,600 in 2018/19 – a fall of more than a fifth. Partial data for 2019/20 suggest an even bigger fall, being 32% down on the same period in 2014 (see Figure 7). For under 19s, the total numbers across all levels (intermediate, advanced and higher) fell by 22% from 125,851 in 2014/15 to 97,697 in 2018/19.

[8] This means attending for all of the first two terms of the academic year (October 2017 – March 2018) at one or more education providers; spending 5 of the 6 months in employment or a combination of the two. Specific destinations such as school sixth forms, higher education institutions or apprenticeships are reported for these students. A sustained apprenticeship is recorded when 6 months continuous participation is recorded at any point in the destination year" (Department for Education, 2019g, p. 5).

Figure 7 Apprenticeship starts by level of apprenticeship, England, under 19



Source: Apprenticeship starts DfE (2020b)
Notes: Data is not yet complete for 2019/20 and represents apprenticeship starts between August and December 2019.

The Social Mobility Commission (2020) reports that the fall in the number of starts was greater for learners living in the most deprived fifth of neighbourhoods. For males aged under 19, the number of starts for such 'disadvantaged learners' fell by 24.5% between 2015/16 and 2017/18, compared with 16% for other learners. For women under 19 the falls were slightly greater but the disadvantage gap was slightly smaller (down 24.9% for disadvantaged learners and 18.9% for others)

Powell and Foley (2020) list some of the most common reasons given by various commentators for this fall. These include: the complexity and inflexibility of the levy; the requirement of the 20% off-the-job training commitment for apprentices (which meant that extra help was required to undertake the apprentices' duties while they were training); lack of suitable apprentices and lack of available training. Smaller (non-levy paying) employers have still had to pay 10% of the apprenticeship training and assessment costs, making the cost of the apprenticeships to some of these smaller companies too high. For some young people, the interaction with the benefits system is also a disincentive, since apprenticeships are classed as employment and therefore can result in loss of household benefits when a young person takes one up rather than staying in education post-16 (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018a).

5. Outcomes

Attainment at Primary and Secondary School

The various changes to curriculum and assessment in this period mean that changes in levels of attainment are hard to interpret, not just because each year's exam results reflect a different combination of reformed and unreformed subjects, and different degrees of adjustment by teachers, but because the meaning of the results is contestable. Harder examinations make it more difficult for students to achieve, but on the other hand it might be argued that their achievements are more valuable.

One assessment that did not change was the Year 1 Phonics check introduced in 2012. The 2019 Conservative manifesto claimed that *"One of the Conservative Party's proudest achievements is that we have raised standards in our schools"* supported by the evidence that *"in the last nine years, the percentage of children passing their primary reading check has gone up from 58 per cent to 82 per cent".* In fact, the check is not a reading check, but a test of phonic decoding including the ability to decode 'pseudo-words'. It is intended as a diagnostic to ensure that children are not behind with these skills, not as a summative assessment of educational attainment or 'standards'. However, since it is central to claims of success, we report on it here. The figures cited are correct, but the bulk of the improvement came before 2015, as teachers got used to the new check and how to prepare children for it. Between 2015 and 2019, the period under study here, success in the check increased by five percentage points from 77 to 82 per cent. The first year (2015 to 2016), accounted for four percentage points, so between 2016 and 2019 the level of success was essentially stable. Possibly it has reached or nearly reached a ceiling. One third of children who did not reach the expected standard in the check in 2019 were summer born, nearly two-fifths had special educational needs and one fifth spoke English as an additional language, all factors that would make it more difficult to succeed at that stage.[9]

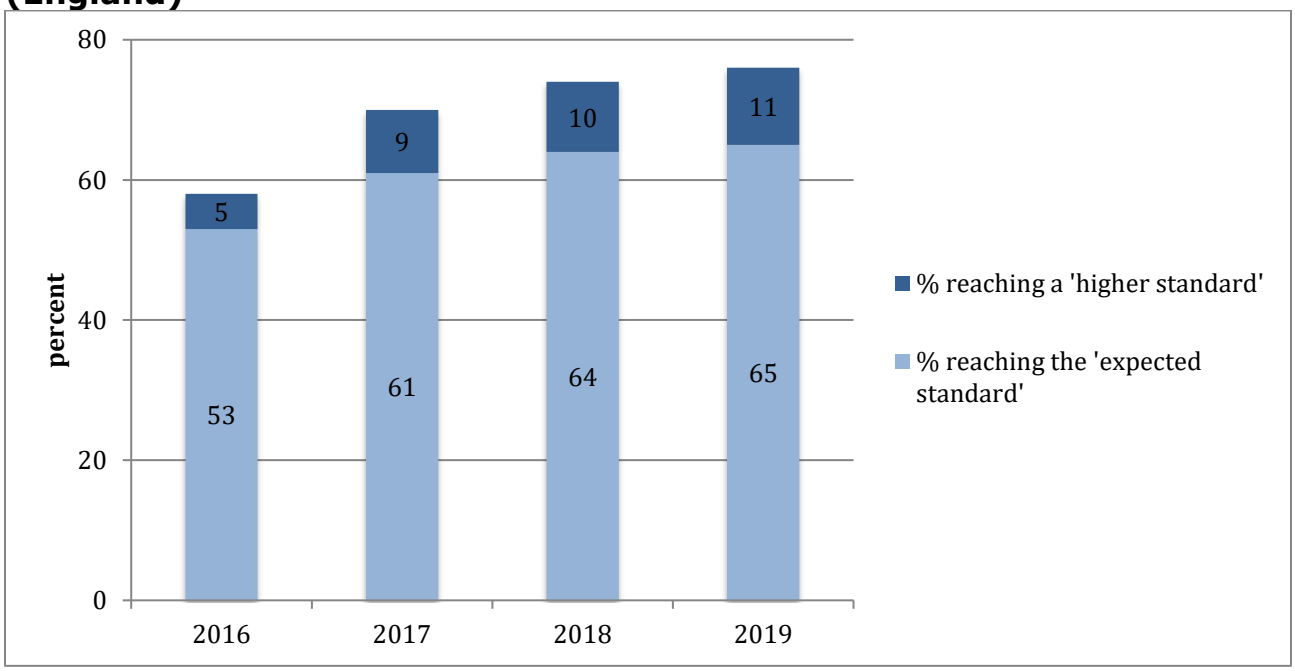
Children's attainment at the end of KS2 (age 11) is measured by how well they do in their SATs tests in reading, maths and grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS), as well as taking teachers' assessments of their writing into account. In order to be considered having reached "the expected standard" in all three subjects, they now need to achieve a scaled score of 100 or more in reading and maths tests and be assessed by the teacher to be 'reaching the expected standard' or 'working at greater depth' in writing. The first attainment figures based on the new curriculum and scores are for the academic year 2015/16 (SATs in 2016), making earlier years' figures not comparable to those from 2016 onwards. Here, therefore, we compare changes in attainment at KS2, where possible, between 2016 and 2019.

[9] Some of these children will have more than one of the characteristics listed

The latest figures (Figure 8) show that in 2019, 76% of pupils achieved at least the expected standard in all three subjects at the end of KS2 - 65% at the expected standard and 11% at the higher standard (those who achieved a high score in reading and maths and who were 'working at greater depth' in writing).

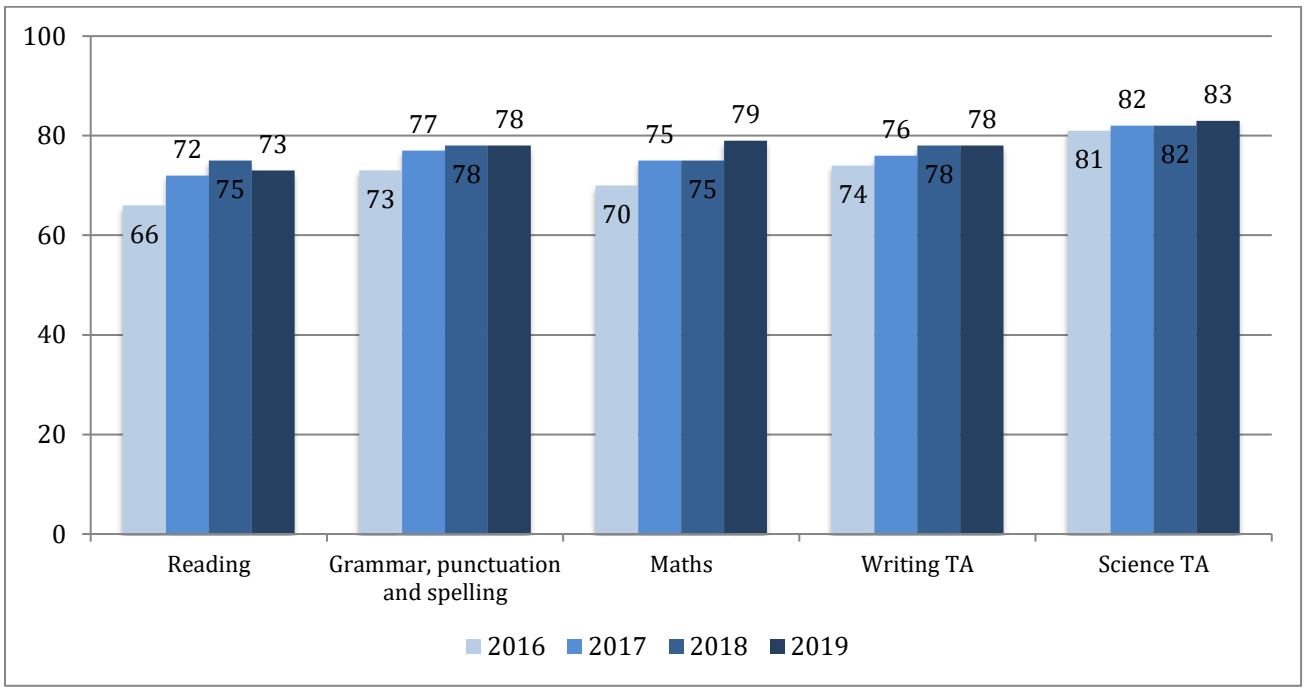
Changes to teacher assessment frameworks for writing in 2018 mean that these overall data are not completely comparable over time. However, attainment in the individual subjects which can be compared on a consistent basis (reading, maths and grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS)), show improvement since 2016 (Figure 9). Most of this was between 2016 and 2017. However, there was substantial improvement in maths in the last year whereby the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard increased from 75% to 79%. At the same time there was a decline in Reading (from 75% to 73%).

Figure 8 Percentage of children reaching the expected standard and percentage reaching a higher standard at the end of KS2, 2016 to 2019 (England)



Source: chart produced by authors using underlying data for DfE (2019h). Changes to writing TA frameworks in 2018 meant that figures for 2018 and 2019 are not strictly comparable to earlier years.

Figure 9 Percentage of children achieving the expected standard in each subject at the end of KS2, 2016 to 2019 (all schools, England)



Source: chart produced by authors using underlying data for DfE (2019h). Changes to writing TA frameworks in 2018 meant that figures for 'Writing TA' and 'Science TA' for 2018 and 2019 are not strictly comparable to earlier years.

Trends in attainment at KS4 (GCSE and equivalent) are even more difficult to assess over time, with multiple changes to headline measures as well as to the underlying curriculum and assessment methods. For most measures, it is now only possible to look at trends from 2016 or even 2017 (Department for Education, 2020c). Table 9 summarises the changes on each of the current headline measures. Overall it shows very small increases in the proportion reaching these threshold measures, with the exception of the percentage of pupils achieving the Ebacc combination at grades 5 and above (2016/17 to 2018/19) and Progress 8 in the last year.

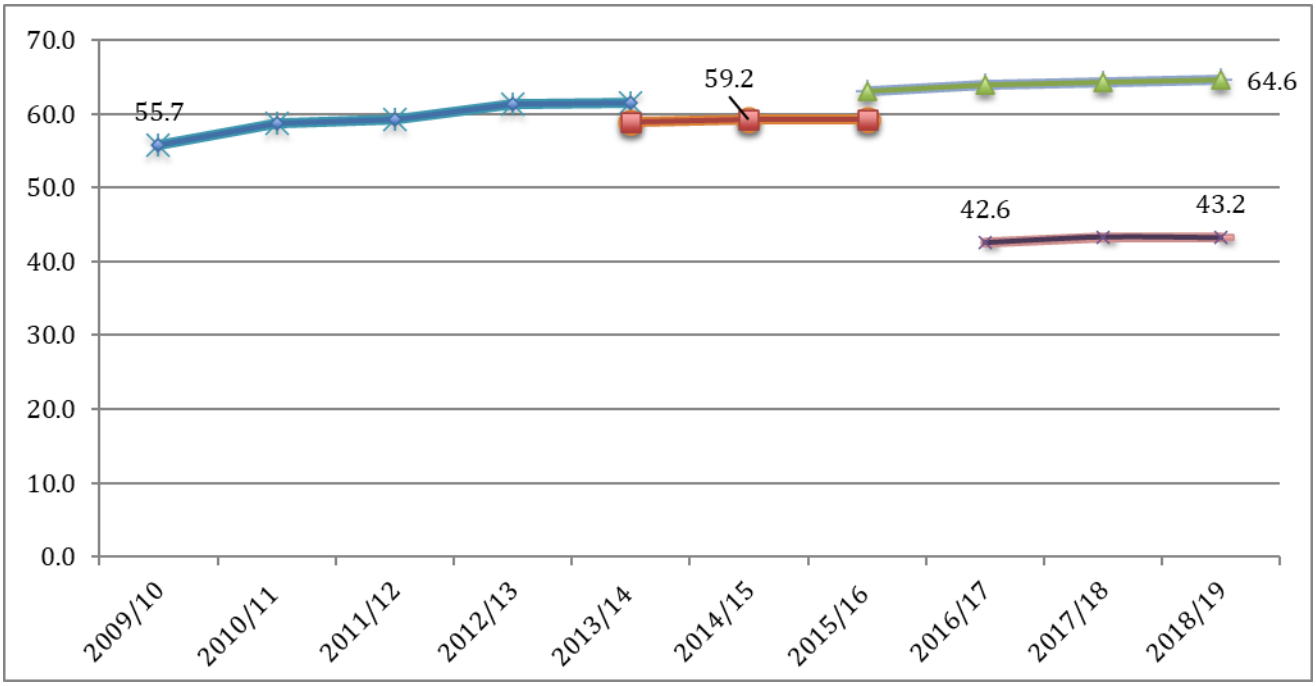
Table 9 Summary of GCSE and equivalent entries and achievements of pupils at the end of key stage 4 (state-funded schools including Academies and CTCs, England)

	2014/15 to 2015/16	2016/17 to 2018/19	2017/18 to 2018/19	2014/15 to 2018/19
DfE headline accountability measures in 2019				
Average Attainment 8 score per pupil	48.4 to 49.9	46.3 to 46.7		
Average Progress 8			-0.03	
% English and maths, grade 5+:		42.6% to 43.2%		
% EBacc entry		38.2% to 40.0%		38.7% to 40.0%
EBacc average point score			4.04 to 4.07	
Other attainment measures				
Percentage of pupils achieving grade 4/C or above in English and maths GCSEs		63.9% to 64.6%		
Percentage of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate at grade 4/C or above		23.8% to 24.9%		
Percentage of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate at grades 5 and above		21.3% to 17.1%		

Source: Authors' summary of figures in Table "Characteristics summary" in the National Characteristics tables accompanying DfE (2020c) report
Notes: see details and notes in the original source.

Figure 10 shows a longer times series back to 2009/10 on the headline measure of the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C (or grades 9-4) in English and Maths. Breaks in the line mark changes in counting rules (see notes). As shown, attainment on this measure continued to increase gradually by around half a percentage point each year. In 2016/17 the headline measure was changed to the percentage achieving grades 9-5 – a higher standard. As shown, this also increased slightly from 2016/17 to 2018/19.

Figure 10 Percentage of pupils achieving threshold in English and mathematics GCSEs – state-funded schools (England)



Source: Data from underlying spreadsheets accompanying DfE (2020c) report on KS4 attainment.
Notes:
1.The green (triangular marker) line from 2015/16 onwards represents percentage of pupils achieving grade 9-4 in English and Maths while the line from 2016/17 represents grades 9-5.
2.The drop in 2013/14 reflects two major reforms: a) the change to the counting of vocational equivalent qualifications which restricted the qualifications counted; prevented any qualification from counting as larger than one GCSE; and capped the number of non-GCSEs included in performance measures at two per pupil, and b) an early entry policy to only count a pupil's first attempt at a qualification, in subjects counted in the English Baccalaureate. From 2014/15 onwards, early entry policy was expanded to all subjects in performance tables.
3.In 2015/16, the rules were changed so it was possible to achieve A*-C in English and maths with a C in either English language or literature and no requirement to take both.

The results of the OECD's 2018 PISA tests in late 2019 provided another opportunity to assess progress. These tests have the advantage of being independent from national systems, curricula and assessment requirements and are designed to test student's understanding and how they can apply it in different situations, rather than what they have learned for a particular exam. However, the different numbers of countries participating each time, differences in sampling, and the varying focus of the tests each time makes them hard to interpret. The tests are of 15 year-olds, so in 2018 would include students in England who had studied the new GCSE curricula but who would have completed primary school before the changes at KS2.[10]

[10] The extent to which the 2018 PISA results can be taken as a reflection on outcome of the Conservative period in office is contested. In 2015, the government suggested that the UK's ranking in the international PISA tests taken by 15-year-olds will be one way to evaluate the progress made in the examination reforms over the conservative period in government (Scott, 2015). But Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary of the National Education Union, asserted

The results showed improvement in England's relative ranking in maths, reading and science since 2015, but it was only in maths that the improvement in the ranking was also accompanied by a significant[11] increase in the average score (OECD, 2019b, 2016). For reading and science, the improvement in ranking was accounted for by a decline in the OECD average and performance of some other countries. Pupils in England on average significantly outperformed their counterparts across the average of OECD countries (Sizmur et al., 2019). They also did better than their counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in both maths and science. In reading, children in England on average performed significantly better than those in Wales, but so did children in Scotland and Northern Ireland (Sizmur et al., 2019). Appendix 7 looks more closely at the direction of travel in the different UK jurisdictions.

In understanding the impact of the curriculum and assessment reforms since 2010, it is also important to remember what is no longer reflected in the data reported. In moving to measures of attainment heavily dominated by English, maths and a small number of other academic subjects, the government no long recognises to the same extent the achievements of young people across a wider curriculum span, and of course there is less incentive for schools and students to take this broader focus. We look further at this issue in the following sections.

