

Social Policy in a Cold Climate

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Labour's Record on Education: Policy, Spending and Outcomes 1997-2010

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Preface

This is one of a series of working papers which form the first stage of a programme of research, *Social Policy in a Cold Climate*, designed to examine the effects of the major economic and political changes in the UK since 2007, particularly their impact on the distribution of wealth, poverty, income inequality and spatial difference. The full programme analysis will include policies and spending decisions from the last period of the Labour government (2007-2010), including the beginning of the financial crisis, as well as those made by the Coalition government since May 2010. The programme is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Nuffield Foundation, with London-specific analysis funded by the Trust for London. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the funders.

The research is taking place from October 2011 to May 2015. More detail and other papers in the series will be found at: http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/new/research/Social_Policy_in_a_Cold_Climate.asp

In our first set of papers, including this, we look back at the policies of the Labour government from 1997 to 2010, charting their approach and assessing their impact on the distribution of outcomes and on poverty and inequality particularly. This provides a baseline for analysing and understanding the changes that are now taking place under the Coalition government. All these papers approach this by following a chain from ultimate policy aims, through specific policy objectives, to public spending and other policies, to outcomes. This provides a device for the systematic analysis and comparison of activity and impact in different social policy areas. A short supplementary paper defining the terms used in the framework and exploring its uses and limitations is available at <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/RN001.pdf>

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Introduction

As we write in 2013, a broad consensus appears to have emerged in English politics about the importance of reducing educational inequalities between richer and poorer pupils, as well as improving educational standards overall. Pledges to close attainment gaps featured in the election manifestos of all three major political parties in 2010 (Labour Party 2010; Liberal Democrat Party 2010; Conservative Party 2010), and led off the section on schools policy in the Coalition Agreement (Cabinet Office 2010).

The programme of reform set out by the Coalition to achieve this has been moving at a rapid pace, including the introduction of the 'pupil premium', total Academisation and the introduction of Free Schools, an overhaul of teacher training, and reforms of the curriculum and examination systems. In 2015, we will be publishing an analysis of these policies: their aims, design and delivery, their cost and their early outcomes.

As the policies have emerged, the government's account of the nature of the problem has also shifted. In the run-up to the general election, the Conservative Party claimed that educational inequalities had widened under Labour (Conservative Party 2008) and this was also stated in the Coalition Agreement. The Schools White Paper of 2010 (DFE 2010) conceded that this was not the case, but argued that inequality was worse than in other countries. The following year, the Social Mobility Strategy made a different claim – that inequality had reduced only slightly despite very large sums of money being spent (Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister's Office 2011). Labour's policies, it claimed, had thus been inefficient as well as ineffective. These claims raise important questions as the parties begin to shape their policies for the next election. Did extra spending help improve standards and narrow gaps? What kinds of policies did or did not work? What scale of changes in educational standards and socio-economic gaps is achievable and can be expected, given wider economic and social conditions? To help inform debate on these questions, and to provide a baseline for our analysis of Coalition policy in 2015, this paper offers an empirical retrospective of Labour's record on education in the school years from 1997-2010, with a particular focus on educational inequality.

The paper focuses mainly on England, as a full four-country comparative study is beyond its scope. It also focuses mainly on the school years. There is some coverage of higher education (HE), and very little on further education (FE). Both will be covered more fully in later work. Labour's policy on the early years is covered in a companion paper (Stewart 2013), while other papers in the series analyse the government's record on health (Vizard and Obolenskaya 2013), cash transfers (Hills 2013a) and neighbourhood renewal (Lupton, Fenton and Fitzgerald 2013), all of which might be expected to have some impact on educational outcomes. Finally, in line with the focus of our wider work on economic inequalities, we concentrate here on the question of educational inequality in relation to poverty and socio-economic status, rather than inequalities between students of different genders, ethnic origins, and learning needs. This is not to imply that these other inequalities are unimportant nor that they are unconnected with socio-economic inequality. The increasing attainment of some minority ethnic groups, for example, is a crucial element in the patterns we describe here. These 'intersectionalities' are more fully explored in analysis elsewhere in the programme by Hills et al. (2013b) which breaks down trends in economic outcomes by the main 'equality groups' covered by the 2010 Equality Act.

Aims

Labour's goals for education were much the same when it entered office in 1997 as when it was campaigning for re-election in 2010: to raise achievements overall in the interests of a more competitive economy and to reduce inequalities in the interests of both of economic competitiveness and a more inclusive and fairer society.

These overarching goals were set out in the Public Service Agreements (PSAs) between the Department responsible for Education and HM Treasury at each spending review, as shown in Table 1. This table also shows the government's objectives for the school years, while the detailed targets set in relation to these objectives are shown in Appendix Table A1. Targets relating to cognitive achievement dominated throughout, although an increasing concern with a wider range of children's outcomes is in evidence from 2004 onwards. This was reflected in departmental reorganisation. At the start of the first Labour term, responsibility for the school years sat within a Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), which by 2001 had become the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), losing employment policy to the new Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). In 2007, skills moved to the new and short-lived Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), and 'education' was formally dropped from the title of the department responsible for schools, as a new department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) was formed. The Coalition's immediate return to a traditional Department for Education marked a decisive break with the direction of policy under Gordon Brown and Ed Balls.

Beyond school, Labour's goal as stated in the 2000 PSA was to "develop in everyone a commitment to lifelong learning, so as to enhance their lives, improve their employability in a changing labour market and create the skills that our economy and employers need". Part of this was to be achieved by improving adult basic skills and levels of vocational qualifications. The government also set itself an ambitious target of increasing the rate of participation by 18-30 year olds in higher education to 50 per cent by 2010, and particularly to make progress on fair access, increasing participation by young people from low income families and traditionally low participation areas.