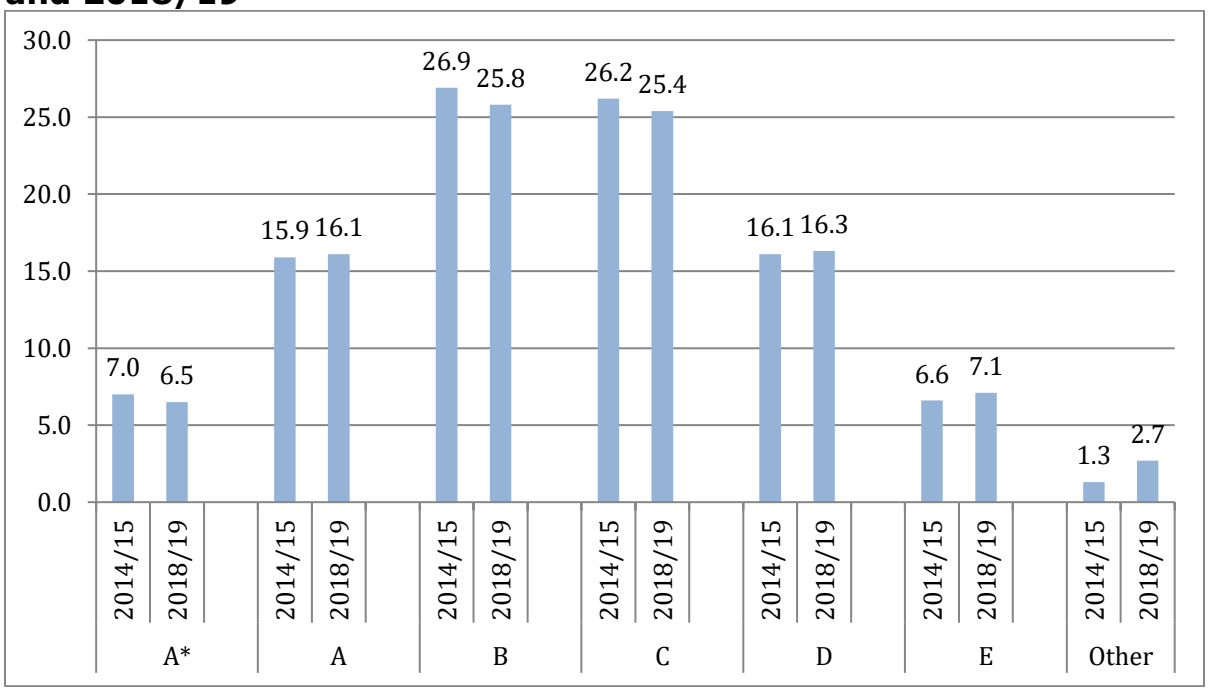
Post-16 Attainment and Destinations

In the post-16 phase, a majority of students are working towards Level 3 qualifications ('A' levels and equivalent). In these period, there was little change in attainment levels for these students. The proportion achieving Level 3 qualifications by 19 was stable (60.0% in 2014, 60.2% in 2018), having risen steadily since 2004. For those taking 'A' levels, there was a small and steady year on year increase in average point scores per entry between 2015/16 and 2018/19 from just under 32 to just over 34 (see Figure 2 in DfE (2020d)). On the other hand, a smaller proportion of pupils across state-funded schools and FE colleges (but particularly at state-funded schools) are passing at higher grades. Across all state-funded schools and colleges, the proportion achieving A* in 'A' Levels fell from 7.0% to 6.5%, and for grades B and above from 49.8% to 48.4%, and C and above from 76.0% to 73.8% (see Figure 11).

that "The findings from Pisa 2018 … reflect an education system before the market reforms introduced by former Education Secretary Michael Gove and pursued by subsequent Secretaries of State. We will have to wait for the next round of Pisa tests taken in 2021…, before a verdict can be given on the Conservative's management of the English education system" (National Education Union, 2019).

[11] Where the difference between two mean scores is referred to as being significant in the PISA results description, it indicates that the compared means are significantly different at the 5% level

Figure 11 'A' Level results of all students aged 16-18 in state funded schools and colleges, per cent achieving each grade (England), 2014/15 and 2018/19



Source: 2018/19 figures are from Table 2c in the National Tables accompanying DfE (2020d) report and 2014/15 from Table 9 in the National Tables accompanying DfE (2016c) report.

A key issue of concern for many years has been the lack of progress made in the post-16 phase by those with lower GCSE attainment – those who are not yet moving on to Level 3 qualifications. The so-called 'Wolf Reforms', coming into effect from summer 2014, attempted to address this by obliging most young people who had not achieved a 'C' grade in maths and English GCSEs to resit these. One positive trend has been an increase in success rates in GCSE resits. Table 10 shows that for students who had not achieved a C/4 grade or above by the end of Key Stage 4, the measure of overall progress in the 16-18 phase increased steadily in this period as did the proportion reaching the C/4 threshold although this remained low (especially for maths).

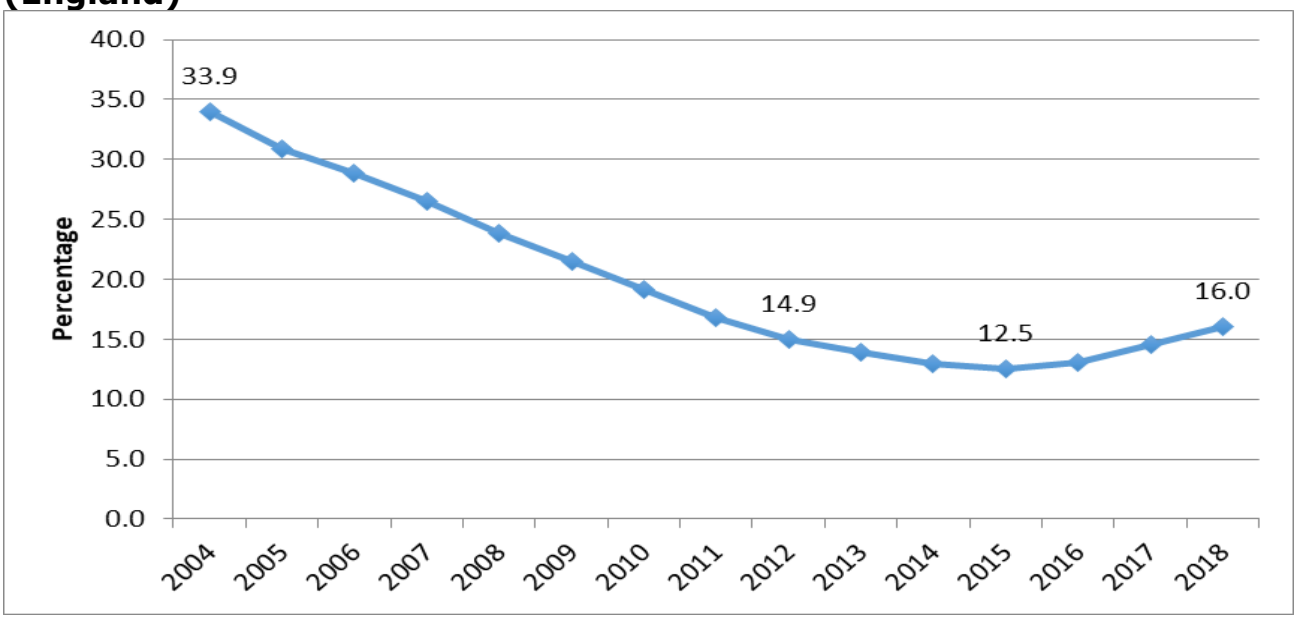
However, the broader picture at the lower end of the attainment scale looks less good. For the first time in over a decade the proportion of 19 year olds not having reached Level 2 began to rise. Level 2 attainment is the achievement of 5 GCSEs of grade A*-C (9 to 4) or equivalent and thus captures the achievements of young people who have passed at higher grades across a range of subjects, not necessarily including English and maths. In 2004, 33.9% of young people had no such qualifications by the age of 19. In 2012 it was 14.9%: in 2015 12.5% and rising to 16.0% by 2018 (Figure 12).

Table 10 English and maths progress in 16-18 phase for those who did not achieve at least GCSE grade 4 or equivalent at the end of KS4

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
English	Average progress	-0.18	-.10	-.02	.06	.13
	Percentage achieving grade 4 or above	13.2	17.0	21.5	23.5	23.0
Maths	Average progress	-0.23	-.13	0	.05	.08
	Percentage achieving grade 4 or above	7.1	12.1	17.5	18.7	18.2

Source: 2017 to 2019 figures are from DfE (2020d), 2016 are from DfE (2018c), 2015 data is from DfE (2017f).
Notes: 1) The progress measure uses a point score system (0-8) to assign points to both a student's prior attainment at key stage 4 and their attainment by the end of 16-18 study. This gives a measure of the progress made in this time, and is displayed here as a national average on this measure. 2) Average progress scores for 2015 are constructed by DfE using 'shadow' data calculated using the new methodologies so as to create a baseline from which progress can be measured. For more details see DfE (2017f)

Figure 12 Proportion with no level 2 qualifications by 19, 2004 to 2018 (England)



Source: Table T1 in "National Tables 1-5" accompanying DfE (2019i) report

This caused the Children's Commissioner's to brief about "children leaving school with nothing", arguing that these young people would have "spent 15 years in compulsory education, often having more than £100,000 of public money spent on their education and yet leave the education system without basic benchmark qualifications" (Children's Commissioner, 2019b, p. 1) and that "decades of educational progress have been reversed in the last four years" (p4).

The majority of young people who are going to achieve Level 2 by 19 achieve it by the end of KS4 at 16. Table 11 shows that this proportion fell between 2012 to 2015 (although not since), a trend attributed to the changes to GCSE performance tables in 2014 which limited the number of vocational qualifications that counted (Burgess and Thomson, 2019).

However, as Table 11 shows, subsequent cohorts have also seen fewer students qualifying to Level 2 by 17, if they had not by 16. Thus while the government's headline measures at higher levels of GCSE attainment have slightly improved or remained stable, the picture is less good for lower-attaining young people who might previously have taken some non-GCSE qualifications to achieve level 2 and open up access to post 16 education and training. We return to this issue when considering inequalities in attainment, since particular groups appear to have been disproportionately affected.

Table 11 Percentage of 19 year olds qualified to Level 2 or higher by cohort and age at which Level 2 achieved

KS4 cohort	Year in which 19	Percentage of cohort achieving Level 2 by 16, 17, 18 and 19 (showing what proportion additionally qualify in each year)				
		16	17	18	19	17-19 combined
2011	2014	69.3	77.3 (+8.0)	84.3 (+7.0)	87.0 (+2.7)	17.7
2012	2015	69.5	77.5 (+8.0)	84.8 (+7.3)	87.5 (+2.7)	18.0
2013	2016	67.6	76.2 (+8.6)	84.0 (+7.8)	86.9 (+2.9)	19.3
2014	2017	65.0	73.9 (+8.9)	82.2 (+8.3)	85.4 (+3.2)	20.4
2015	2018	63.5	72.2 (+8.7)	80.7 (+8.5)	84.0 (+3.3)	20.5
2016	2019	64.1	72.3 (+8.2)	80.0 (+7.7)	-	
2017	2020	64.3	71.5 (+7.2)	-	-	
2018	2021	64.0	-	-	-	

Source: DfE (2019i)

Inequalities in Attainment

Low income

In terms of the distribution of outcomes, the government's primary focus during this period has continued to be on socio-economic inequalities, commonly known as the 'disadvantage gap': 'disadvantage' being described by eligibility for the Pupil Premium[12]. This is essentially a low income measure, although does not capture all families with low income, particularly those from low income working families, with part time workers or those in low status occupations (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2010; Kounali et al., 2008). The gap compares those eligible with those

[12] Those who were eligible for FSM in the last six years, looked after children, children who were adopted from care or left care via Special Guardianship of Child Arrangements order

not. The latter group comprises everyone from the children of the very wealthy and those whose families are only just over the eligibility threshold. Its composition will vary from school to school and place to place, and will be affected by the varying socio- economic position of people from different ethnic groups.

Overall, results in this time period show little progress in closing this gap. The picture is most positive for results at the end of primary school although there are worrying signs of stagnation in the latest figures. While the Department of Education shows a narrowing of the disadvantage gap, albeit very modest, a recent EPI report sugests widening of the gap in the last year (2019). Department for Education data (2019h) shows that at KS2 in 2019, about half of 'disadvantaged' pupils achieved the expected level (51%) compared with 71% of all other children, a gap of 20 percentage points, falling from 21 ppts in 2016. The Education Policy Institute (working with 2019 data) estimated the gap in scaled KS2 scores as equivalent to around nine months of learning, falling by half a month between 2015 and 2018 before rising slightly in 2019 (to 9.3%) (Hutchinson et al (2020), also see Appendix 8). For persistently disadvantaged pupils (those who have been eligible for FSM for at least 80% of their school career), the gap was wider (12.2 months). This had fallen more slowly, by 0.3 months between 2015 and 2018 with a slight increase to 12.1 months in 2019 – the level in 2012. Progress appears to be slightly better if we look at the trend of DfE's own disadvantage gap measure, which covers pupils across the attainment spectrum. The difference in the performance of disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils according to this index has narrowed since 2015, from 3.10 to 2.91, continuing its previous trend (also Appendix 8).

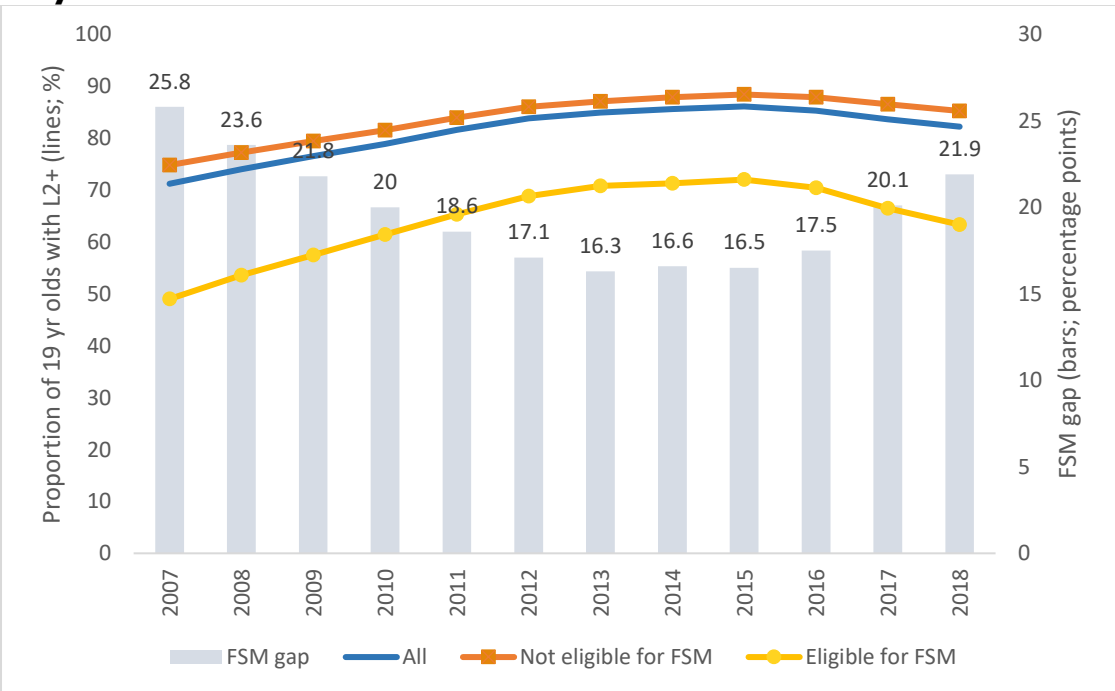
At KS4, the disadvantage gap is greater than at KS2. There are worrying signs at best of progress stalling and at worst of the gap widening, as well as evidence of negative effects of curriculum and assessment reform on some students from lower income families. Here, DfE's disadvantage gap index shows an increase over the past 3 years, following years of decline (it fell from 3.80 in 2015 to 3.66 in 2017 before increasing to 3.68 in 2018 and further to 3.70 in 2019). EPI's latest analysis (Hutchinson et al., 2020) indicates that the progress on closing of the disadvantage gap has stalled, and there are signs that 2018 might be the turning point for worsening of the disadvantage gap. While there was a fall in the gap in average GCSE grades between most and least disadvantaged students between 2015 and 2019 overall (reducing from 19.4 to 18.4 months), it has remained at 18.4 months since 2017. Additionally, there was no progress in closing of the disadvantage gap for English and Maths, (18.1 months in both 2015 and 2019). For persistently disadvantaged students, the gap increased slightly for English and maths between 2015 and 2019 (see Appendix 9).

Other sources, using different measures to assess the disadvantage gap, also show an increase in the gap at KS4 between 2016 to 2018: Using 'Progress 8', the National Foundation for Educational Research shows that from the same base, disadvantaged pupils make less progress than their peers, with a widening of inequalities in secondary schools (Donkin, 2019, p. 8). Results from PISA also

indicate an increase in the gap in reading performance in England for 15 year olds between the most and least disadvantaged pupils, measured by the Economic, Social and Cultural Status Index (ESCS)[13]: growing from 79 points difference in 2015 (Jerrim and Shure, 2016) to 82 points in 2018 (Sizmur et al., 2019). Despite increasing, the gap in reading perfromance between the most and least advantaged was still lower in 2018 in England compared to the average across OECD countries (89 points difference), although not statistically significantly so. On the positive side, the proportion of pupils who are top performers despite being in the most disadvantaged socio-economic group in England is significantly higher than across OECD countries on average, indicating greater resilience of students in England (Sizmur et al., 2019).

Turning to attainment by age 19, the Children's Commissioner's analysis (2019b) shows that the increase since 2015 in the proportion of young people not achieving Level 2 is principally due to a worsening of the situation for young people eligible for Free School Meals and those from disadvantaged areas (also those with special educational needs, covered later). Figure 13 shows the larger fall in attainment for those eligible for FSM, reversing the trend of narrowing of this gap since 2007 (see also Appendix 10 for further details).

Figure 13 Trends in percentage achieving Level 2 by age 19, by FSM eligibility 2007-2018



Source: Source: Table T7 in "National tables 6 to 15: state-sector characteristics" accompanying DfE (2019i) report

[13] This index is on the information about pupils' parents' backgrounds, education and possessions in their homes, as reported by the pupils themselves. The pupils are divided into 4 equal groups (quartiles) according their standardized scores on the index with quartile 1 representing the most socio-economically disadvantaged and 4 – the least disadvantaged.