Table 1: Labour's Education Aims as Expressed in Public Service Agreements

Year of Spending Review	Departmental Aims and Objectives
1998	<p>Departmental Aim: To give everyone the chance, through education, training and work, to realise their full potential and build an inclusive and fair society and a competitive economy.</p> <p>Objective relating to school years: Ensuring that all young people reach 16 with the skills, attitudes and personal qualities that will give them a secure foundation for lifelong learning, work and citizenship in a rapidly changing world</p>
2000	As 1998 (see note)
2002	<p>Departmental Aim: Help build a competitive economy and inclusive society by: creating opportunities for everyone to develop their learning; realising potential for people to make the most of themselves; achieving excellence in standards of education and levels of skills.</p> <p>Objectives relating to school years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain improvements in primary education • Transform secondary education • Pupil inclusion • Raise attainment at 14-19
2004	<p>Departmental Aim: As 2002</p> <p>Objectives relating to school years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard children and young people, improve their life outcomes and general well-being, and break cycles of deprivation • Raise standards and tackle the attainment gap in schools • All young people to reach age 19 ready for skilled employment and higher education
2007	<p>Departmental Aim: No single aim</p> <p>Objectives relating to school years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure the wellbeing and health of children and young people • Safeguard the young and vulnerable • Achieve world class standards in education • Close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds • Ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond • Keep children and young people on the path to success

Sources: Public Service Agreements for respective years

Note: In 2000, the word 'thus' was added before 'build', otherwise the aim was exactly the same.

Policies

For the school years, three kinds of policies were enacted. First, there were reforms to the nature of education: curriculum, assessment and the types of schools available. Second, there were policies to improve system performance across the board, such as inspection, training, central guidance on pedagogy, investments in school buildings and equipment, and accountability through targets. Third, there were specific targeted initiatives and programmes to address the needs of children from low income homes, those needing particular or complex support, and/or those at risk of or already disengaged from learning.

In higher education, Labour came into office faced with a financial crisis caused by rapid increases in participation during the 1980s and early 1990s that had not been matched by increases in funding. Moreover it was apparent that the main beneficiaries of the expansion of HE had been those from higher social classes (Dearing 1997). Its policies in this area therefore followed two interlocking paths: one an overall reform of higher education finance, but in a way that would enable fairer access; and the other a set of specific policies to encourage wider participation.

Curriculum and assessment

In contrast to the current government, Labour did not make reform of curriculum and assessment one of its first term objectives. The national curriculum was retained with its Key Stage tests forming the basis of the school accountability system, as was the system of GCSEs and A levels. The key early intervention, building on a policy introduced by the previous Conservative administration, was to strengthen the focus on literacy and numeracy in the primary curriculum, with the new literacy and numeracy strategies prescribing a mandatory hour a day on these subjects. However, over time, the system was reformed in the direction of greater curriculum breadth and personalisation, and with a stronger emphasis on engagement both in the primary and secondary school.

At primary level, concerns that the initial focus was making the curriculum too narrow were reflected in 2003 in *Excellence and Enjoyment: A strategy for primary schools*, which emphasised school and teacher autonomy and replaced the national literacy and numeracy strategies with a new, broader, primary national strategy. The government moved further in this direction in 2008/9, when it commissioned Sir Jim Rose to conduct an independent review of the primary curriculum with the aim of reducing prescription and content in order to give schools more flexibility over how to teach and how best to supplement the basic curriculum in order to meet local and individual needs. Rose's recommendations for a slimmer national entitlement were adopted in 2009, but had not been implemented by the time Coalition took over and initiated its own curriculum review. Significantly, Rose was only tasked with looking at curriculum, unlike the wider, charitably-funded, Cambridge Primary Review (CPR) which came out in the same year and made more far-reaching recommendations for the reform of primary education including a later start (at age six) and the abolition of national tests and league tables. The government rejected CPR, as well as a critical report on 'teaching to the test' by the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee in 2008 which recommended decoupling assessment from school accountability (House of Commons 2008). Nevertheless it made some moves in this direction by abolishing Key Stage 2 tests in science, and piloting a system of 'single tests' with children being entered when teachers thought they were ready rather than at specific age.

In a similar vein, there was no change to the secondary curriculum in Labour's first term, with curriculum review coming in the second and third terms and leading to greater broadening and flexibility, and a partial withdrawal from testing. The introduction of the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners in 2004 saw a new emphasis on variation within schools and a wider range of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 as equivalent to GCSEs. For a short time in 2004, it also looked as though the direction of travel might be towards a new 14-19 diploma framework that would subsume GCSEs, 'A' levels and vocational qualifications, as recommended by the Tomlinson Review. However, the government eventually rejected the Tomlinson recommendations, instead retaining GCSEs and 'A'

levels. However it increasingly emphasised 'personalised learning', with varying routes and options for individuals within the basic structure. New vocational diplomas were introduced as well as wider opportunities for work-based learning before and after the age of 16 in order to encourage engagement in further learning. The 2005 Schools White Paper, with its major focus on personalised learning, also announced that all schools were to offer extended services (8am-6pm with a range of out-of-hours learning opportunities to cater for different interests), as well as intensive small group tuition in English and maths for those falling behind, and an increased emphasis on identifying and promoting opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, and more grouping and setting by subject ability. National Tests at Key Stage 3 (age 14) were scrapped in 2008, partly to do with problems with their delivery, but also to enable a greater focus on learning rather than on testing in the early years of secondary school.

Another important development was the increasing emphasis put on social and emotional aspects of learning from the mid 2000s. The SEAL programme, a whole-school approach to promoting self awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills, was piloted in 2003 and rolled out in primary schools in 2005 and secondary schools in 2007. By 2010, the approach was being implemented in 90 per cent of English primary schools and 70 per cent of secondary schools. The Steer Report on Learning Behaviour, in 2005 also addressed this issue, encouraging schools to evaluate links between learning, teaching and behaviour and to establish Learning Support Units. A 2009 follow-up report noted improvements since 2005 and identified the contribution of the National Strategies in supporting schools in self-evaluation, embedding SEAL, encouraging schools to appoint strategic leaders for behaviour and attendance and developing materials on Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) to support teacher training.

We also include here Every Child Matters (ECM) – a new approach introduced in 2003 following the Laming Inquiry into the tragic death of Victoria Climbié the previous year. ECM was not about curriculum or assessment, but about a new approach to children's services, both universal and targeted, arising from Laming's recognition that child protection could not be seen as an issue separate from that of children's well-being generally. It set out a vision of a good childhood - that all children should be able to enjoy and achieve, stay safe, be healthy and happy, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. It aimed to reduce the numbers of children who experienced educational failure, engaged in offending or anti-social behaviour, suffered from ill-health or became teenage parents. However, although this was not a schools policy per se, schools were to play a major part. The Children's Plan of 2007 signalled a vision of a 21st century school which, in line with ECM, "actively contributes to all aspects of a child's life – health and wellbeing, [and] safety ... because they help children achieve, but also because they are good for children's wider development and part of a good childhood" (DCSF 2007 p 146). The change in terminology and the interagency working that followed, in combination with SEAL, extended schools, vocational qualifications and work-based learning, encouraged schools to see achievement in a broader sense, to offer a wider range of learning opportunities in order to promote engagement, and to work with other agencies to support achievement, particularly for the most disadvantaged. New inspection arrangements required schools to assess how they were contributing to children's well-being not just their cognitive attainments.

Post-16 policies are also important to note. A key goal established early on, and inherited from the Conservatives, was to increase participation after the age of 16, encouraging more young people into continuing education and training rather than employment without training, or unemployment. The government aimed to reduce the numbers of 16-18 year olds not in education employment or training (so-called NEETs), which stood at 8.5 per cent in 1997, to 8.2 per cent by 2004. In-school programmes were obviously key. But new initiatives were also directly targeted at post-16s: Connexions – a new integrated service incorporating careers advice, youth services and other support services for young people, and the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a weekly cash allowance of up to £30 payable to young people aged 16-19 from low income families remaining in full-time education, which rolled out to all areas in 2004. However, by 2004 9.6 of young people were classified as NEET, rising to 10.4 in 2006. New targets were set to reduce the proportion of NEET young people by 2 per cent by 2010. In 2007, it was

announced that the compulsory 'participation age' (including work-based learning and apprenticeships as well as school or college) would rise to 17 from 2013 and 18 in 2015.

School Choice and Diversity

Increasing choice and diversity within the school system was a key objective for Labour under Tony Blair, emerging strongly from 2001 as the government switched its focus from primary school improvements to reform of the secondary school system. Labour had already adopted and expanded the Conservative policy of specialist schools, and in 1998 made it possible for such schools to select up to 10 per cent of their intake on aptitude in the existing specialisms in sport, the arts, modern languages and technology. The number of specialist schools expanded from 200 in 1997 to 1000 by 2002, already nearly one third of secondary schools. The 2001 Schools White Paper, *Schools Achieving Success*, introduced new specialisms in mathematics and computing, science, engineering and business and enterprise, and announced the intention to extend the programme to 50 per cent of secondary schools by 2005. The requirement for private sponsorship was halved, and the following year a Partnership Fund was launched to make up shortfalls in sponsorship for schools wanting to become specialist. Specialisms in humanities and music were added in 2004. By 2010, virtually all secondary schools had at least one specialism and a trial of specialist primary schools had also been launched.

In 2000, the Academies programme was announced. Early policy documents suggest that Academies were initially principally seen as devices to transform learning experiences in the most disadvantaged urban areas, thus a school improvement policy rather than a school diversity policy, and one which was intended to be fairly limited in scale. However, the programme brought in new school providers in the form of Academy sponsors (typically businesses and individual entrepreneurs at this stage), capital contributions and matching funding from government for new buildings and facilities, as well as the ability to vary the national curriculum and staff terms and conditions. By the time of the Schools White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All*, in 2005, the Academy model (now described as a 'state funded independent school') appeared to be valued in its own right not just as a mechanism for turning round schools in the poorest areas, and the government adopted explicit targets to increase the number of Academies to at least two hundred.

The 2005 White Paper (subtitled *More Choice for Pupils and Parents*) itself marked a significant move towards a choice and diversity agenda in education, led by the Prime Minister. Indeed commentators at the time observed that the paper seemed to be in two distinct halves, written by two different people – one dealing with matters of curriculum, pedagogy and school improvement, with an emphasis on personalised learning and additional tuition for children who were falling behind, and the other launching an expansion of choice. The latter included proposals for a new form of school, the Trust school, and a wider range of proposals to start to reconfigure the school system: giving parents the right to request new schools; moving local authorities into commissioning roles rather than setting up and running their own schools; encouraging more faith schools; and encouraging schools to federate. The importance of supporting choice for less advantaged families was recognised in proposals for choice advisers and free transport.

In many respects, the White Paper and its subsequent enactment in the 2007 Education and Inspections Act paved the way for the Coalition's more fundamental reforms. It was not universally supported by Labour MPs. Tensions within the Labour party over the proposals led to a back-bench rebellion and forced amendments to the Bill, notably a strengthening of the admissions code to limit the potentially segregating effect of increased school diversity. Under Gordon Brown, there was no further attempt to extend this agenda nor particularly to promote Trust schools, while the independence of Academies was to some extent curtailed by the requirement that they follow the national curriculum in core subjects. The other countries in the UK also declined to follow the choice and diversity agenda of Labour in England.

School Improvement

School improvement policies under Labour took a number of forms. Perhaps the most significant policy decision overall was the decision to continue with the system of school performance tables adopted by its Conservative predecessor in the early 1990s as part of a suite of market reforms designed to drive up standards by making schools compete with each other for pupils. Performance tables are now a familiar part of the educational furniture in England, but in 1997 they were a relatively new development. The governments of both Scotland and Wales discontinued them after devolution.

In England, Labour accompanied performance tables with strong central management of performance through targets mandating that all schools must achieve a certain level of performance in national examinations. The first targets were introduced in 2000, with the 'floor' being gradually raised as standards improved overall. The approach was one of extra support combined with pressure. On two occasions, Labour issued lists of schools that it most wanted to see improved, or closed. In 1997 an initial 'naming and shaming' of 18 schools led to twenty-five schools being 'Fresh Started' – closed and re-opened them with new headteachers and many new staff, new names, uniforms and badges, and sometimes with new buildings. In 2008 a much larger scheme, the National Challenge, was announced. 638 schools currently below the floor target were given notice to improve or be closed and replaced by an Academy. National Challenge (not to be confused with the City Challenges, see later) involved extra support to school leadership teams from a dedicated 'National Challenge advisor', local authorities and the National College for School Leadership, as well as targeted training for established and newly qualified teachers. However its tightly specified timeline for improvement or closure meant that it was a powerful 'stick' as well as 'carrot' measure.