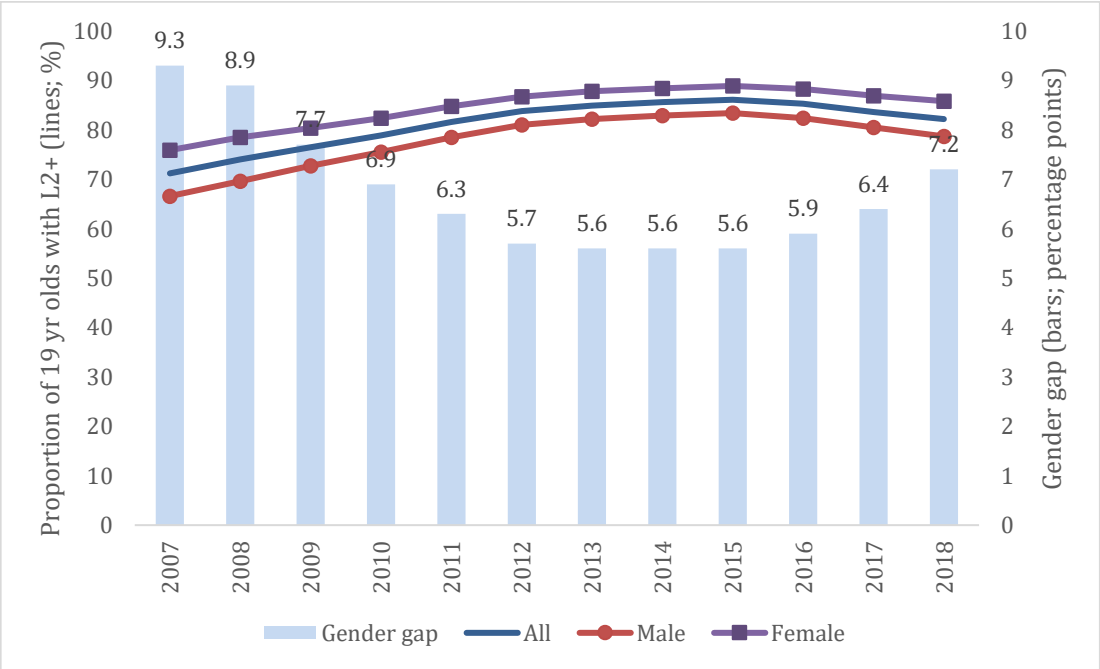
Gender

Gender differences (in favour of girls except for maths) were not a particular focus of policy in this period.

At KS2, girls remained ahead of boys in every subject except in maths, and gender gaps for overall attainment widened slightly between 2016 and 2019 (from 1 percentage point to 4 for achievement at the higher standard and 7ppt to 10 at the expected standard) (see Appendix 8). Boys continued to outperform girls at the higher standard in maths (by 5 ppts in 2019).

At KS4 girls also continue to outperform boys across the headline measures of attainment with differences between them remaining broadly stable. Gaps are higher for some of the measures than for others, for example large differences between genders are reported in the proportions achieving the English Baccalaureate at grade 4/C or above and grade 5 and above. Between 2015 and 2018 there was also a substantial increase in the gender gap in the proportion achieving Level 2 by age 19 – from 5.6 to 7.2 percentage points, after a steady trend of decline (Figure 14). This suggests that the GCSE reforms initiated by the last government have particularly affected boys at the lower end of the attainment spectrum.

Figure 14 Trends in percentage achieving Level 2 by age 19, by gender 2007-2018



Source: Table T7 in "National tables 6 to 15: state-sector characteristics" accompanying DfE (2019i) report

PISA 2018 results showed a mixed picture for gender gaps in England, with gender gaps stable and significant in maths and reading (but with boys outperforming in the former and girls in the latter) and no significant gender differences in science (Sizmur et al., 2019). More specifically, in England, while boys continue to significantly outperform girls in maths, the gender gap in 2018 (13 points) remained similar to that in 2015. And although it was higher than the OECD average (by 5 points), it was not significantly higher. Despite an increase in the average reading scores among boys in England, the gender gap remained relatively stable overtime (no significant change), with girls significantly outperforming boys by 20 points in 2018. This gap was significantly smaller than the OECD average (30 points). While boys also performed slightly better than girls in science in England, the average score gap (three points) was not significant, similarly to 2015 results. The science gender gap in England was similar to that in the OECD countires (Sizmur et al., 2019).

Ethnicity

Equalities in attainment by ethnicity have also not been a particular policy focus in this period. Overall, the pattern is that we are still seeing the same groups of children with highest and lowest attainment, but there have been some changes for particular groups. For KS2, comparing comparable measures for 2016 and 2019, the same groups are at the bottom of the distribution: those from Gypsy / Roma background (19% achieving expected standard), traveller of Irish heritage (26%). Black Caribbean pupils (56%), fare least well of the major ethnic groups, while Chinese (80%) and Indian pupils (77%) are the highest achievers (Department for Education, 2019h, 2016d). Gypsy Roma and Irish heritage traveller groups made the smallest gains in this period (+6 and +7 percentage points, respectively). The largest gains were for Pakistani (+15 points), Other White (ie not British or Irish) (+15) and Bangladeshi groups (+14) (see Appendix 8).

For KS4 we can compare 'attainment 8' scores for 2014/15 and 2018/19. Similarly, the same groups are at the top (Chinese and Indian) and bottom (Gypsy / Roma and traveller of Irish heritage). However, differences between groups are notable. The only groups making gains in this period were those at the top (Chinese, Indian and any other Asian background not including Pakistani and Bangladeshi) and at the bottom (Gypsy / Roma and traveller of Irish heritage). The biggest losses were for Black Caribbean students and mixed white and Black Caribbean students (see Figure in Appendix 9).

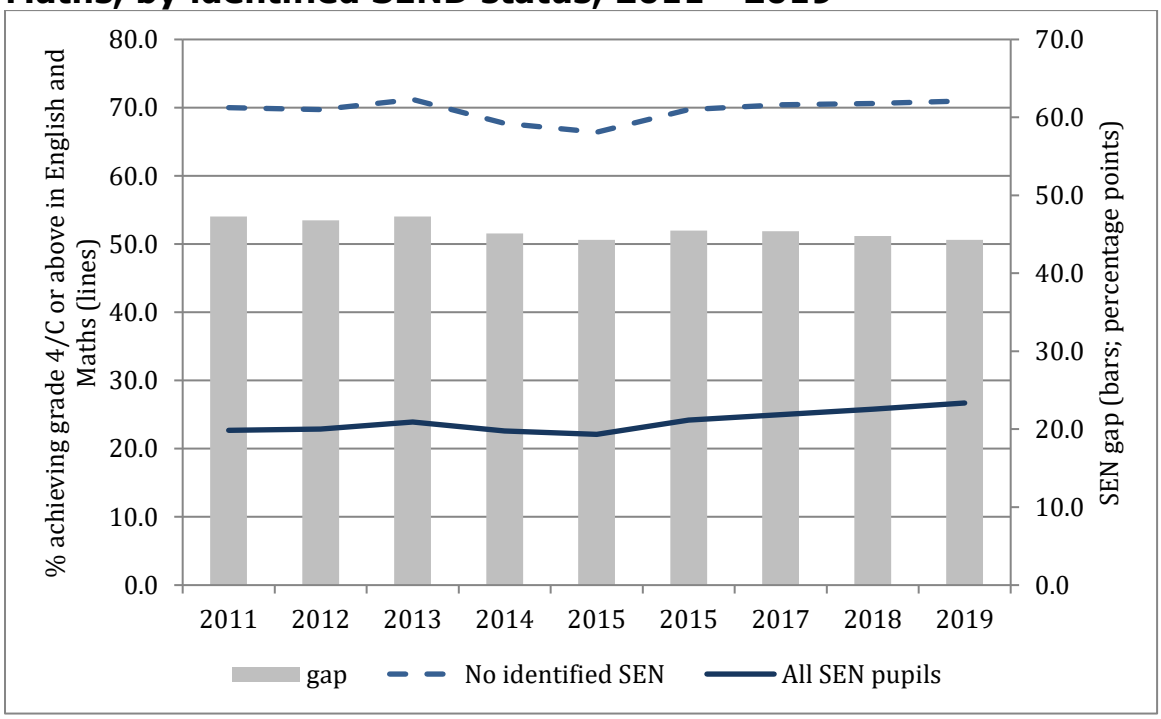
Ethnic differences can also be seen in the change in the proportion of students achieving Level 2 by age 19 (see graphs in Appendix 10). When the data are aggregated to major ethnic group, a decline is evident for all groups between 2015 and 2018, but least for the Chinese group. More detailed analysis shows that the biggest declines have been experienced among Gypsy/Roma young people, and those from Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Other Black, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean heritage.

Special Educational Needs

The largest difference between the comparison groups reported by DfE by characteristics is when looking at SEND. In 2019, 22% of pupils with SEND reached the expected standard in the overall KS2 assessment – 52 percentage points lower than pupils with no SEND (74%). This gap increased from 48 percentage points between 2016 and 2017 and has remained stable since (Department for Education, 2019h, p. 11).

At KS4, the gap between pupils' attainment with and without identified SEND remains persistently large. In 2015, 20% of pupils with SEND achieved A*-C in English and Maths, while 64.2% of pupils with no identified SEND did (see Figure 15). Both groups show an improvement in attainment over time, but the gap between them remained the same. In 2019, 26.7% of students with identified SEND gained GCSEs in English and maths at grades 9-4, compared with 71% of those without identified SEND (a gap of 44.3). The persistently high gap between those with and without SEND is observed for other KS4 measures over recent years such as Average attainment 8 scores and Percentage of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate (Department for Education, 2020c).

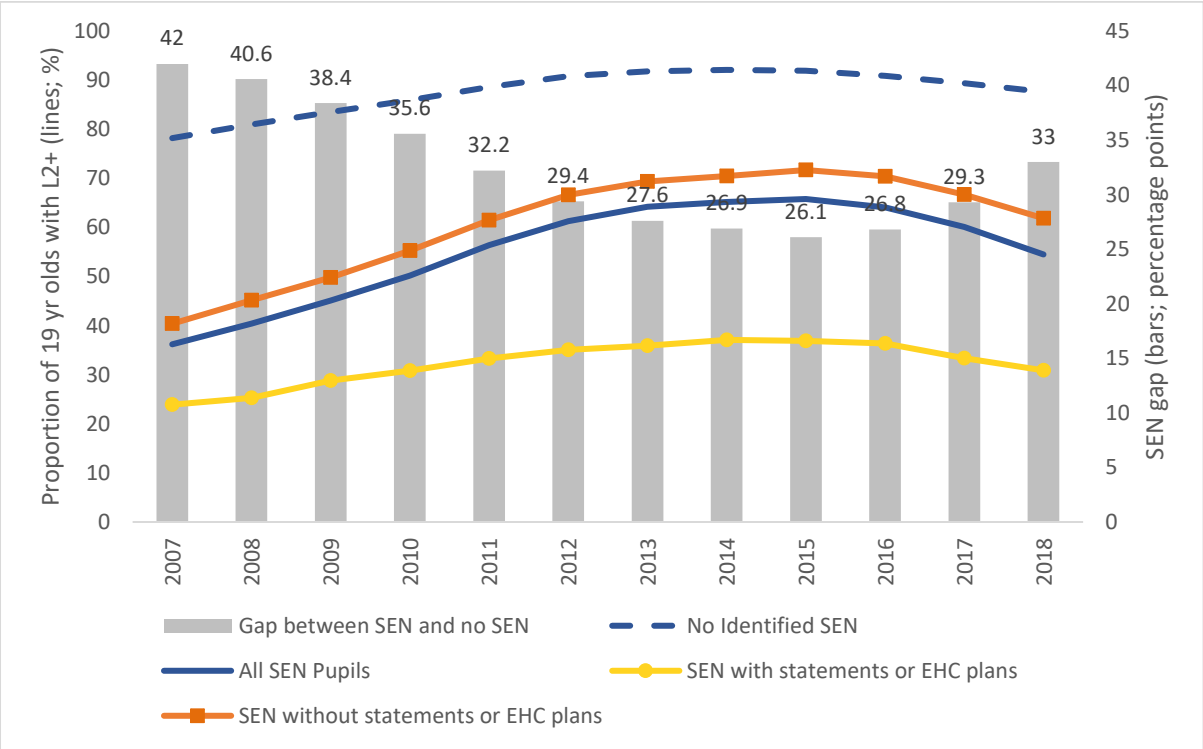
Figure 15 Proportion of pupils achieving 4/C or above in English and Maths, by identified SEND status, 2011 - 2019



Source: DfE (2020c), National Characteristics Table, summary

By age 19, the SEND/non SEND gap increased in the proportion achieving Level 2, rising by seven percentage points between 2015 and 2018, reversing progress since 2011 (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 Proportion of 19 year olds qualified to Level 2, by SEND status 2007-2018



Source: Table T7 in "National tables 6 to 15: state-sector characteristics" accompanying DfE (2019i) report. See also Appendix 10.

Geography

Space and time do not permit a full geographic analysis in this paper. However, it is evident that very large geographical disparities in educational outcomes continue to exist. London retains and to some extent has extended its substantial advantage across different levels of education.

At KS2, in 2019, attainment of expected or higher standards remained highest in London (with 85% of pupils there reaching at least the expected level) compared with 76% for England as a whole. Indeed the increase from 2016 was highest in London, extending its advantage. Yorkshire and the Humber was still the region with lowest KS2 attainment, followed by East Midlands and West Midlands. Between 2016 and 2019, the East slipped its relative regional standing, now achieving lower than the North West and the same as the South West, whereas it was ahead of them in 2016 (see Appendix 8).

At KS4, London and South East remain the highest attaining regions in terms of their average 'attainment 8 scores' in 2018/19 as they did in 2014/15, while the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber are the bottom two regions in both years (see Appendix 9).

Students in London were also most likely to have achieved Level 2 by age 19 in 2018 – with 85.5% doing so compared with 82.2% in England as a whole and 79.5/79.6% in the lowest attaining regions, Yorkshire and the Humber and the East Midlands (see Appendix 10). While all regions have seen a decline on this measure since 2015, this has been sharpest in the North and Midlands (see Appendix 10). Children's Commissioner's analysis (2019b) finer grained analysis of this data shows that just 68.3% of 19 year olds reached this level in Nottingham, compared with over 90% in the London Borough of Sutton. FSM/non FSM gaps on this measure were also widely different between places: at the regional level ranging from 11.9 percentage points in London to 26.6 percentage points in the South East, and at the local authority level from under 6 percentage points in Newham to over thirty in Wokingham. These data point to very large inequalities in educational experiences and outcomes.

Wider Outcomes

In our previous work on this topic (R. Lupton et al., 2016), we have argued that a narrow focus on education policy as the key determinant of educational outcomes is insufficient. We also need to consider the impact of the wider social policies (covered elsewhere in this programme of work) that affect children and comprise the 'social determinants' of educational achievement: policies on family support through the social security system; health; housing; transport; and community services and facilities. We have also argued that educational attainment in standardised tests should not be seen as the only outcome of education policy. Education policies may increase attainment whilst also having negative effects on other valued outcomes for children and young people such as: their mental health, confidence and desire to learn; their achievements and interest in the arts, music and sports; and their contributions to local, national and international communities. These tensions about the purposes of education policies began to surface in the 2019 election manifestos, much more prominently than they had done at any time in the last two decades.

It is a sign of the direction that policy has taken in the last decade that England no longer has a holistic monitoring framework for children's and young people's outcomes, such as the Every Child Matters framework, and that wider outcomes are not reported by schools, making it hard to see whether there are trade-offs between efforts to drive up educational standards and efforts to ensure young people's wider well-being.

All we can do here is note that recent studies show that children in England fare badly compared with those in other countries on liking of school (Inchley et al., 2016; The Children's Society, 2018), self-efficacy, fear of failure, and life satisfaction (OECD, 2020), and relationships with teachers (Children's Worlds, 2016). The prevalence of anxiety and depressive disorders is increasing (Sadler et al., 2018). According to the OECD's PISA 2018 study, fewer UK students are satisfied with their lives than average for OECD countries (53% compared to

67%). However the vast majority report sometimes or always feeling happy, with only about 9% reporting always feeling sad (OECD, 2019c).

Of course, adolescent well-being is not related only to experiences at school. Interestingly, scores on liking of school in England have improved slightly in recent years (The Children's Society, 2018). Calls for help with 'exam stress' are increasing, but so too are support services so it is hard to know whether this reveals a bigger problem or simply that more people can ask for help.

6. Conclusions

Education on the Eve of the Pandemic

The Conservative government elected in 2015 essentially pursued policies of continuity, bedding down and extending the major reforms initiated in 2010 by the Coalition government. This was an unremarkable period of policy-making.

These efforts resulted in, at best, a modest improvement in standards and quality. However, at the same time pupil numbers and needs rose, while funding was static or (in the post-16 phase) falling. Thus while it is undoubtedly the case that education has not suffered as much as other policy areas from the post-2010 period of austerity, the system in 2019/early 2020 was increasingly under strain, evidenced in teacher shortages, rising pupil-teacher ratios and difficulties meeting additional needs. There was no real evidence that the efforts put into remodelling the system were substantially improving it.

Moreover, despite a rhetoric of social mobility, little if any impact had been made on inequalities and in fact there was increasing evidence of the most vulnerable children and young people missing out in a system geared to increasing performance and competition. The new funding formula seemed to signal a shift of resources away from areas of highest need, offsetting to some extent the redistributive effect of the Pupil Premium, while reforms in the post-16 phase mainly focused on higher attainers who could go on to the technical equivalent of 'A' Levels, leaving huge challenges for lower attainers.

Future Policy Challenges

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this situation already left the government elected in 2019 facing many ongoing challenges, including but not limited to:

- Continuing to address quality and accountability issues in the autonomous school system.
- Tackling failures in system reform: particularly the SEND system and University Technical Colleges.

- Teacher recruitment and retention, with the added challenge created by the UK's exit from the EU.
- High and sustained disadvantage gaps.
- Particularly acute problems in some ethnic groups and for young people who are finding themselves marginalised or excluded in a system preoccupied with raising standards and rigour overall.
- Ensuring successful post-16 transition for young people with lower GCSE attainment who will not be able to access 'T' Levels immediately; including creating many more high quality apprenticeships.
- Growing problems with the quality of the school estate, given limited capital investment in recent years.

COVID-19 Challenges and Opportunities

The COVID-19 crisis presents both short and longer term challenges to the education system. Most immediately there have been challenges to the delivery of education: the shift to online learning; keeping schools open for the children of key workers and encouraging their attendance; and re-opening schools and colleges safely for all young people. As has been widely documented, many of these challenges have been particularly acute in areas of higher deprivation. Ensuring fair and successful transitions from primary to secondary, secondary to post-secondary and KS3/'A' Level to the labour market and HE for young people who have not taken the usual end-of-course examinations has also been a critical and contested issue. The distributional effects of the 2020 no-exam year remain to be seen.

In the longer term, the education system will resume not just facing the issue of how to remedy 'lost learning' and to address inequalities in that respect, but needing to respond to the economic, social and emotional impacts of the crisis: such as reduced family income, employment and housing insecurity, emotional stress, and (for some), illness or bereavement. The economic fallout will also present wider threats to ongoing government spending, as well as the challenge of responding to increasing hardship and inequalities in family circumstances. This will test a system currently making little progress with addressing disadvantage gaps and moving in the direction of increasing exclusion and marginalisation of some of the most vulnerable learners, with a less progressive funding formula.

However, the pandemic may also have broader policy effects, including re-thinking of how education can (and cannot) be supported at home through technological solutions; highlighting inequality,vulnerability and support needs; and possibly causing some re-valuing of teachers and other education and care professionals. On the other hand, history suggests it may help with teacher recruitment and retention as the appeal of secure employment is increased. The imperative of local coordination in addressing need may also help resolve some of the difficulties of system fragmentation which have emerged since 2010.