However, while competition between schools and central management through targets were major planks of Labour's school improvement agenda, they were not the only ones. The new government embarked on a general expansion and improvement of the school workforce, through additional recruitment, policies to better reward teachers and to raise the status of the profession by seeking to attract top graduates, and new professional development requirements and opportunities. Average teachers' salaries had been virtually static (in real terms) since the early 1990s until the end of the decade. In 2000, Labour increased salaries for newly qualified teachers, by 6.6 per cent, more than double the rate of inflation, as well as introducing performance pay and an upper pay scale. A new system of management allowances replaced responsibility points and a new grade of Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) was introduced, carrying higher salaries. From 2002, the government also adopted the Teach First scheme, under which top graduates could receive a short training programme and then take up a teaching position, in a disadvantaged school, for two years, before resuming their chosen career. There were 560 Teach First graduates in schools by 2010 (Teach First 2013).

Teachers' work, as well as their pay, was reconfigured under Labour. In 2003, the government signed a national workforce agreement with the teacher unions, designed to free teachers from administrative tasks and excessive cover, and to give them guaranteed time for planning, preparation and assessment. This, along with the many additional initiatives and programmes that were being introduced, stimulated demand for a much larger number of support staff: teaching assistants, mentors, family liaison offers and so on. Indeed the workforce agreement acknowledged the vital role played by school support staff and led to the establishment of higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) standards and roles, creating the opportunity for some career progression for these staff.

Initiatives were also introduced to improve teacher quality through professional development. Teacher training was reformed. From 1998, newly qualified teachers were required to complete an 'induction year' in schools, with a reduced timetable, support from a tutor, and regular observation and review. For aspiring headteachers, a new National Professional Headship Qualification (NPQH) was established, along with a new National College for

School Leadership. More fundamentally, the government vastly expanded the amount of guidance and support to serving teachers. A key tool was the set of 'National Strategies' which, though regarded by many as overly prescriptive, provided teachers with materials and guidance to help increase consistency and quality of performance. These started with the national literacy and numeracy strategies in 1997, and developed in 2001 with the introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy (later Secondary National Strategy), offering consultancy, guidance and teaching materials across all subjects and on whole-school approaches to assessment and monitoring, behaviour and attendance. National strategy advisors supported teachers and school leaders – thus creating a new tier in the workforce. Many other initiatives sought to extend teachers' experience and collaborative networks and the sharing of good practice, starting with Beacon Schools in 1998, a Leadership Incentive Grant for schools in Excellence in Cities (see later) or in otherwise challenging circumstances, Leading Edge Partnerships for secondary schools and Primary Strategy Learning Networks from 2005, the Families of Schools set up under the City Challenges. A significant change was the requirement from 2004 for local authorities to provide all schools with a school improvement partner (SIP) to support the headteacher in planning and improvement. This latter initiative was the key element in what the government called its New Relationship with Schools in that year, in which it recognised the need to streamline and improve the relationship between the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Local Authorities (LAs) and schools; ensure closer alignment of national and local priorities; and address 'bureaucracy' as an ongoing area of concern at both the primary and secondary phases of education. Other elements included greater use of self evaluation and a new lighter touch inspection framework.

Targeted Policies

As the previous section demonstrates, many of Labour's universal policies incorporated an element of additionality or tailoring towards the most disadvantaged schools or areas. Teaching was to be improved across the board, but with Teach First boosting efforts in disadvantaged schools. Academies both brought new providers and innovation into the market, and targeted new resources and approaches at areas of educational disadvantage. Fresh Start and National Challenge policies were directed at the lowest performing schools, often in low income communities.

In addition, targeted programmes formed an important part of Labour's approach. This is a particular point of contrast with the Coalition's direction of travel. Whereas the current government emphasises the autonomy of individual schools and teachers to decide the best ways to use pupil premium funding to raise the achievements of the most disadvantaged, support by 'toolkits' and other means of exchanging good practice, Labour took a more centralised route, initiating centrally designed and funded initiatives directed to specific places.

Initially, the focus was on areas of disadvantage, beginning with Education Action Zones - local clusters of schools that would look for innovative approaches to raising attainment, for example: adapting curriculum, varying teachers' pay and conditions, or running family literacy schemes. Seventy-three EAZs eventually covered some 1300 schools, before being amalgamated into a bigger programme, Excellence in Cities (EiC), in 1999. EiC was targeted on all secondary schools (and later on about a third of primaries) in selected urban authorities. Funding of about £120 per pupil per year was provided to support specific interventions: learning mentors, learning support units, City Learning Centres, and provision for students identified as 'gifted and talented'. At the same time, various other additional funds were directed to disadvantaged schools, most notably Pupil Learning Credits (PLC), an additional grant to 260 secondary schools in EiC areas with 35 per cent or more pupils on Free School Meals (FSM), and aimed at pupils aged 11-14. Typically schools received an additional £55k-£75k per year between 2001 and 2003 (about three times as much per pupil as EiC), and had great flexibility over how it was spent.

Schools in disadvantaged areas also benefited from a plethora of other ring-fenced grants and tailored support and guidance (Simkins 2004), including ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG), a leadership incentive grant. In 39 communities, additional education inputs were provided through New Deal for Communities (NDC) regeneration

programmes and from 2001-2007, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) also supported similar initiatives. In addition, perhaps one of Labour's biggest and most ambitious targeted programmes was Building Schools for the Future (BSF). Announced in 2004 and hitting the ground from 2005/6, BSF set out to upgrade and refurbish the entire secondary school building stock in 15 to 20 years, involving not just construction of new schools, but also improving facilities at existing schools, such as ICT infrastructure and new ways of using ICT across the curriculum. In 2007, a complementary but smaller scale Primary Capital Funding programme was also announced. A critical and intriguing feature of BSF was that it was targeted not at the worst school buildings, which James (2011) has argued would have been a more efficient way to upgrade the stock, but at the most disadvantaged local authorities – thus a programme that was as much about raising educational ambition in the poorest areas as it was about maintaining and upgrading buildings. By the time Labour left office in 2010, work on over 160 schools was completed, with another 450 well underway: i.e the programme had affected about one fifth of secondary schools.

One criticism that has been made of these area-based initiatives is that they were geographically targeted but not really area-based: that is to say that they were either individual school improvement programmes or ways of funding additional compensatory education initiatives (such as breakfast clubs or learning mentors) in response to need but without particular tailoring to the structural and contextual features of the areas in question (Lupton 2009; Whitty 2008). A partial exception was the London Challenge, introduced in 2003 for secondary schools and 2006 for primary schools, and rolled out in 2008 to two other conurbations, Greater Manchester and the Black Country, as City Challenge. In contrast to previous ABIs, London/City Challenge took a city-wide and strategic approach, with chief advisers working with local authorities and schools across the city. It emphasised structural issues for school improvement, including teacher recruitment, professional development, and additional support for leadership in the most disadvantaged schools, rather than principally being about specific initiatives or funding streams to support disadvantaged pupils (although some of these were developed locally). Key elements included: a positive approach designed to raise ambition across the city, rather than pressure on 'failing' schools'; school advisers directly employed by DCSF providing bespoke support to identified schools; improved data to enable schools to benchmark; collaboration between schools; tailored support for headteachers and middle leaders; an accreditation scheme for London teachers; and promotion of Teach First and key worker housing.

Beyond the City Challenges, there were other programmes designed to support achievement in disadvantaged schools. A programme of support for leadership and teaching in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances (SFCC) was succeeded in 2008 by the 'Extra Mile' project, which ran from 2008-2010 in a small number of disadvantaged schools (about 100 secondaries and 40 primaries), and was designed to help schools implement the successful practices of other schools which appeared to 'buck the trend' by achieving highly despite disadvantaged intakes. The programme was based on a set of guidance materials, support from advisers and from a linked partner school. The first phase of secondary schools also received a small grant (£10,000) and both the primary schools and their partner schools also received small grants (£7,000 and £3000) as did their local authorities. Notably the identified practices were not the standard menu identified by generic school effectiveness studies, but ones tailored specifically to more disadvantaged contexts, such as promoting and valuing partnerships with parents and the community, having empathy for pupils' backgrounds, and helping pupils to manage their emotions – showing perhaps that lessons had been learned from research on the particular organisational challenges to improvement in deprived areas.

In parallel, the late 2000s also saw an increasing focus on individual pupils who were falling behind, partly in recognition of the fact that research showed more advantaged pupils benefiting most from programmes targeted at schools. Between 2005 and 2007, specific programmes – Every Child a Reader and Every Child Counts - were developed for children falling behind the expected levels at Key Stage 1, with the aim that these should each reach 30,000 six-year old children by 2010/11. Every Child a Writer, aimed at children in Years 3 and 4, and designed to improve whole-class tuition, guided writing and one-to-one tuition, was piloted in 2008/9 and rolled out to 60 local authorities in 2009/10 under the auspices of the National Strategies. In 2007, DCSF also funded a two year

'Narrowing the Gap' research and development programme, coordinated by the Local Government Association, to work out how better to narrow gaps (on all the ECM outcomes) between disadvantaged and vulnerable children and their peers by strengthening institutional arrangements between schools and children's services, improving leadership and governance, and engaging parents and carers. 96 local authorities took part in the project.

Finally, a late development, in 2008, was the announcement of an overhaul of provision for pupils educated outside of mainstream schooling in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) or other settings, sometimes known as 'education other than school' or 'education elsewhere'. Such pupils are among the most disadvantaged and marginalised in the education system. In 2006, only one per cent of 15 year-olds in Pupil Referral Units achieved five GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent. A tenth of PRUs in 2006/7 were adjudged inadequate by Ofsted. The 2008 'Back on Track' White Paper announced measures to establish a core educational entitlement for young people in alternative provision, and to improve planning, commissioning and accountability. Twelve pilot projects ran from 2009 to 2011.

Schools Policy Overview

Looking at these policies as a whole, we draw out four main points. First, there was a good deal of continuity with the reforms of the Thatcher and Major governments in the sense that: education continued to be defined as a servant of economic growth and international competitiveness and positioned as a private rather than a public good; success was judged in terms of the acquisition of qualifications for the knowledge economy; and market principles and structures were used to regulate and improve the system as well as to promote individual choice. (Grek and Ozga 2008) observe that similar paths have been followed by numerous European states.

Second, Labour's distinctive approach to public management was strongly in evidence - central government intervention and guidance, targets, support and pressure, investment in infrastructure and workforce all marking a departure from what went before. A very substantial volume of policy was initiated, paid for and organised by central government. This included centralised initiatives on curriculum, pedagogy and professional development for schools and teachers in general as well as a large number of additional programmes, initiatives and funds targeted at the most disadvantaged areas, schools and pupils. From the mid 2000s, as in other areas of Labour social policy, there were attempts to consolidate and streamline multiple initiatives, and also to move from a very centralised approach to one in which schools and teachers had more autonomy, albeit strongly constrained by performance targets. One interpretation of this is that the early years of government were focused on trying to quickly establish better practices and support systems, getting to a point where it was possible to let go of the reins to a greater extent.

Third there were some distinctively progressive aspects in Labour's policy mix with evidence of a move towards greater targeting of disadvantage and on reducing inequalities as time went on and standards overall started to rise. Table A1 shows that earlier targets focused on raising overall standards and on reducing the numbers of schools and local authorities with low attainment, thus aiming to closing gaps by bringing more pupils up to expected levels. This remained the case throughout, but from 2004, and particularly from 2007, a sharper focus was added, perhaps in recognition that improvements at the school and LA level could still leave behind the most disadvantaged individuals. Targets for children in care emerged in 2004, and a direct indicator of the attainment of those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) compared with others was introduced in 2007, although individual schools continued to be held to account on overall levels of achievement not on their success with the most disadvantaged. Indicators of progress as well as raw attainment were added. One thing that made this possible was the significant investment in data resources, including the creation of the National Pupil Database. Considerable resource was also put into evaluation, leading in some cases to wider programme roll-outs and in other cases to sharper targeting, such as on individuals rather than simply on schools.