Most fundamentally, in creating a temporary 'test-free zone', COVID-19 may lead to resolution, one way or another, of the debate about whether all of England's extensive testing apparatus is really needed and justified given its social and educational costs. At the 2019 election, it became apparent that after nine years of Conservative reform, a longstanding political consensus on education had been lost. While the 2019 Conservative manifesto stuck to the current agenda, opposition parties argued for broader curriculum, fewer tests and a less competitive and more inclusive system. The need for a new 'great debate' about what education is for, and how it should be organised, was beginning to be signalled. COVID-19 may well be the trigger for this debate finally to happen.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Conservative Election Manifestos 2015-2019

Table 1.1 Summary of Education Commitments in Conservative Election Manifestos 2015-2019

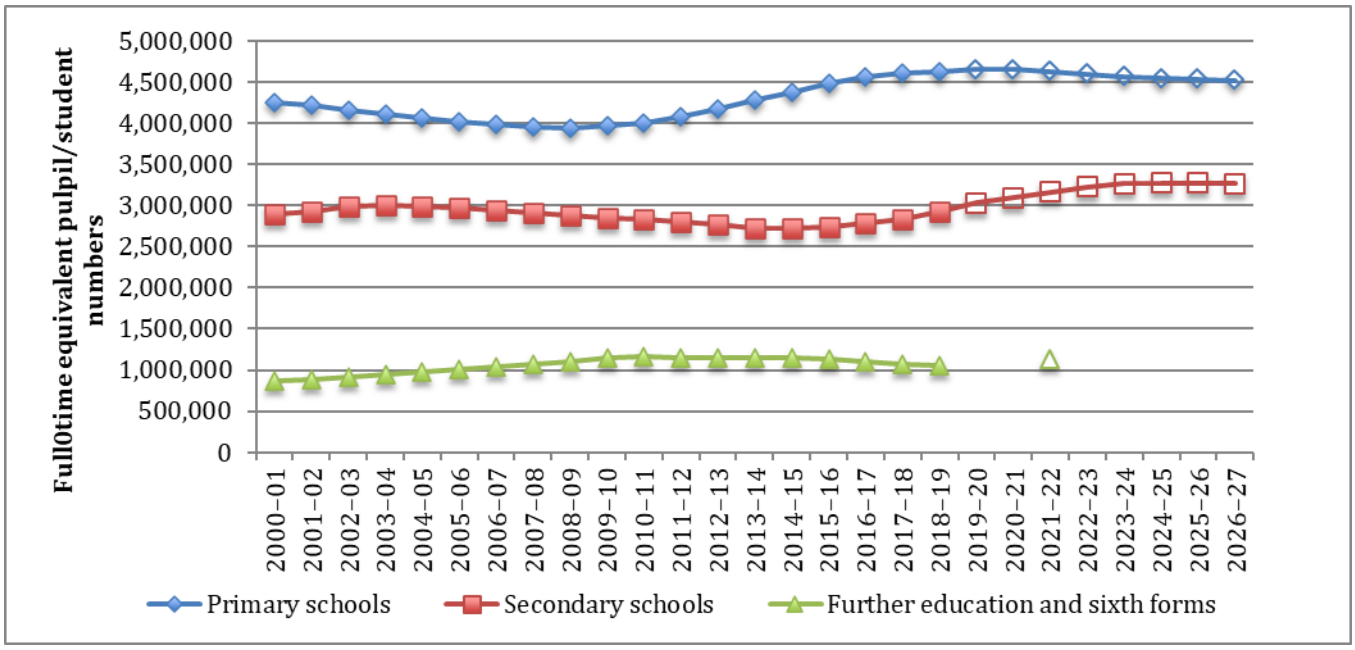
	May 2015	June 2017	December 2019
Secretary of State	Nicky Morgan July 2014 to July 2015	Justine Greening:July 2016 to Jan 2018 Damian Hinds:Jan 2018 – July 2019	Gavin Williamson July 2019 -
School system	Expand Academies, Free Schools, studio schools and university technology colleges. Allow good schools to expand and introduce new powers to force 'coasting' schools to accept new leadership. Expand National Leaders of Education programme to enable best headteachers to take control of failing primary schools	Continue with Free School programme. Require universities (as condition of charging maximum tuition fees) to sponsor Academies or found Free Schools. Ensure at least 100 leading independent schools do the same. New funding for specialist maths school in every major city. Lift ban on new selective schools and rules preventing establishment of new Roman Catholic Schools Prevent local authorities from creating new places in schools rated 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' Conduct a review of admissions policy.	Build more Free Schools. Support choice. Support innovation (eg maths schools), expand alternative provision for excluded students
Funding	Protect school funding with real terms increase in schools budget. Make school funding fairer. £7bn over life of parliament to provide good school places.	Increase overall schools budget by £4bn by 2022, representing a real terms increase for every year of the parliament. Make funding still fairer but make sure no school has budget cut through new formula.	Additional £14bn over 3 years for school funding
Curriculum/ Assessment	Require secondary pupils to take GCSEs in English, maths, science, a language and history or geography (Ebacc subjects) Expect every 11 yr old to reach specific standards in maths and English or resit at start of secondary school to make sure no pupil is left behind	Build on success of phonics test and expect 11 yr olds to know times tables off by heart. Improve accountability at Key Stage 3. Expect 75% of pupils to have been entered for Ebacc combination of subjects by end of next parliament. Ensure all children have access to academic, knowledge-rich curriculum. Consider how Ofsted can give parents more information on what children are being taught.	Retain commitment to core subjects. Offer 'arts premium; to secondary schools and invest in primary PE teaching

Table 1.1 (continued)

	May 2015	**June 2017**	**December 2019**
Secretary of State	Nicky Morgan July 2014 to July 2015	Justin Greening July 2016 to Jan 2018	Damian Hinds Jan 2018 -
Teachers	Recruit and retain best teachers by reducing paperwork, introducing bursaries, paying good teachers more, reducing burden of inspection and encouraging growth of Tech First. Train and extra 17,500 maths and physics teachers in next 5 years and increase number who can teach Mandarin. Set up independent College of Teaching to promote high standards	Continue to provide bursaries to attract top graduates into teaching. Forgive new teachers student loan repayments while teaching. Provide greater support for teachers with planning and marking and bear down on unnecessary paper work and inspection burden. Create a single jobs portal. Explore teaching apprenticeships sponsored by major companies.	Raise teachers' starting salaries to £30,000 p.a.
16-18 phase	Continue to replace lower level classroom-based FE courses with high quality apprenticeships. Ensure there is a University Technical College within reach of every city,	Replace 13,000 existing technical qualifications with new 'T' Levels. Invest in FE college equipment and facilities and create new programme to attract industry professionals to work in FE colleges Deliver commitment to create 3m apprenticeships for young people by 2020 Introduce a UCAS-style portal for technical education	New £2bn capital investment into upgrading FE colleges. Expand to 20 Institutes of Technology
Social-economic disadvantage	Continue to provide the Pupil Premium Protected at current rates.	Continue to protect the Pupil Premium. Introduce significantly discounted bus and train travel for apprentices to ensure no young person is deterred by travel costs	No specific proposals – emphasises that all children should have access to good schools and get qualifications while learning in an environment where they can be happy and fulfilled.
Other	Expect teachers to be trained on behaviour		Back heads and teachers on exclusions and discipline. Expand programme for schools with worst behaviour to learn from others. Deliver more places for children with complex special educational needs.

Appendix 2: Trends in Pupil Numbers

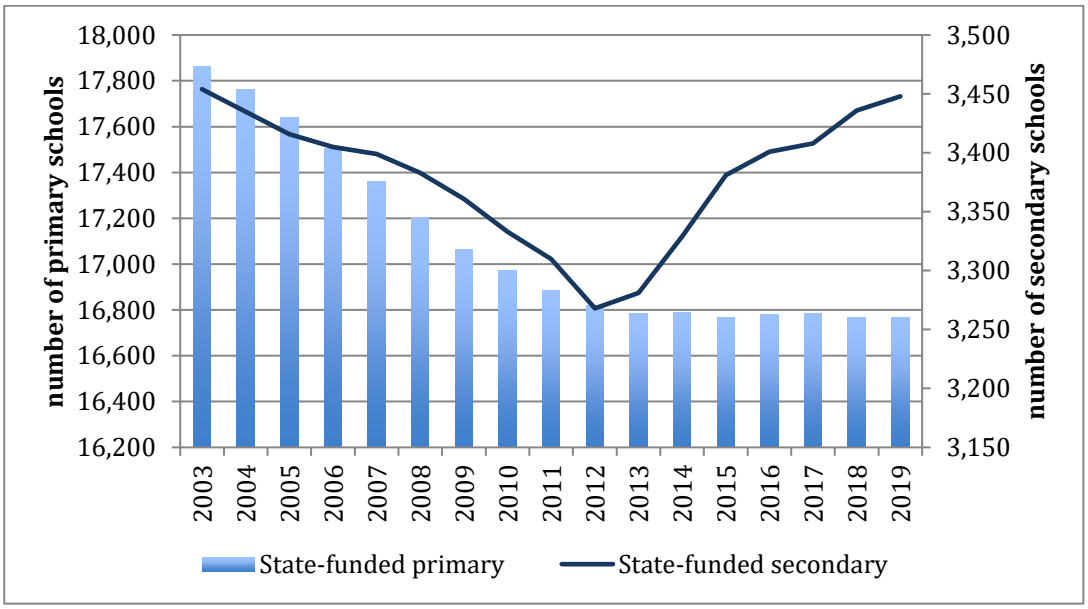
Figure A2.1 Trends and Projections in Pupil and Student Numbers, 2000-01 to 2026-27



Source: Authors reproduced Figure 1.2 in (Britton et al., 2019) using the underlying data from the associated spread sheets and calculated the projected numbers of FE and sixth form student based Britton and colleagues' estimate that the number of young people in these forms of education is likely to grow between 2019 and 2022 by around 6%, in line with the ONS population projections for the age group of 15 to 19 year olds (Britton et al., 2019, p. 64).

Appendix 3: Numbers of Schools

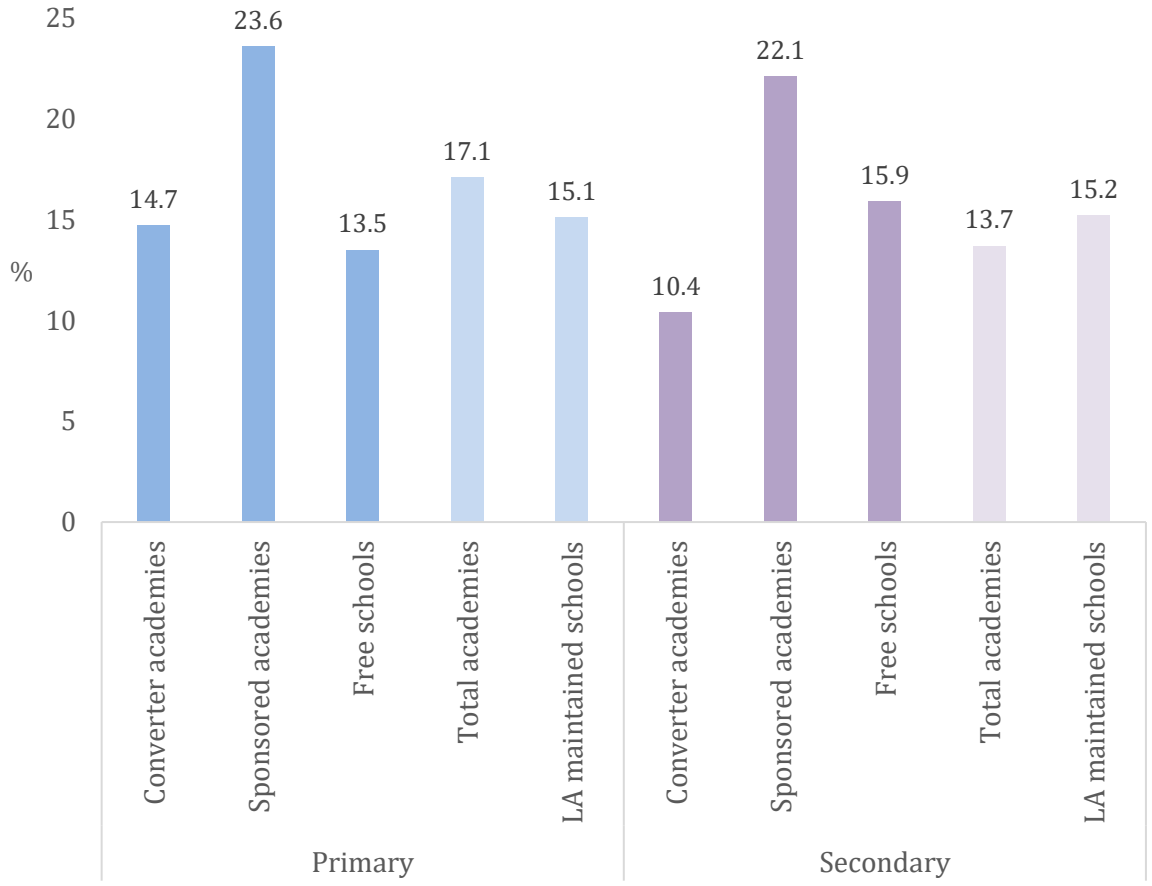
Figure A3.1 Numbers of Primary and Secondary Schools



Source: (Department for Education, 2019d) Main tables, Table 1a. Data as at January each year.

Appendix 4: Levels of Free Schools Meal Eligibility in Different Types of Schools

Figure A4.1 Percentage of pupils eligible for and claiming Free School meals, by type of school in England, 2019 (excludes universal infant Free School meals)

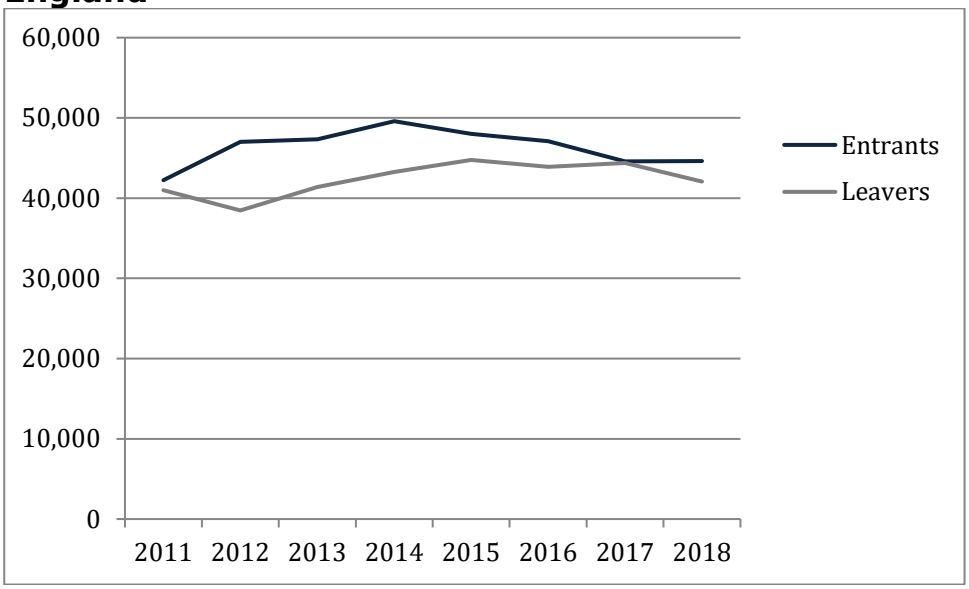


Source: (Department for Education, 2019d), Figure D. Data as at January 2019.

Appendix 5: School Workforce Trends

The ratio between qualified FTE teachers entering the state-funded sector and leaving it has been maintained at around 1-1.1. The trend has been that of an increase in both entrants and leavers between 2012 and 2014 with a fall thereafter (although a slight increase in the numbers of entrants in 2018)

Figure A5.1 qualified teachers: entrants and leavers, 2011 to 2018, England



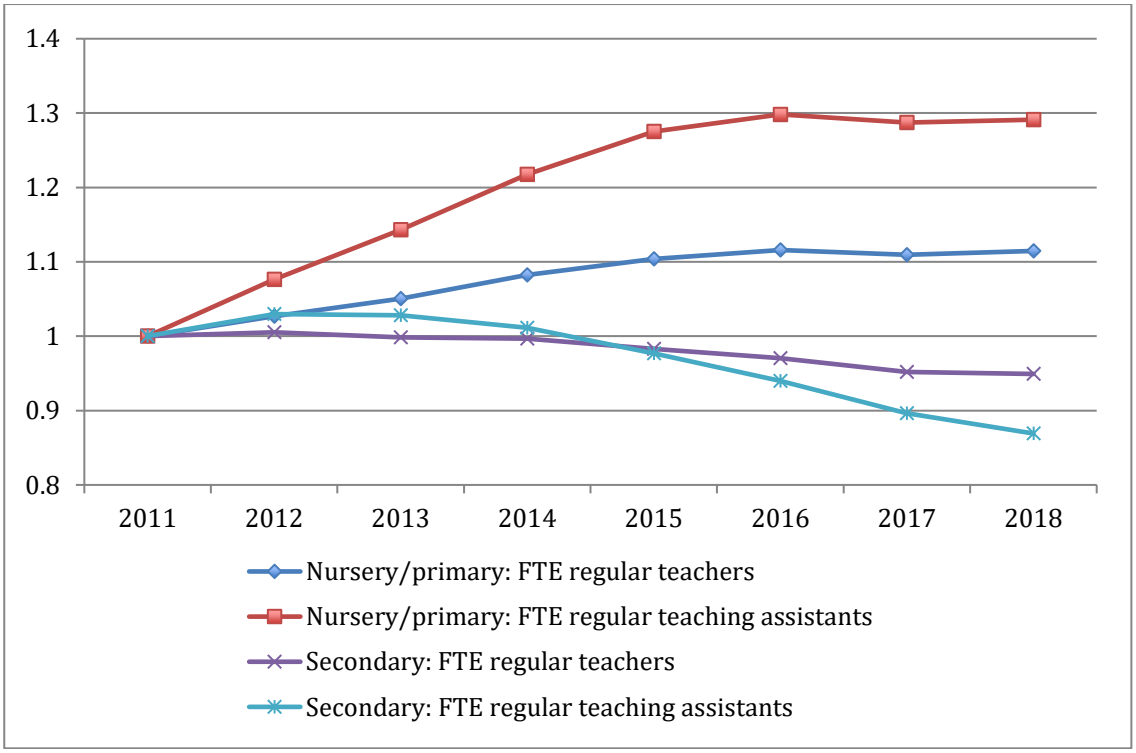
Source: Table 7a and Table 7b in (Department for Education, 2019e), as at November each year.