Fourth, Labour's policy over these thirteen years was not a steady progression towards the implementation of clearly agreed goals and policies. There were clear divisions in the party. Choice and diversity were very much the policies of the Blair camp. From 2004, and particularly from 2007 under the direction of Ed Balls, there was a shift towards a broader agenda for childhood, incorporating mental and physical health, participation and enjoyment as well as educational achievement and economic goals, and greater emphasis on children's 'being' (their current state) as well as their 'becoming' (preparing them for the future labour market). While pressing ahead with the 'standards agenda', for the first time since the 1970s, some parts of government at least were articulating the view that cognitive achievements were only one of the aspects of a good childhood for which schools should be responsible. ECM, the Children's Plan, extended schools, SEAL, work-based learning and vocational qualifications all pointed to a broader and more inclusive vision of education and a serious attempt to engage all learners, whatever their starting point, family background or educational resources at home.

Higher Education

In a striking parallel with the situation faced by the Coalition in 2010, Labour came into office needing to swiftly respond to the recommendations of a commission on the funding of higher education appointed by its predecessor, in this case the Dearing Committee. Dearing recommended the introduction of a flat-rate contribution from students of around 25 per cent of the average university tuition cost, paid back through an income-contingent mechanism by graduate in work. It also recommended an income contingent mechanism for repaying maintenance costs.

Labour's initial response, in 1998, was to introduce tuition fees, for the first time in England. However these were to be paid up-front and contingent on parental income. No fees were paid by students whose families were in a bottom income band (about 40 per cent of students), £500 by those in the next band, and a full £1,000 per year by the remainder. Maintenance grants were abolished, but the existing mortgage-type loans for maintenance were replaced by a 'graduate tax' system, as Dearing had recommended, so that low income students ended up paying less. These reforms were unsurprisingly unpopular with students, but also with leading universities, who argued that the fee income was insufficient. The Higher Education Act of 2004, therefore, increased fees, with effect from 2006, and allowed them to vary between universities up to a cap of £3,000 per year (so called 'top-up fees'). It also moved them from an up-front payment to the graduate tax model, as used for maintenance loans, as Dearing had suggested. Maintenance grants, abolished in 1998, were reinstated from 2006 for low-income students, and students who were eligible for full maintenance grants also received help with fees. Thus the government persisted with the Conservative policy of shifting the cost burden of HE away from general taxation and onto students and their parents, but at the same time attempted to reduce the expected deterrent effect for potential students from low income families. While some research showed that students from lower social classes were more debt averse than their higher social class peers and therefore more likely to be put off from going to university at all (Callender and Jackson 2005) others (e.g. Barr and Crawford 2005) argued that the income-contingent nature of the scheme would reduce its perceived risk and also that the alternatives (spending more public money on higher education at the expense of pre-schools and schools, or limiting the number of places available), would be more detrimental to low-income students' chances of getting to university than a 'loans for fees' scheme progressively designed. In Scotland, tuition fees were abolished in 2008.

Partly in response to criticism of its funding changes, and partly to meet its goal of expanding and widening access, Labour also adopted Dearing's recommendations that higher education institutions (HEIs), should implement strategies including bursaries and to widen participation, monitored by a new Office For Fair Access (OFFA). It also introduced, in 2004, its national Aimhigher programme, to raise aspiration, attainment and HE participation among non-traditional groups by a series of interventions including master-classes and mentoring schemes, information, advice and guidance, university visits, talks and roadshows.

Resources

Overall Increases in Spending

Financing these policies meant a considerable increase in spending. When Labour took office in 1997, UK spending as a proportion of GDP (4.6 per cent) was at its lowest point since the mid 1950s and also low by international standards (10th out of fifteen EU countries). Arguably, given Labour's emphasis on childhood (and especially on childhood disadvantage) in other areas of its social policy (Hills 2013a; Stewart 2013), spending more on education and on the education of the poorest children might be seen as a policy in itself.

Table 2 shows total spending on education in the UK from 1997/98 to 2009/10 in cash and real terms. These data refer to the UK as a whole, not England¹. The data also refer to education spending as a whole, covering nursery, primary and secondary schools, further and higher education, central administration and inspection and local authority services, and student support. In 2009, school spending made up about 70 per cent of the total.² For comparative purposes, we also show the data from 1991/92 to 1996/97, the period of John Major's Conservative government.

Table 2: Total Public Expenditure on Education in the UK 1991/2 to 2009/10

Years	Political period	Total public expenditure on education (Nominal) £ billion	Total public expenditure on education (Real, 2009/10 prices) £ billion	Total real expenditure, Indexed, 1997-98=100	Annual growth in real expenditure	Average annual increase in real expenditure (geometric mean)	Average annual increase in real expenditure (geometric mean)	Average annual increase in real expenditure (geometric mean)
1991-92	Thatcher / Major	31.3	47.6					
1992-93	Major	33.2	48.9	100.0	2.9			
1993-94		34.7	49.8	102.2	1.7			
1994-95		36.2	51.1	105.6	2.7	1.0		
1995-96		37.0	50.8	114.5	-0.7			
1996-97		37.8	50.0	125.4	-1.5			
1997-98	Blair (1)	38.6	49.7	130.5	-0.6			
1998-99		40.0	50.8	142.6	2.2	3.3		
1999-00		42.2	52.5	147.9	3.4			
2000-01		45.9	56.9	155.4	8.3			
2001-02	Blair (2)	51.2	62.4	158.4	9.5		4.6	
2002-03		54.7	64.9	165.2	4.1	6.6		
2003-04		61.0	70.9	170.1	9.2			4.5
2004-05		65.1	73.6	178.1	3.7			
2005-06	Blair (3)	69.8	77.3		5.1	3.5		
2006-07		73.5	78.8		1.9			
2007-08	Brown	78.4	82.2		4.3			
2008-09		83.2	84.6		3.0	4.0		
2009-10		88.6	88.6		4.7			

Source: HM Treasury Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA)

¹ Data for the individual UK countries are not consistently available over this period. England accounts for the lion's share of the UK population and spending, so English policy decisions will have driven most of the patterns observed here.