Table A5.1 Total number of FTE staff in state-funded schools

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% increase
FTE regular teachers	439,240	445,216	449,630	455,407	456,974	457,349	451,968	453,411	3.2%
FTE regular teaching assistants	218,680	232,482	244,438	254,998	262,376	265,287	262,684	263,913	20.7%
FTE regular other support staff	218,663	225,210	228,218	232,914	238,218	235,135	232,031	229,949	5.2%
Total regular FTE workforce	876,583	902,908	922,286	943,319	957,568	957,771	946,683	947,274	8.1%

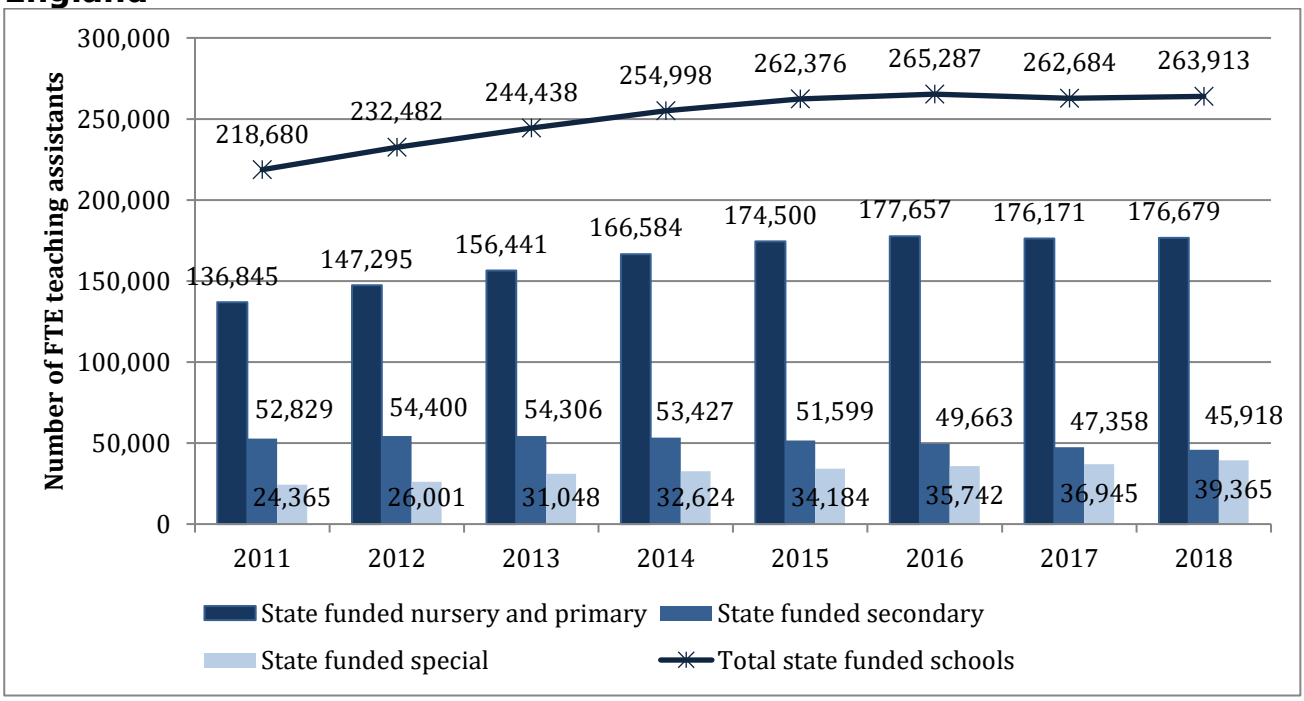
Source: DfE (2019e) Table 1

Figure A5.2 Total number of FTE staff in state-funded schools, index numbers, 2011=1



Source: Authors' calculations using figures in Table 1 in DfE (2019e)

Figure A5.3 Total FTE teaching assistants by school type, 2011 – 2018, England



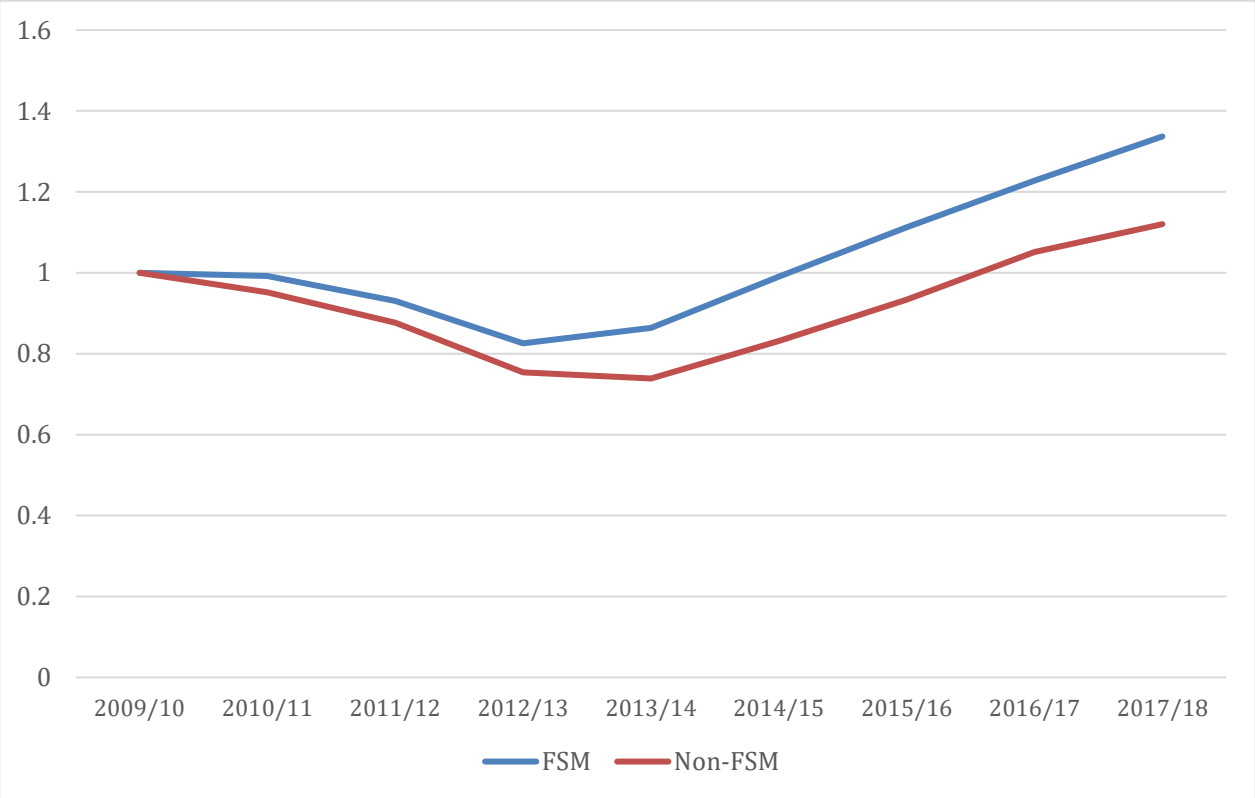
Source: Authors' reproduced Figure B in DfE (2019e) from underlying data in excel, Table 2b

Appendix 6: School Exclusions by Characteristics

Table A6.1: Exclusions by FSM Status 2017/18

			Number of exclusions	Percentage of school population
Permanent exclusions				
	Pupils eligible for Free School meals		3,051	0.28
	Other pupils		4,852	0.07
Fixed period exclusions				
	Pupils eligible for Free School meals		149,760	13.65
	Other pupils		260,949	3.73

Figure A6.1: Fixed period exclusion rate by FSM status, indexed to 2009/10 =1



Source: DfE (2019f) Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England 2017 to 2018

Table A6.2: Exclusion Rates by Gender and Ethnicity 2017/18

Groups with particularly high rates highlighted in bold/italic

		Permanent exclusions			Fixed period exclusions		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
White		**0.15**	**0.05**	**0.10**	**7.78**	**3.12**	**5.50**
	White British	0.15	0.05	0.10	8.04	3.26	5.70
	Irish	0.25	0.04	0.15	7.25	2.70	5.00
	Traveller of Irish heritage	***0.53***	***0.03***	***0.29***	***27.24***	***7.14***	***17.42***
	Gypsy/ Roma	***0.56***	***0.15***	***0.36***	***23.79***	***9.05***	***16.52***
	Any other White background	0.09	0.02	0.05	4.05	1.37	2.74
Mixed		**0.24**	**0.08**	**0.16**	**8.37**	**3.34**	**5.89**
	White and Black Caribbean	***0.42***	***0.13***	***0.27***	***14.26***	***5.98***	***10.13***
	White and Black African	0.22	0.06	0.14	8.64	2.90	5.78
	White and Asian	0.12	0.05	0.09	4.72	2.05	3.41
	Any other Mixed background	0.20	0.07	0.13	6.52	2.42	4.52
Asian		**0.07**	**0.01**	**0.04**	**2.80**	**0.68**	**1.76**
	Indian	0.03	0.01	0.02	1.17	0.30	0.75
	Pakistani	0.10	0.01	0.06	4.03	0.97	2.52
	Bangladeshi	0.08	0.00	0.04	3.10	0.75	1.93
	Any other Asian background	0.06	0.01	0.03	2.29	0.55	1.45
Black		**0.20**	**0.06**	**0.13**	**8.16**	**2.94**	**5.56**
	Black Caribbean	***0.44***	***0.12***	***0.28***	***15.17***	***5.73***	***10.46***
	Black African	0.13	0.04	0.08	6.02	2.14	4.08
	Any other Black background	0.21	0.06	0.13	8.59	2.90	5.80
Chinese		**0.01**	**0.01**	**0.01**	**0.82**	**0.19**	**0.50**
Any other ethnic group		**0.10**	**0.03**	**0.06**	**4.79**	**1.44**	**3.16**
Unclassified		**0.27**	**0.08**	**0.18**	**11.14**	**4.76**	**8.05**
Minority ethnic pupils		**0.14**	**0.04**	**0.09**	**5.40**	**1.87**	**3.66**
All pupils		**0.15**	**0.05**	**0.10**	**7.23**	**2.83**	**5.08**

Table A6.3: Exclusion Rates by Special Educational Needs 2017/18

		Primary	Secondary
Permanent exclusions			
	Pupils with SEN with statements or an EHC plan	0.18	0.33
	Pupils with SEN Support	0.15	0.66
	Pupils with no SEN	0.01	0.15
	All pupils	**0.03**	**0.20**
Fixed period exclusions			
	Pupils with SEN with statements or an EHC plan	13.44	28.19
	Pupils with SEN Support	7.07	28.47
	Pupils with no SEN	0.39	7.57
	All pupils	**1.40**	**10.13**

Appendix 7: PISA 2018 Results for the UK and its different jurisdictions

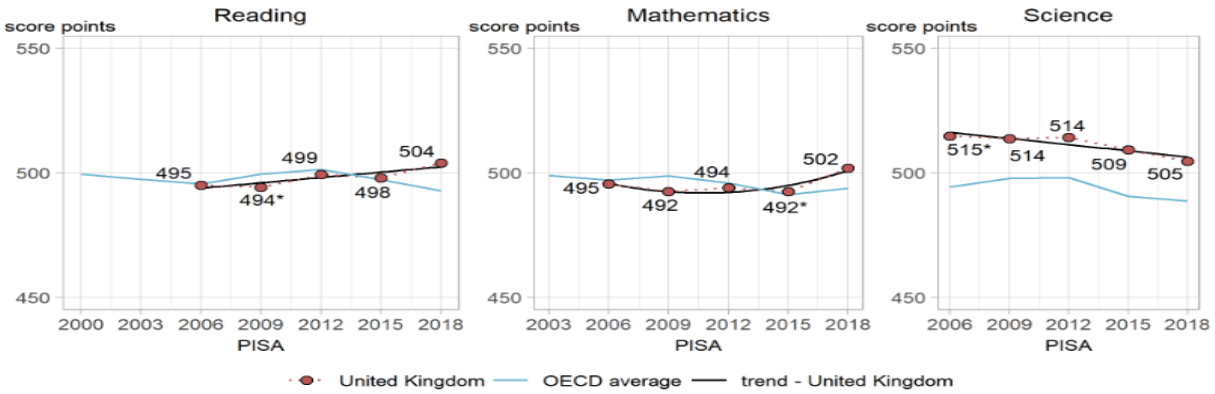
Overall UK trends follow the English pattern, i.e. an increase in ranking but only a significant increase in score in maths.

For reading, the UK was 22nd from the top in 2015 (score 498) and by 2018 it was 14th despite only a small (not statistically significant) increase in the average score (504). This was, the result of the OECD average score for reading falling by an even higher margin during the same period (from 493 to 487).

The average score for science in 2015 for the UK put the country in 15th place from the top (score 509) and in 2018 – in 14th (score 505). The average for OECD countries fell during this period: from 493 in 2015 to 489 in 2018.

The average maths score has increased significantly during the period, with the UK moving from the 27th place from the top in 2015 (score 492) to the 18th by 2018 (score 502). OECD average for maths fell slightly during the period from 490 in 2015 to 489 in 2018.

Figure A7.1 Average scores across reading, writing and science tests in the UK compared to the OECD average, 2006 to 2018



Source: OECD (2019c), Figure 2

In 2018, English children on average also did better than their counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in both maths and science (no significant difference between Scotland, Wales and NI for these subjects). In reading, children in England on average performed significantly better than those in Wales, but so did children in Scotland and Northern Ireland (Sizmur et al., 2019).

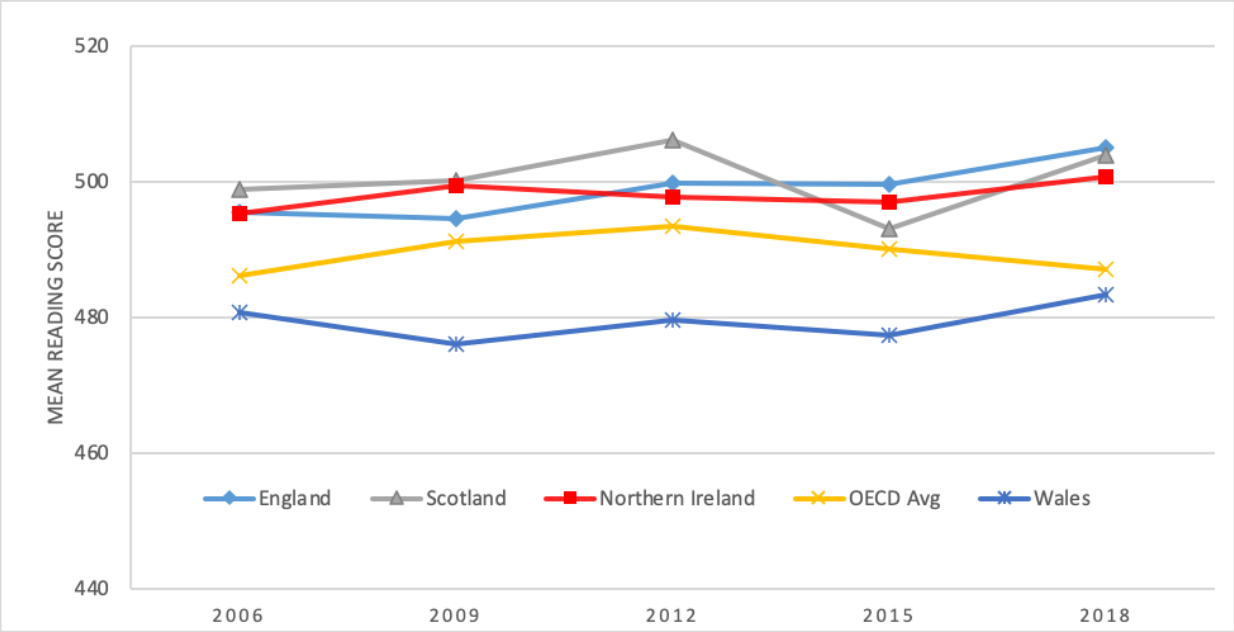
Looking at the time trend since 2006 more closely, it is worth noting that although pupils in Wales have on average lower scores across all subjects and years compared to other UK nations, they made good progress in their PISA performance in 2018 as their average scores for all three subjects came close to the OECD averages having been below them for some years before that. But while their average reading scores remained broadly stable over time and their maths scores were increasing significantly since 2012, their science performance deteriorated over the years.

Scottish children were the only ones across UK nations to have significantly improved their average reading scores between 2015 and 2018, but their average maths and science scores fell significantly since 2012.

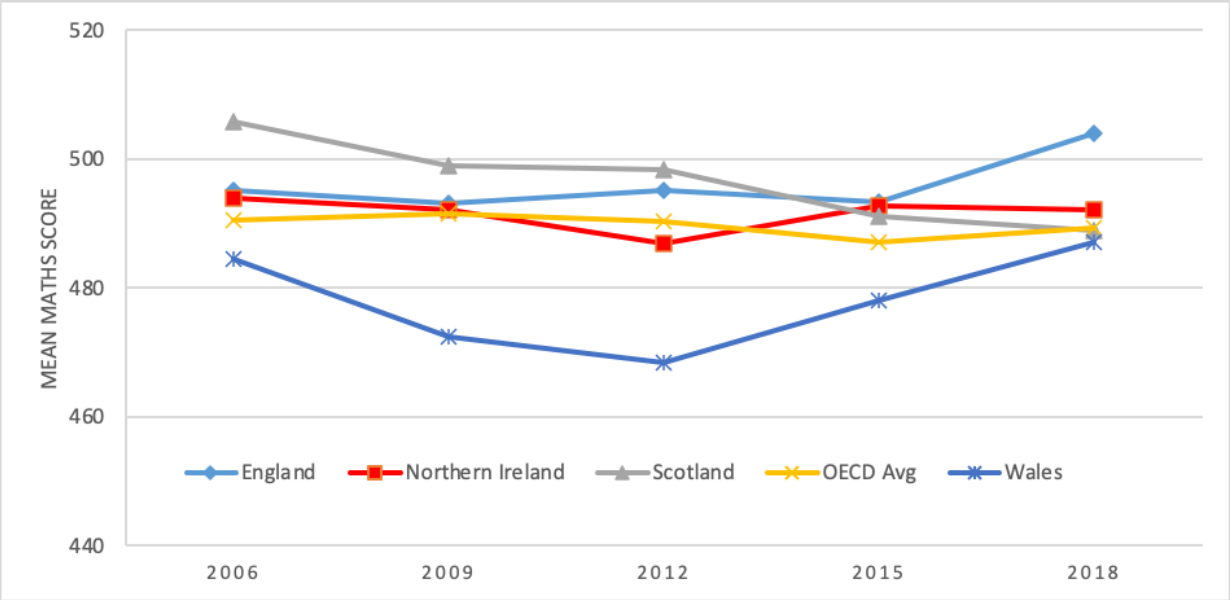
And finally, children in Northern Ireland showed no significant improvement in reading or maths since 2015 (and broadly stable scores since 2006), but their average science score fell significantly multiple times since 2006.