² HM Treasury PESA 2011, Table 5.2

The table shows a 78 per cent real terms increase in expenditure over the Labour period, contrasting with virtually no increase during the previous government's term in office. The biggest year on year increases came during Blair's second term, between 2001/2 and 2004/5.

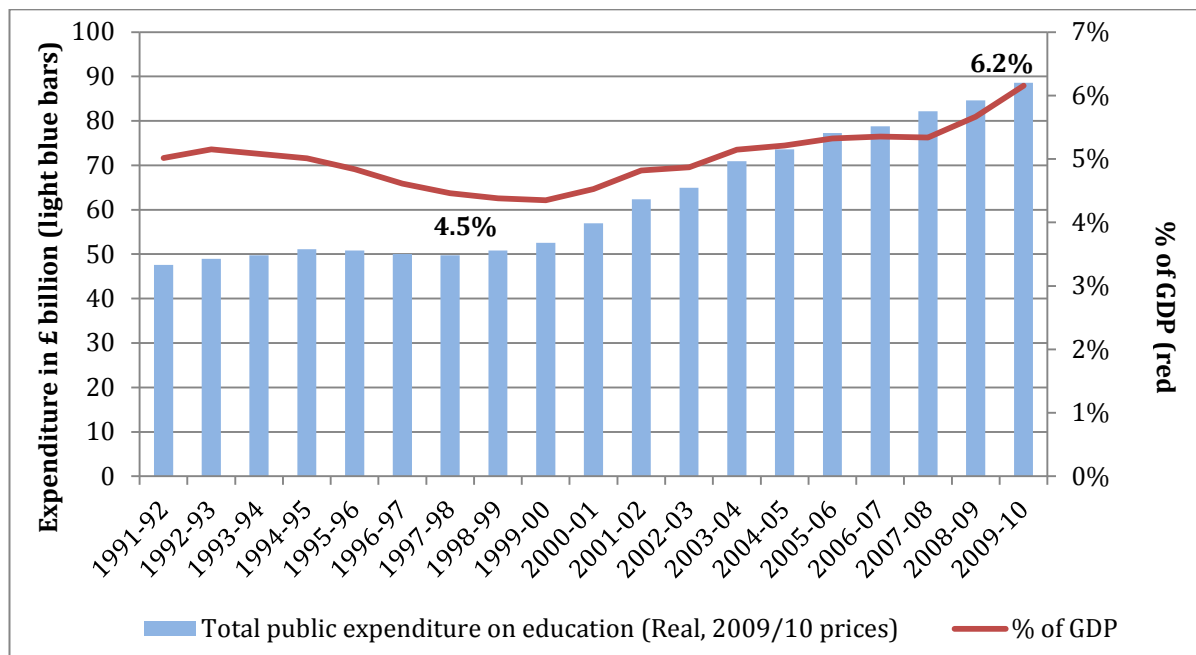
Table 3 shows these same data as a proportion of GDP, demonstrating how much of the national income was spent on education, and in Figure 1 we chart real terms spending both as £billion and as per cent of GDP, both back to 1991/2. (Chowdry and Sibieta 2011a) put this in longer historical perspective. Labour's spending prior to the financial crash and recession (i.e. up to 2007/8) took it back up to the level of the early 1980s (5.5 per cent). Its continued spending to 2010, combined with a large fall in GDP, took spending to 6.2 per cent of GDP – back to the post-war high-point of 1973-4.

Table 3: Total Public Expenditure on Education in the UK 1991/2 to 2009/10 as a Percentage of GDP

Years	Political period	Total public expenditure on education (Real, 2009/10 prices) £ billion	Real GDP (2009/10 prices) £ billion	% of GDP
1991-92	Thatcher/Major	47.6	948.010	5.0%
1992-93		48.9	949.761	5.2%
1993-94		49.8	980.114	5.1%
1994-95	Major	51.1	1,020.350	5.0%
1995-96		50.8	1,049.564	4.8%
1996-97		50.0	1,085.552	4.6%
1997-98		49.7	1,114.826	4.5%
1998-99	Blair (1)	50.8	1,160.296	4.4%
1999-00		52.5	1,208.108	4.3%
2000-01		56.9	1,257.826	4.5%
2001-02		62.4	1,294.001	4.8%
2002-03	Blair (2)	64.9	1,332.555	4.9%
2003-04		70.9	1,377.908	5.1%
2004-05		73.6	1,410.916	5.2%
2005-06	Blair (3)	77.3	1,451.859	5.3%
2006-07		78.8	1,471.138	5.4%
2007-08		82.2	1,538.689	5.3%
2008-09	Brown	84.6	1,494.330	5.7%
2009-10		88.6	1,439.547	6.2%

Source: HM Treasury Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA)

Figure 1: Total Public Expenditure on Education (UK) shown in real terms and as percentage of GDP 1991/2 to 2009/10



Source: HM Treasury Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA)

Increases in spending far exceeded increases in the child population. Figure 2 shows demographic change in key population age groups over the Labour period in office. We show two sets of figures in this graph. UK-wide numbers of children in the primary and secondary age groups are shown to provide a parallel with the UK-wide spending figures in Figure 1. Numbers of full-time equivalent pupils in English schools³ are shown to contextualise later discussion of teacher numbers.