Figure A7.2 Average reading, maths and science scores at age 15 across UK nations and OECD countries' average, 2006 to 2018

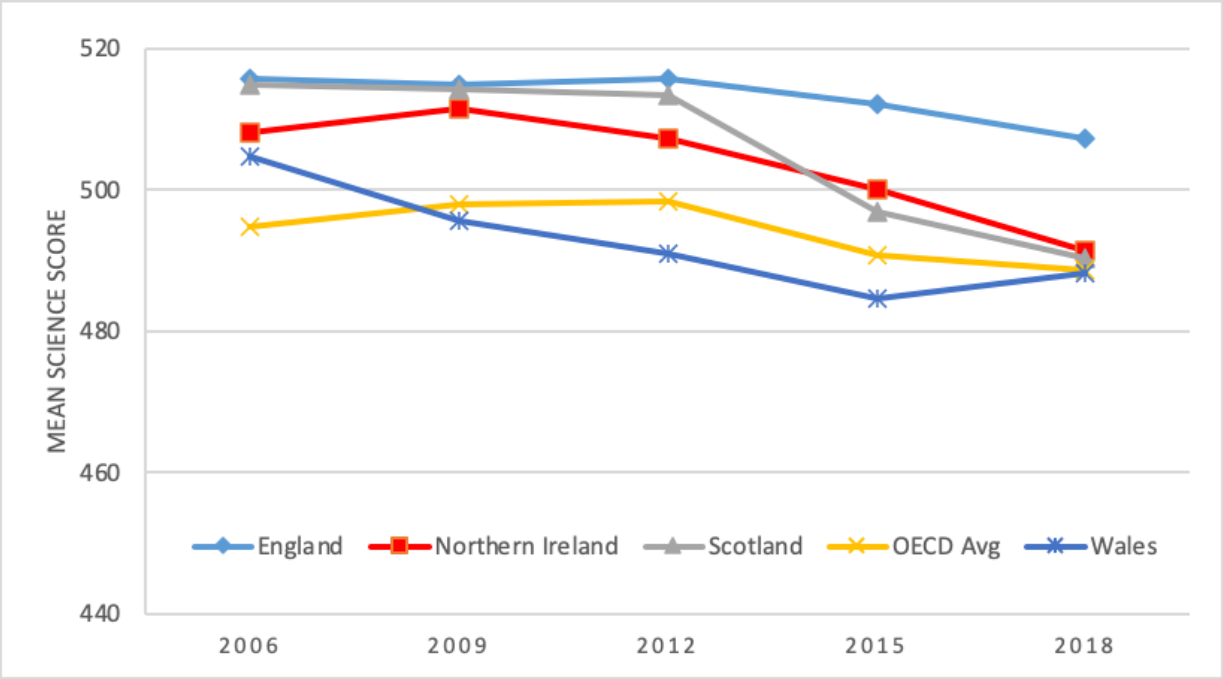
a) Reading



b) Maths



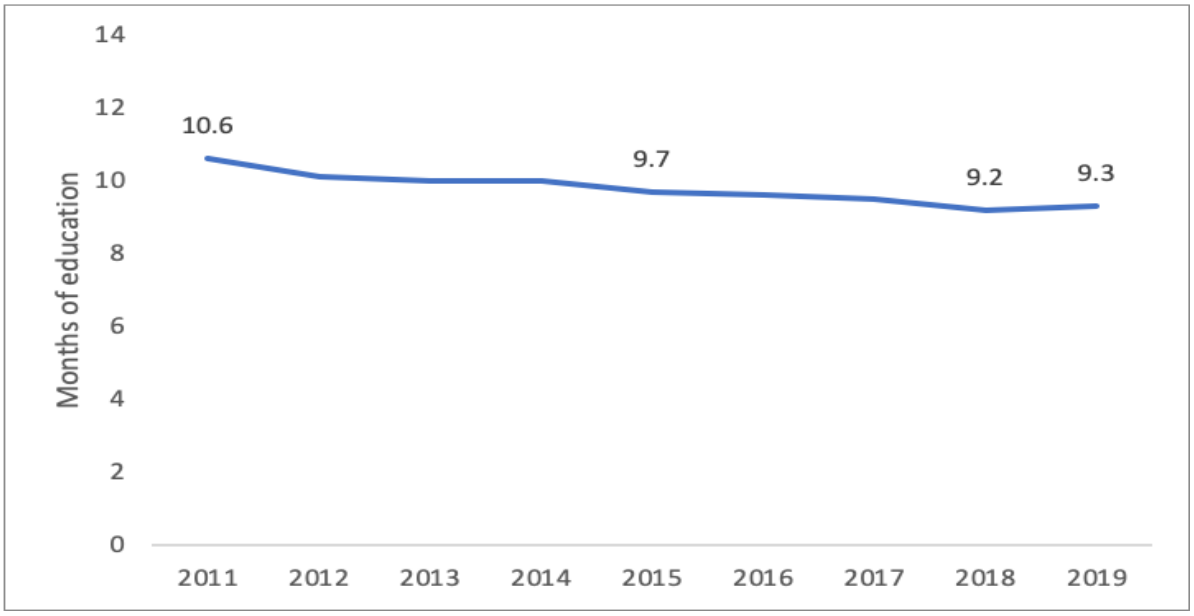
c) Science



Source: Authors' reproduction of Figures 7.13 – 7.15 from Juliet Sizmur et al. (2019) using underlying data in excel spreadsheets online

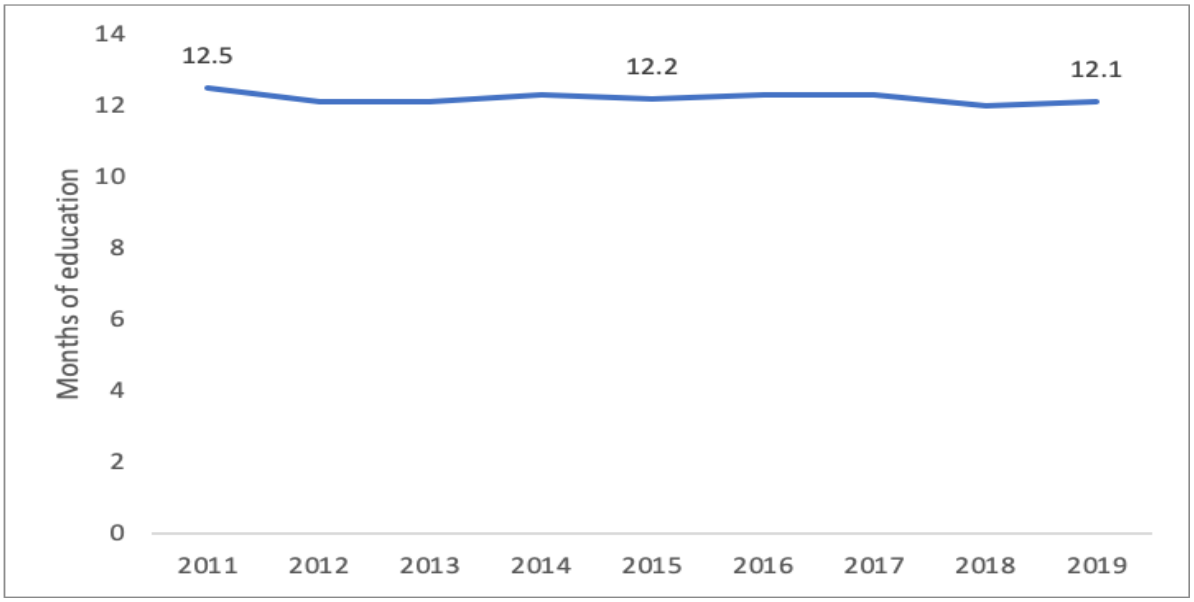
Appendix 8: Key Stage 2 Attainment by Characteristics

Figure A8.1 Trend in disadvantage gap (in months) in KS2 reading and maths



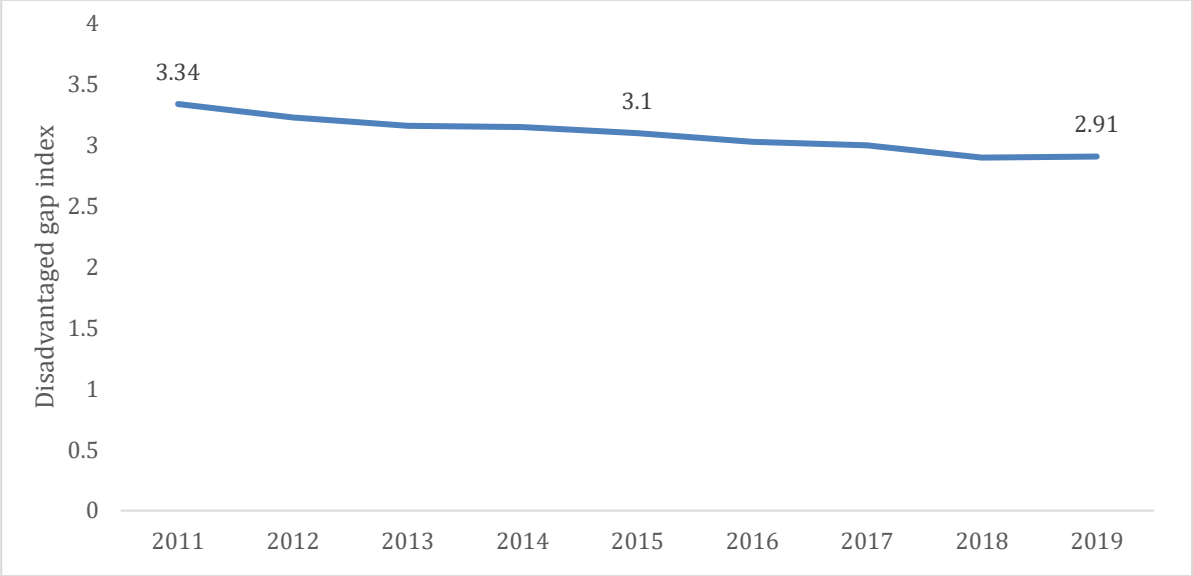
Source: (Hutchinson et al., 2020) , Figure 2.1
Notes: KS2 is measured with the average scaled score in reading and Maths.

Figure A8.2 Trend in the persistently disadvantaged gap (in months) in KS2 reading and maths



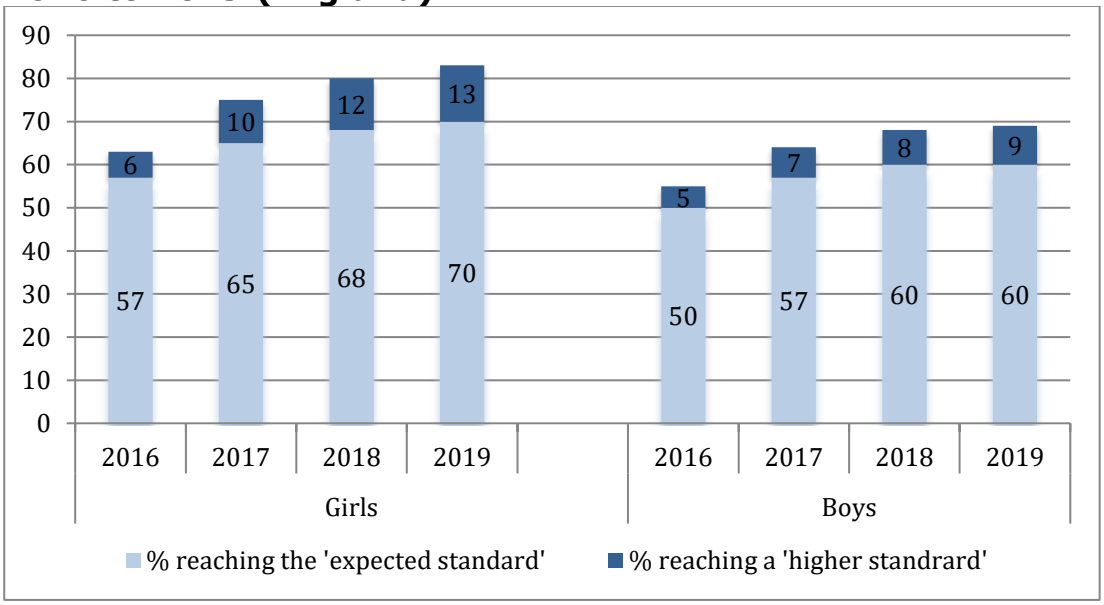
Source: (Hutchinson et al., 2020) Figure 3.1
Notes: KS2 is measured with the average scaled score in reading and Maths.

Figure A8.3 Trend in DfE Disadvantaged gap index at KS2 (state-funded schools, England)



Source: Chart produced by authors using underlying data for DfE (2019h).
Notes: The index is based on reading and maths attainment. These figures are based only on those pupils for whom a valid test level/score could be determined. This means that this number may differ from the total included in national test results (the latter include pupils recorded as 'absent' or 'unable to access test'). The comparisons are made by ordering pupil scores in reading and maths assessments at end of key stage 2 and assessing the difference in the average position of disadvantaged pupils and others. To obtain a disadvantage gap index (values between -10 and +10 with 0 indicating no disadvantage), the mean rank of pupils (who are ordered by their scores in reading and maths) in the disadvantaged and other pupils groups are subtracted from one another and multiplied up by a factor of 20.

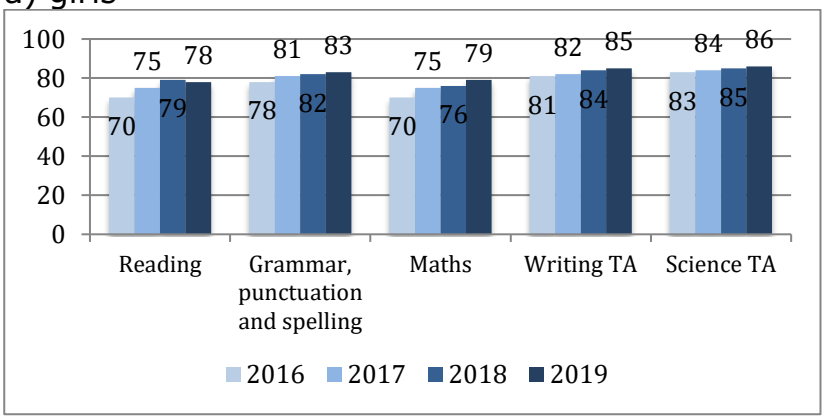
Figure A8.4 Percentage of children reaching the expected standard and percentage reaching a higher standard at the end of KS2 by gender, 2016 to 2019 (England)



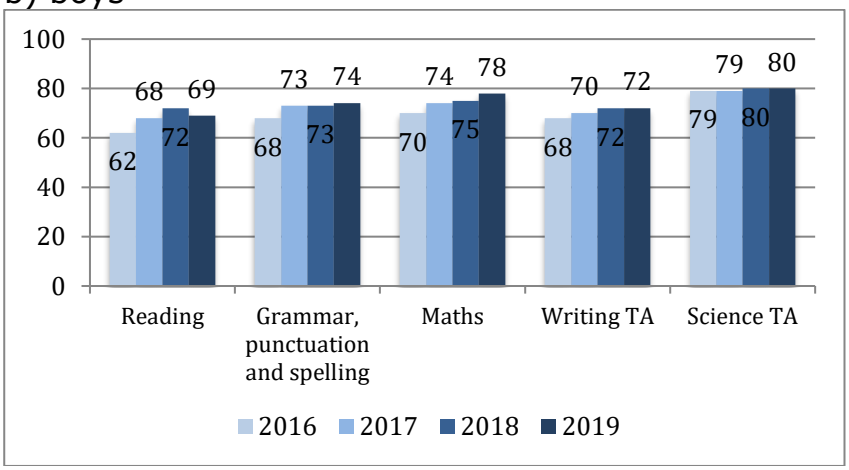
Source: chart produced by authors using underlying data for DfE (2019h). Changes to writing TA frameworks in 2018 meant that figures for 2018 and 2019 are not strictly comparable to earlier years.

Figure A8.5 Percentage of children achieving the expected standard in each subject at the end of KS2 by gender, 2016 to 2019 (all schools, England)

a) girls

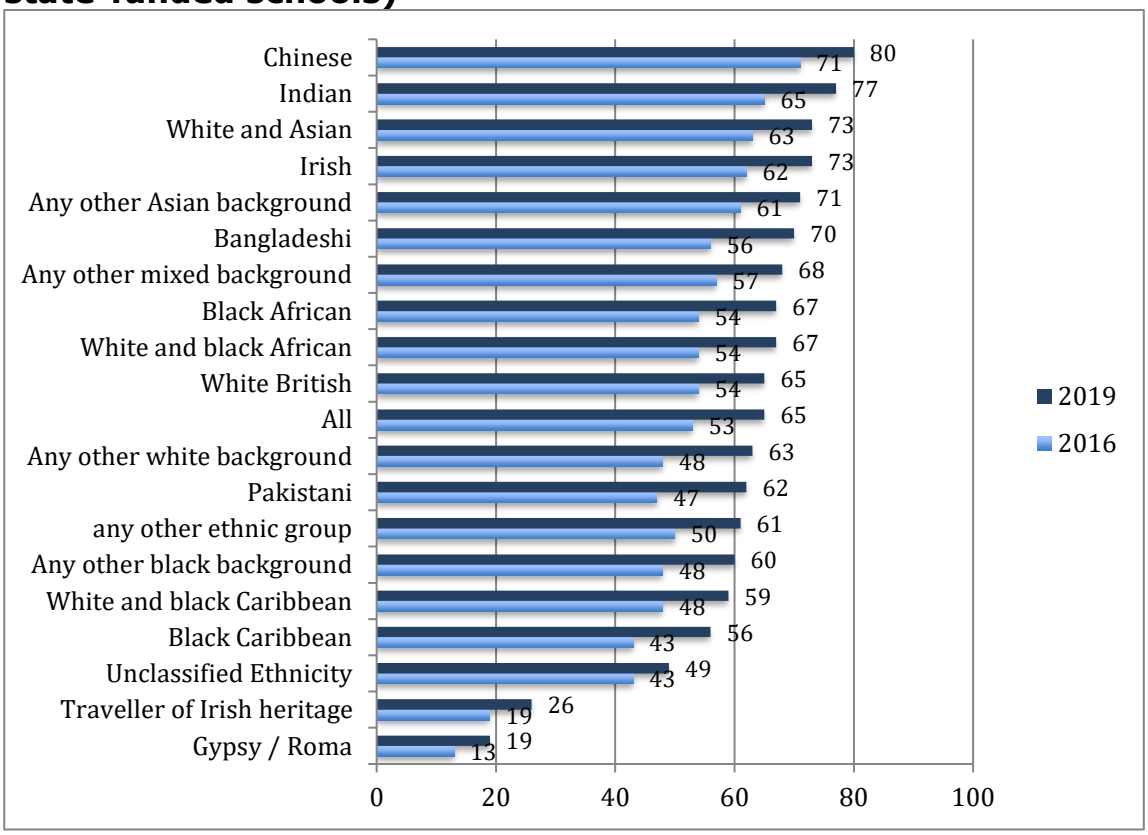


b) boys



Source: chart produced by authors using underlying data for DfE (2019h). Changes to writing TA frameworks in 2018 meant that figures for 'Writing TA' and 'Science TA' for 2018 and 2019 are not strictly comparable to earlier years.

Figure A8.6 Percentage reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of KS2, by (detailed) ethnicity (England, state-funded schools)



Source: chart produced by the authors using figures in Table_N4a in DfE (2019h) and data underlying figure 15 in DfE (2016d)

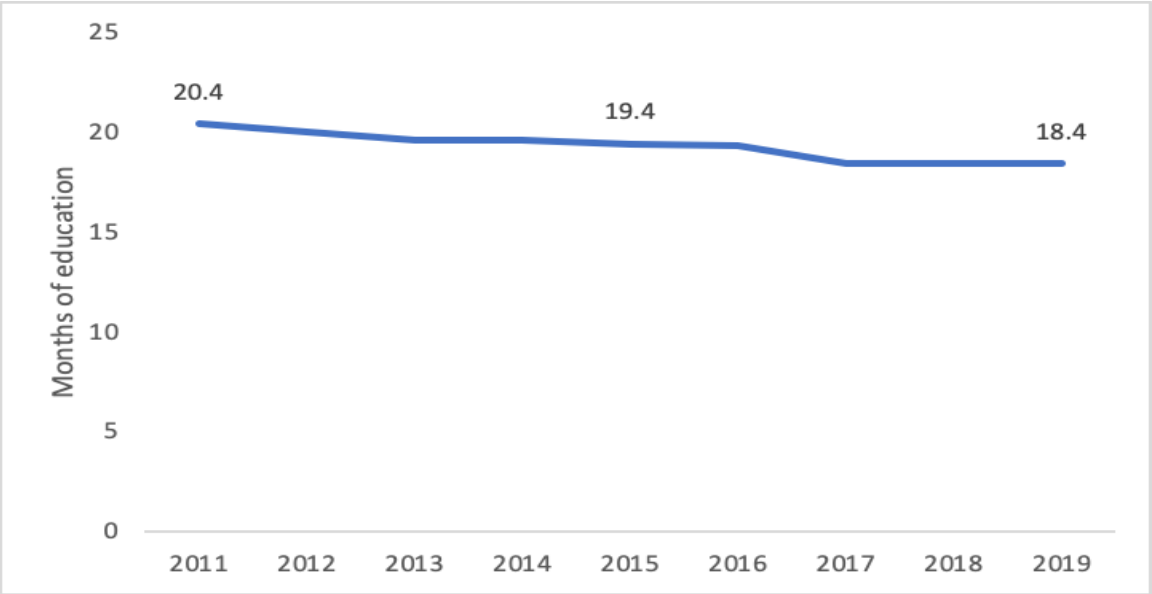
Figure A8.7 Percentage of pupils reaching the expected and higher standard in reading, writing and maths in state-funded schools at the end of KS2 by English region, 2016 and 2019 (sorted by the total % in 2019)

	2016			2019		
	% reaching the expected standard	% reaching a higher standard	Total	% reaching the expected standard	% reaching a higher standard	Total
Yorkshire and The Humber	50	4	54	63	9	72
East Midlands	52	5	57	63	10	73
West Midlands	51	4	55	63	10	73
East	53	6	59	64	10	74
South West	52	5	57	64	10	74
North West	53	5	58	65	10	75
England	***54***	***5***	***59***	***65***	***11***	***76***
South East	55	6	61	66	11	77
North East	57	6	63	67	11	78
London	59	7	66	71	14	85
Inner London	60	8	68	71	14	85
Outer London	59	7	66	71	14	85

Source: Figures for 2016 are from Table L1 in DfE (2016d) and Table_L1 in DfE (2019h)
Notes: 1. Changes to writing TA frameworks in 2018 meant that figures for overall attainment in 2016 and 2019 are not strictly comparable.
2. Includes state-funded schools only.
3. The 'England state-funded schools' figures reported by DfE for regions may be slightly different from the 'England state-funded schools only' figures in the corresponding national tables. This is because the former are presented similarly to LA figures (i.e. including pupils with missing results or pending maladministration).

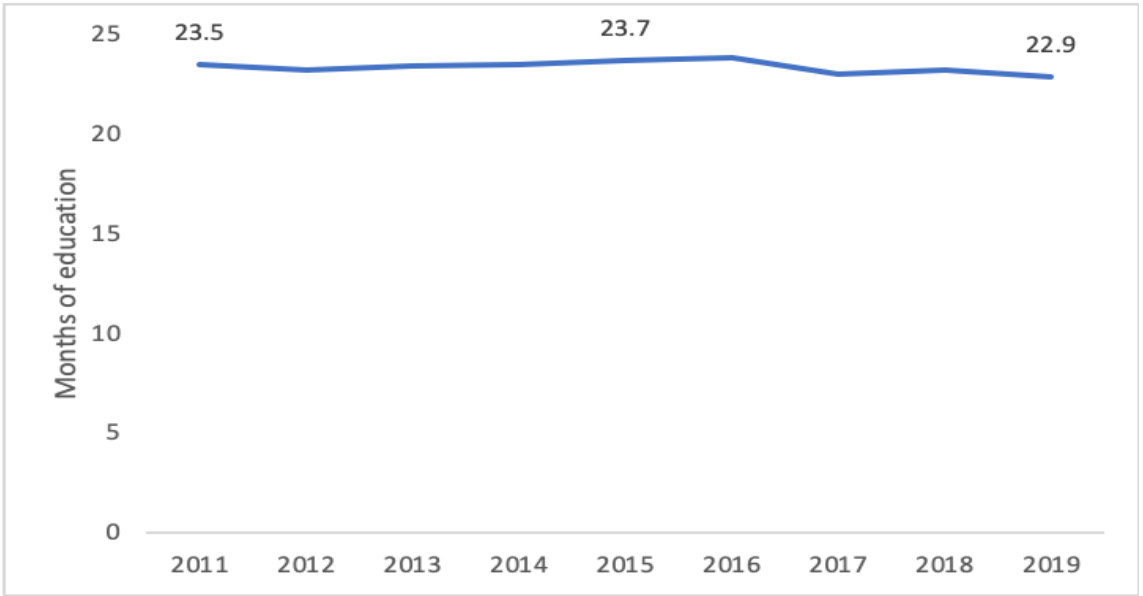
Appendix 9: Key Stage 4 Attainment by Characteristics

Figure A9.1 Trend in disadvantage gap (in months) at KS4



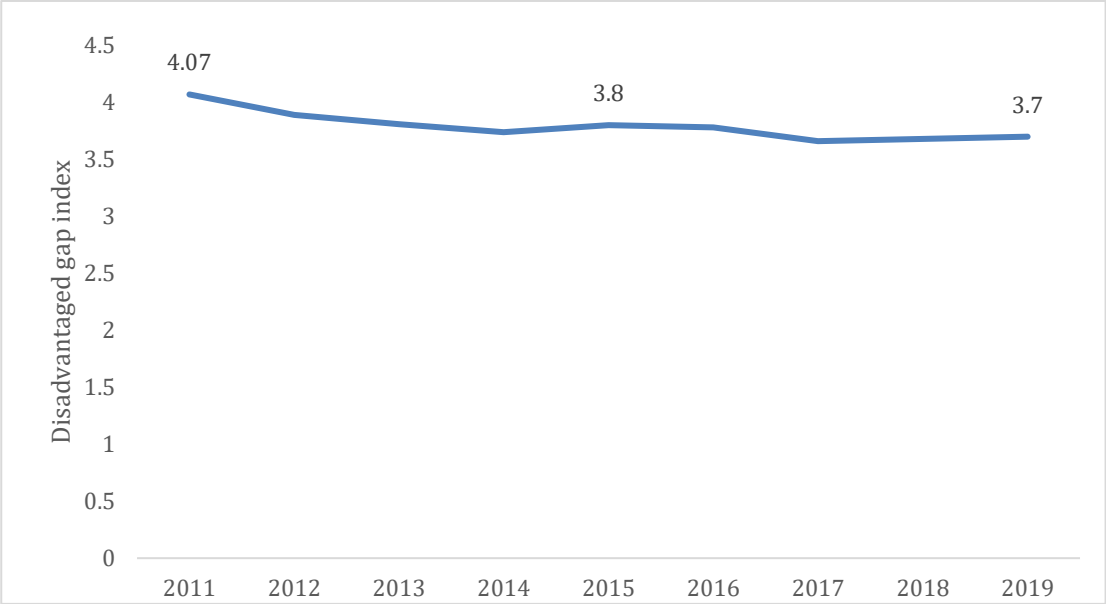
Source: Reproduced from Hutchinson et al. (2020), Figure 2.1
Notes: Gap based on average GCSE grade across all GCSE entries. As well as the 9 to 1 grading scale (which was introduced in 2017 for English and Maths and in 2018 for some other GCSE subjects), with 9 being the highest grade.

Figure A9.2 Trend in persistently disadvantaged gap (in months) at KS4



Source: Reproduced from Hutchinson et al. (2020), Figure 3.1
Notes: Gap based on average GCSE grade across all GCSE entries. As well as the 9 to 1 grading scale (which was introduced in 2017 for English and Maths and in 2018 for some other GCSE subjects), with 9 being the highest grade.

Figure A9.3 Trend in DfE Disadvantaged gap index at KS4 (state-funded schools, England)



Source: Chart produced by authors using underlying data for: key stage 4 performance in DfE (2020c)

Table A9.1 Average attainment 8 score by ethnicity, 2014/15 to 2018/19

		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	White	**48.1**	**49.7**	**45.9**	**46.1**	**46.1**
	white British	48.2	49.8	45.9	46.1	46.2
	Irish	52.9	54.5	51.6	52.2	52.1
	traveller of Irish heritage	24.0	29.3	23.8	21.9	26.6
	Gypsy / Roma	18.6	20.4	18.0	18.2	19.1
	any other white background	48.0	49.5	46.5	47.0	46.8
	Mixed	**49.4**	**50.5**	**47.0**	**47.3**	**47.6**
	white and black Caribbean	44.9	46.3	41.3	41.3	41.0
	white and black African	49.8	50.2	47.1	46.5	47.4
	white and Asian	53.5	54.5	51.8	52.5	53.2
	any other mixed background	51.0	51.8	48.8	49.1	49.2
	Asian	**51.1**	**52.5**	**49.8**	**50.4**	**51.2**
	Indian	56.0	57.0	55.4	56.3	57.3
	Pakistani	46.8	48.5	45.0	45.7	46.2
	Bangladeshi	51.0	52.1	49.9	49.6	50.6
	any other Asian background	53.4	55.0	52.3	53.6	54.5
	Black	**47.2**	**48.7**	**44.8**	**45.0**	**44.9**
	black Caribbean	44.4	45.4	40.5	39.6	39.4
	black African	48.9	50.3	46.9	47.5	47.3
	any other black background	45.1	47.0	42.6	43.0	43.0
	Chinese	**61.1**	**62.4**	**62.6**	**64.2**	**64.3**
	any other ethnic group	49.7	50.2	46.8	47.2	47.3
	unclassified	46.3	44.0	40.1	40.0	40.5
	All pupils	**48.4**	**49.9**	**46.3**	**46.5**	**46.7**

Source: DfE (2020c)

Table A9.2 Average attainment 8 score by regions, 2014/15 to 2018/19

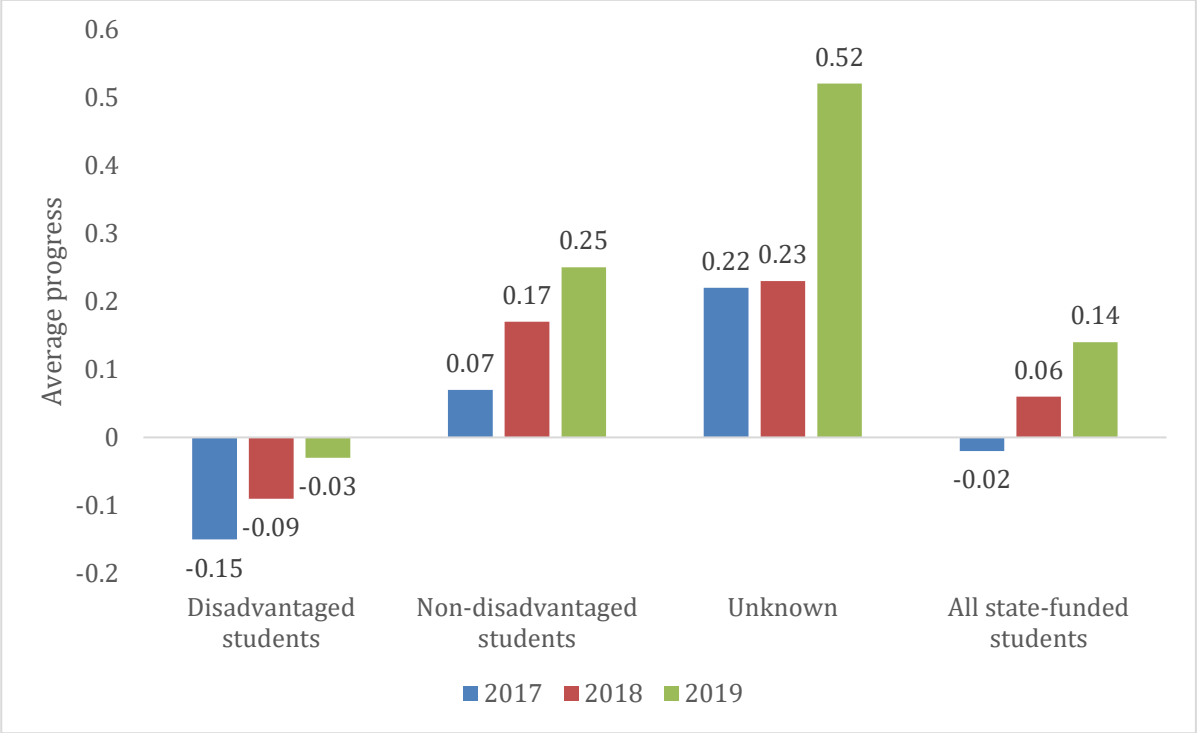
	Average Attainment 8 score per pupil				
	2014/15	**2015/16**	**2016/17**	**2017/18**	**2018/19**
Outer London	51.5	52.3	49.2	49.9	50.4
London	51.1	51.9	48.9	49.4	49.7
Inner London	50.2	51.3	48.2	48.3	48.4
South East	49.6	51.0	47.5	47.8	48.0
East	48.9	50.4	46.7	47.0	47.0
South West	49.0	50.3	46.2	46.7	46.7
East Midlands	47.1	48.9	45.4	45.5	45.8
West Midlands	47.6	49.2	45.4	45.2	45.6
North West	47.8	49.4	45.6	45.7	45.5
Yorkshire and The Humber	46.9	48.9	45.4	45.1	45.4
North East	47.0	48.7	44.7	44.9	44.7

Source: DfE (2020c, 2019j)

Notes: Attainment 8 and Progress 8 are part of the secondary accountability system that was implemented for all schools from 2016. In 2018, Attainment 8 had a maximum point score of 90, compared to a maximum of 87 to 2017, as a result of the phased introduction of reformed GCSEs. This difference should be taken into account when considering any change in Attainment 8 scores between 2017 and any subsequent years. See DfE (2020c, 2019j) for more details.

Appendix 10: Post-16 Attainment by Characteristics

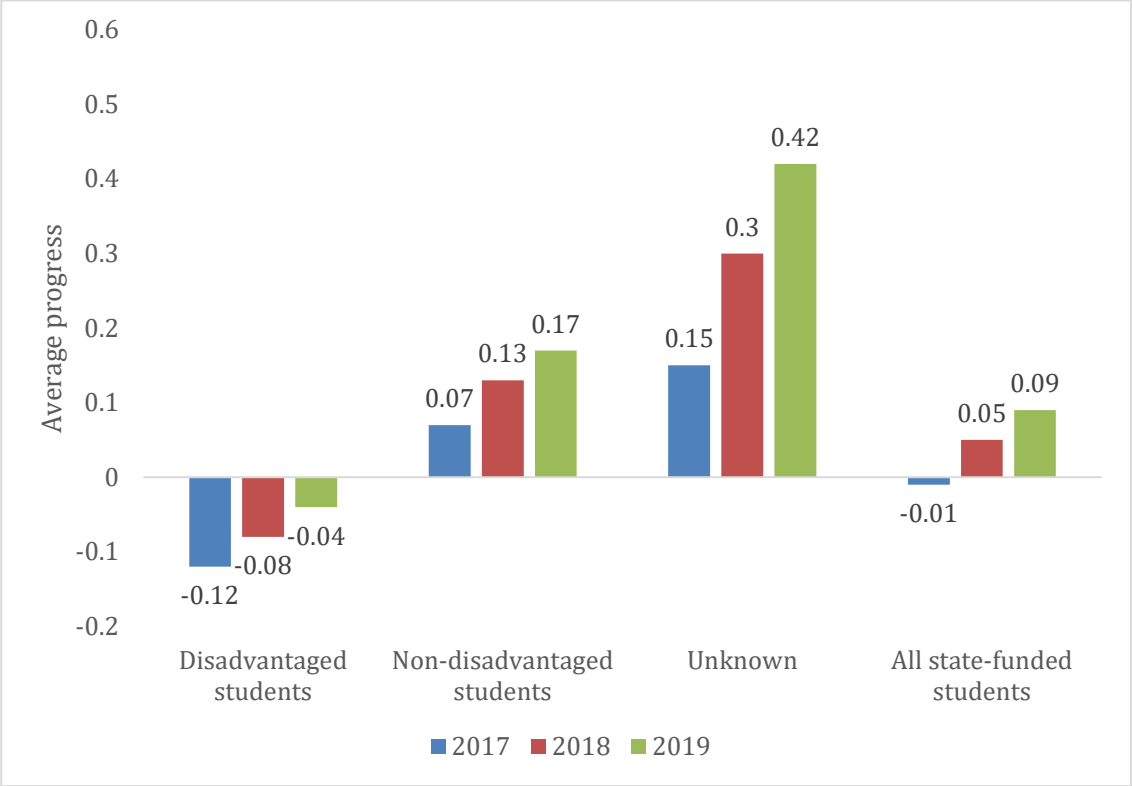
Figure A10.1 National average progress in English, broken down by disadvantage status, England



Source: DfE (2020d)

Notes: The progress measure uses a point score system (0-8) to assign points to both a student's prior attainment at key stage 4 and their attainment by the end of 16-18 study. This gives a measure of the progress made in this time, and is displayed here as a national average on this measure. Data includes students who were reported as disadvantaged, non-disadvantaged students, and for whom disadvantaged status cannot be determined at the end of key stage 4.

Figure A10.2 National average progress in Maths, broken down by disadvantage status, England



Source: DfE (2020d)

Notes: The progress measure uses a point score system (0-8) to assign points to both a student's prior attainment at key stage 4 and their attainment by the end of 16-18 study. This gives a measure of the progress made in this time, and is displayed here as a national average on this measure. Data includes students who were reported as disadvantaged, non-disadvantaged students, and for whom disadvantaged status cannot be determined at the end of key stage 4.

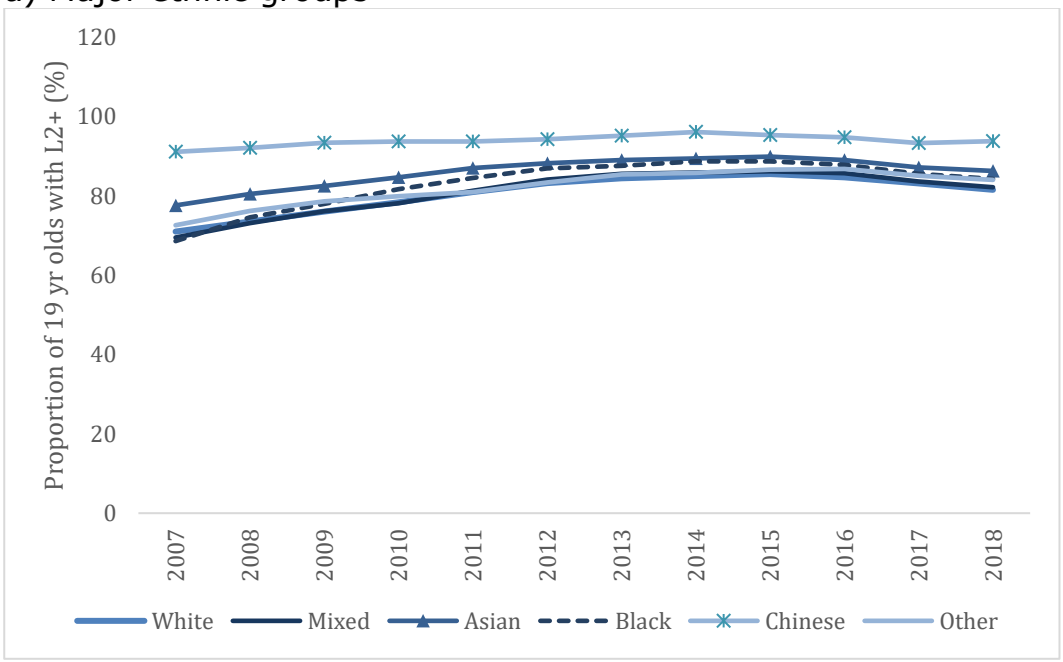
Table A10.3 Proportion of young people with level 2 or higher qualifications by 19

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
All	71.2	74.0	76.5	78.9	81.6	83.8	84.9	85.6	86.1	85.3	83.6	82.2
Gender												
Male	66.6	69.6	72.7	75.5	78.5	81.0	82.2	82.9	83.4	82.4	80.5	78.7
Female	75.9	78.5	80.4	82.4	84.8	86.7	87.8	88.4	88.9	88.3	86.9	85.8
Gender gap	*9.3*	*8.9*	*7.7*	*6.9*	*6.3*	*5.7*	*5.6*	*5.6*	*5.6*	*5.9*	*6.4*	*7.2*
Disadvantaged status in Year 11												
Not	76.4	79.4	82.3	84.6	86.7	88.5	89.4	89.9	90.4	90.0	89.0	88.0
Disadvantaged	48.9	53.1	56.7	61.2	65.1	68.8	71.1	72.0	73.4	72.6	69.2	66.8
Gap	*27.6*	*26.3*	*25.5*	*23.5*	*21.6*	*19.8*	*18.3*	*17.9*	*17.1*	*17.4*	*19.7*	*21.2*
Free School Meal status in Year 11												
Not eligible	74.8	77.2	79.4	81.5	83.9	86.0	87.1	87.9	88.4	87.9	86.5	85.2
Eligible for FSM	49.0	53.6	57.5	61.4	65.3	68.8	70.8	71.3	72.0	70.4	66.5	63.3
FSM gap	*25.8*	*23.6*	*21.8*	*20.0*	*18.6*	*17.1*	*16.3*	*16.6*	*16.5*	*17.5*	*20.1*	*21.9*
Special Educational Need (SEN) status in Year 11												
No SEN	78.2	81.0	83.5	85.9	88.6	90.8	91.8	92.1	91.9	90.9	89.4	87.6
All SEN Pupils	36.2	40.4	45.1	50.2	56.4	61.3	64.2	65.2	65.8	64.1	60.1	54.5
Statements or EHC plans	23.9	25.3	28.8	30.8	33.3	35.1	35.9	37.1	36.9	36.4	33.4	30.9
No statements or EHC plans	40.4	45.2	49.8	55.3	61.5	66.6	69.4	70.5	71.7	70.4	66.7	61.9
SEN GAP	*42.0*	*40.6*	*38.4*	*35.6*	*32.2*	*29.4*	*27.6*	*26.9*	*26.1*	*26.8*	*29.3*	*33.0*
Ethnic Group												
White British	70.9	73.5	75.9	78.4	81.1	83.3	84.5	85.1	85.6	84.8	83.3	81.7
Irish	72.6	76.7	76.5	78.6	82.7	85.1	86.6	86.7	88.4	86.6	86.0	86.8
Traveller of Irish heritage	46.7	36.4	32.5	30.1	27.8	32.8	40.9	40.7	40.7	42.1	39.6	37.7
Other White	74.5	77.8	79.2	79.7	81.0	83.4	84.2	84.3	84.1	83.6	82.1	80.6
Gypsy/Roma	27.3	31.9	29.6	27.1	34.8	37.3	38.3	35.1	38.0	38.3	32.3	26.2
White	*71.0*	*73.5*	*76.0*	*78.4*	*81.0*	*83.2*	*84.4*	*85.0*	*85.5*	*84.7*	*83.1*	*81.5*
White / Black Caribbean	61.5	66.0	69.9	73.0	76.7	80.6	81.7	81.4	81.5	81.9	78.6	76.5
White & Black African	69.8	78.0	79.9	80.5	84.1	85.7	87.4	86.2	88.5	86.8	85.8	83.8
White & Asian	80.2	81.3	83.7	85.0	86.6	87.6	89.1	89.8	89.9	88.7	87.4	86.7
Other Mixed	72.0	74.9	77.6	79.4	82.7	85.5	87.0	88.0	88.1	87.1	85.5	84.3
Mixed	*69.5*	*73.1*	*76.1*	*78.1*	*81.3*	*84.1*	*85.6*	*85.9*	*86.2*	*85.7*	*83.6*	*82.2*
Indian	86.7	88.6	89.5	91.3	93.1	93.8	94.3	94.1	94.5	94.1	92.7	91.9
Pakistani	70.6	73.9	77.1	80.1	83.0	84.9	85.9	86.3	86.8	85.4	83.0	81.3
Bangladeshi	70.4	75.3	78.7	81.0	83.9	85.7	87.3	88.3	88.5	87.9	86.7	87.0
Other Asian	79.9	83.3	83.8	85.0	86.2	87.4	87.5	89.4	90.1	89.3	88.1	88.9
Asian	*77.6*	*80.5*	*82.5*	*84.7*	*87.0*	*88.2*	*89.0*	*89.4*	*89.9*	*89.0*	*87.2*	*86.3*
Caribbean	64.8	71.2	74.0	78.6	81.5	84.4	84.9	86.1	86.0	84.6	81.7	79.5
African	74.5	79.1	82.0	84.9	87.1	89.0	89.8	90.4	90.3	89.7	87.9	87.0
Other Black	62.0	69.3	75.2	78.2	82.2	83.8	84.7	87.8	87.1	85.7	83.2	81.3
Black	*68.6*	*74.6*	*78.0*	*81.7*	*84.5*	*86.9*	*87.6*	*88.7*	*88.7*	*87.8*	*85.6*	*84.3*
Chinese	*91.1*	*92.1*	*93.4*	*93.7*	*93.7*	*94.3*	*95.2*	*96.1*	*95.3*	*94.8*	*93.3*	*93.8*
Other Ethnic Group	72.6	76.2	78.6	79.9	81.0	83.4	85.4	85.8	86.6	86.8	85.1	84.0
Information refused or not obtained	66.8	70.2	72.6	75.2	77.4	82.2	83.3	82.9	85.5	84.5	81.4	79.8

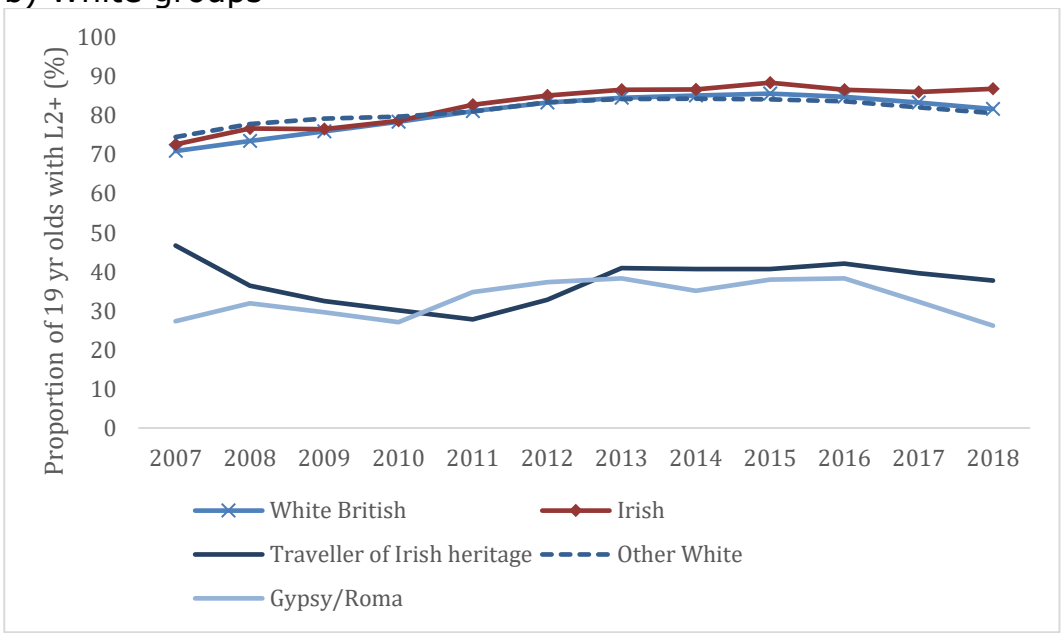
Source: Table T7 in "National tables 6 to 15: state-sector characteristics" accompanying DfE (2019i) report. Coverage: England, young people in state schools at academic age 15

Figure A10.4 Proportion of young people with level 2 or higher qualifications by age 19, England

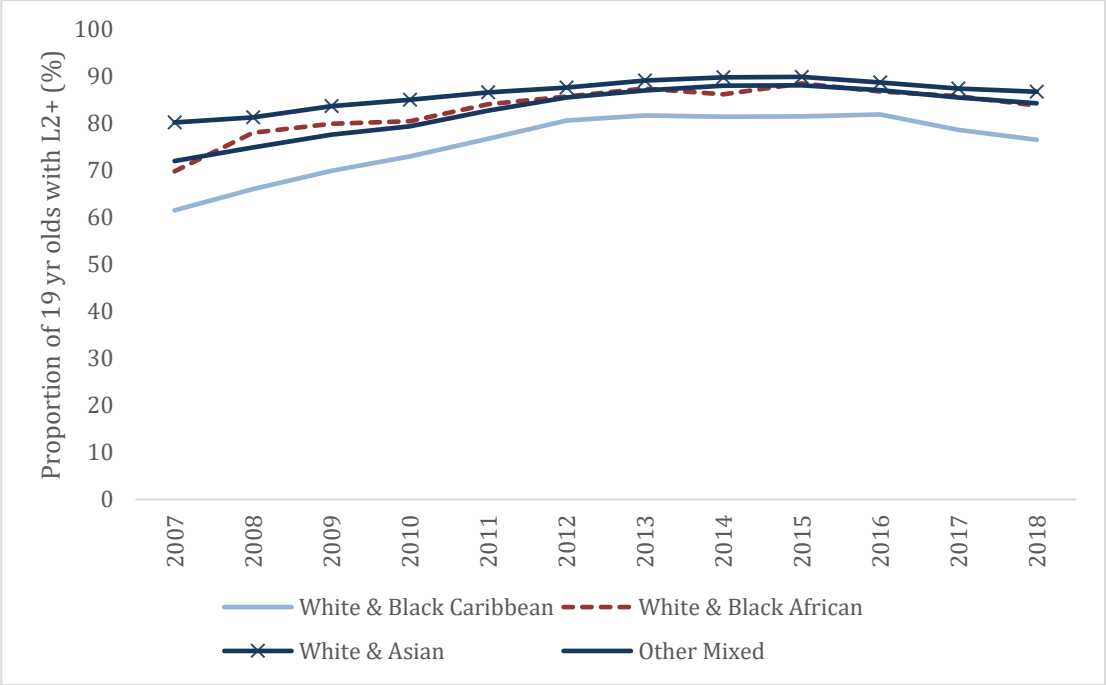
a) Major ethnic groups



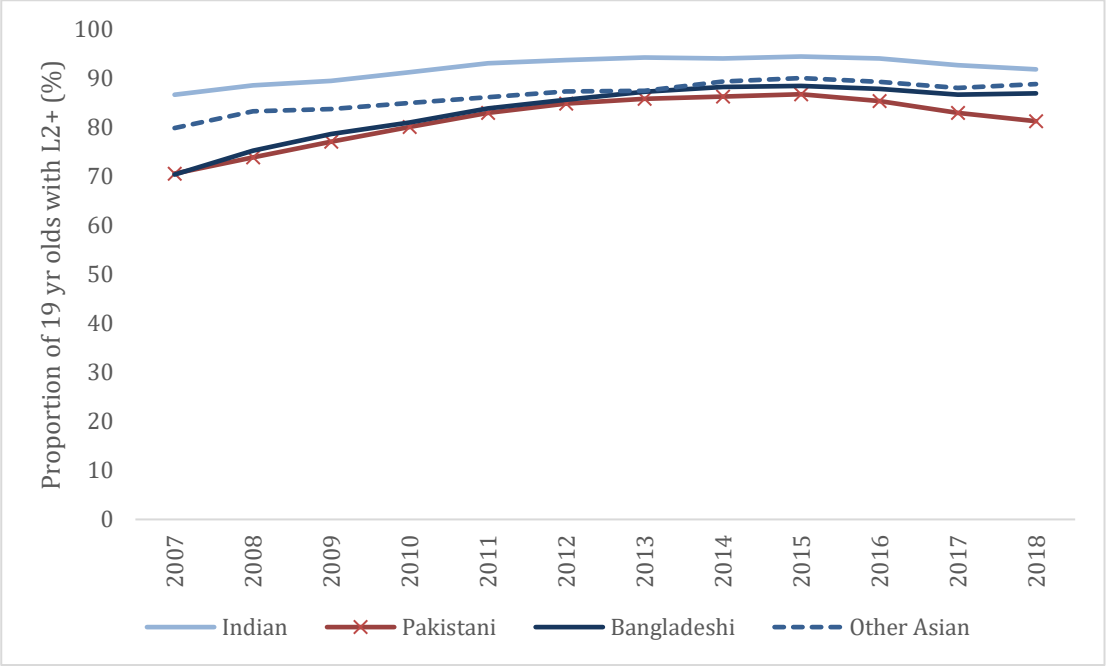
b) White groups



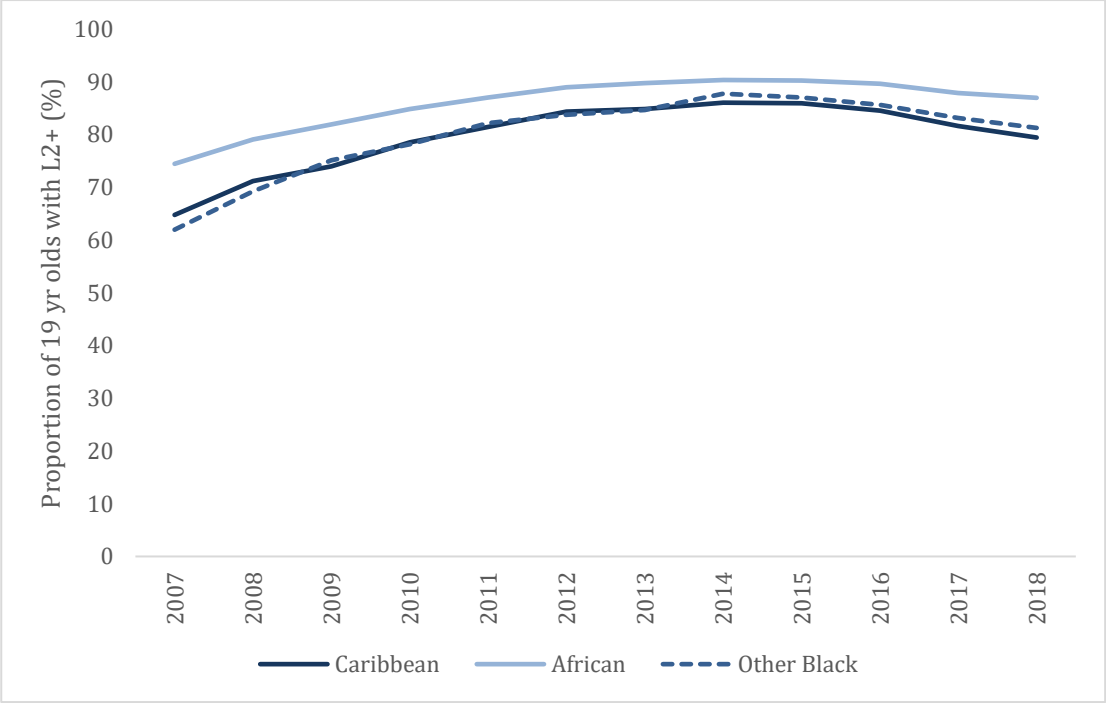
c) Mixed groups



d) Asian groups



e) Black groups



Source: Table T7 in "National tables 6 to 15: state-sector characteristics" accompanying DfE (2019i) report. (Coverage: England, young people in state schools at academic age 15)

Table A10.1 Proportion of young people with level 2 or higher qualifications by 19, by region

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	change 2015 to 2018
Yorkshire & the Humber	67.6	71.2	73.5	76.4	79.4	82.0	83.8	84.6	85.0	84.6	81.7	79.5	-5.5
East Midlands	70.2	72.5	74.8	77.1	80.3	81.7	82.8	83.5	84.3	83.6	81.6	79.6	-4.7
North East	70.2	73.2	76.3	78.5	81.4	83.2	84.5	84.9	85.8	84.8	82.0	80.8	-5.0
West Midlands	70.1	73.0	75.7	78.4	80.6	83.2	84.2	85.1	85.2	84.7	82.3	81.1	-4.1
North West	70.5	73.1	75.8	78.8	81.9	84.4	85.8	86.2	86.2	85.0	83.9	82.0	-4.3
South East	73.1	75.7	77.7	79.8	82.1	84.3	85.2	85.9	86.7	85.6	84.2	82.7	-4.0
South West	72.7	74.7	77.0	79.1	82.1	84.0	84.8	85.3	85.6	84.9	84.1	82.9	-2.7
East of England	72.6	75.3	77.9	79.8	82.1	83.8	84.9	85.4	86.3	85.5	84.1	83.2	-3.2
London	72.5	75.8	78.6	81.1	83.5	86.0	87.0	87.7	88.2	87.6	86.3	85.5	-2.7
England	***71.2***	***74.0***	***76.5***	***78.9***	***81.6***	***83.8***	***84.9***	***85.6***	***86.1***	***85.3***	***83.6***	***82.2***	**-3.9**

Source: Source: Table T16 in " Local authority tables 16 to 24: by FSM and SEN" accompanying DfE (2019i) report