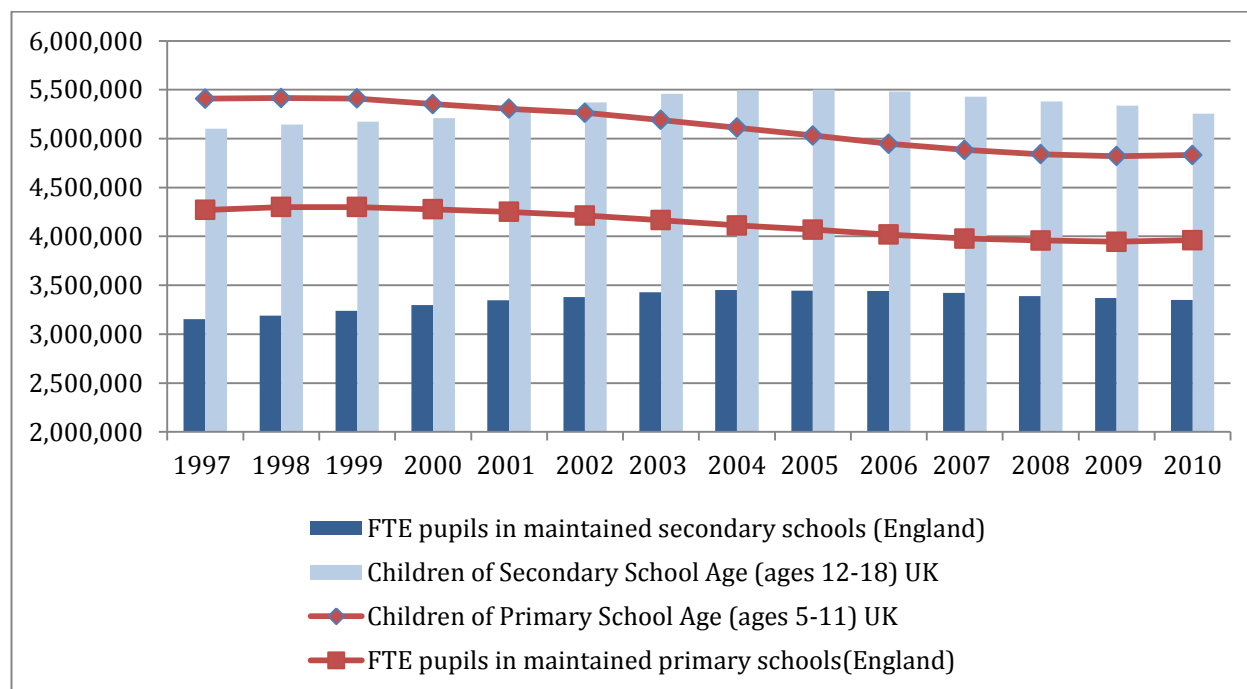
In both cases, the number of primary school children fell in the early 2000s before flattening out towards the end of the decade. In UK-wide population terms, primary numbers finished down four per cent for 2010 compared with 1997. Numbers of children in English primary schools were down seven per cent. Numbers of secondary school children showed the inverse trend. UK-wide, numbers of secondary age children were up three per cent. Numbers in English secondary schools were up six per cent. The proportion of young people of university age was up 22 per cent in the UK over the period, although, as we have seen, the bulk of public education spending is not directed towards them but towards those in compulsory education.

Overall this is a position of little change, compared with the large change in spending shown in Figure 1. The result of the combined spending and demographic trends is that spending per child, in real terms, went up by approximately the same amount as spending overall – between 70 and 80 per cent.⁴

³ Maintained secondary schools, academies, City Technology Colleges and also maintained special schools and Pupil Referral Units are included. Data for the age of pupils in independent schools is not consistently available but overall the percentage of pupils in independent schools remained constant at about 7 per cent throughout the period, so fluctuations would not significantly affect trends in state school numbers.

⁴ Data from OECD suggest a 72 per cent rise from 1999 to 2009 (probably too low as not all years are included), while our own calculations based on children aged 5 to 18 over the whole period suggest an 80 per cent rise (probably too high as spending on HE and under fives is included while numbers in those age groups are not, as provision is not universal).

Figure 2: Change in Size of Key Population Sub-Groups 1997-2010



Sources: UK Populations: ONS (Mid-year population estimates by single year of age)
 School Pupils: Figures for years 1997 to 1999 are from Schools and Pupils in England: January 2005; figures for 2000-2010 are from DfE: Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2010

International Comparisons of Spending

It is commonly pointed out that the increase in spending in the UK was relatively high by international standards, often in conjunction with a statement that increases in educational standards were not commensurate. For example, Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director of Education at OECD, was widely reported as saying “Spending in the UK has gone up really a lot and has not been reflected in changes to exam scores. You have seen huge effort on the part of government and at the same time outcomes have been flat” (Daily Telegraph 11th Sept 2012, Daily Mail 12th September 2012). We come to international comparisons of attainment later in the paper.

In Table 4, we compare spending as a percentage of GDP in the UK with three different sets of countries, using OECD data for 1999 to 2009 (the last available year):

- the OECD countries
- the EU15 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK)
- the four big Western European nations (France, Germany, Italy and the UK)

Table 4: International Comparisons of Spending on Education 1997/99 to 2009

Country	Percentage of GDP			Ranking					
	1997	2009	Diff 1997- 2009	OECD 30		EU 15		Big 4	
				1997	2009	1997	2009	1997	2009
Belgium		6.6			7		4		
Chile		4.8	4.8		26				
Estonia									
Israel		5.8			12				
Slovak Republic		4.1							
Slovenia		5.7			15				
Turkey									
Iceland	18.3	7.8	-10.5	1	2				
Denmark	7.9	8.7	0.9	2	1	1	1		
Norway	7.5	7.3	-0.2	3	3				
Sweden	7.4	7.3	-0.2	4	4	2	2		
New Zealand	6.9	7.2	0.4	5	5				
Finland	6.7	6.8	0.1	6	6	3	3		
Austria	6.2	6.0	-0.2	7	9	4	6		
France	5.9	5.9	0.0	8	11	5	8	1	1
Canada	5.5	5.2	-0.3	9	19				
Switzerland	5.4	5.5	0.1	10	16				
Poland	5.4	5.1	-0.3	11	21				
United States	5.3	5.5	0.2	12	17				
Portugal	4.9	5.8	0.9	13	13	6	9		
Netherlands	4.8	5.9	1.1	14	10	7	7		
Ireland	4.7	6.5	1.8	15	8	8	5		
Australia	4.6	5.0	0.4	16	25				
Germany	4.6	5.1	0.4	17	22	9	11	2	3
Hungary	4.5	5.1	0.6	18	20				
UK	4.5	5.7	1.2	19	14	10	10	3	2
Spain	4.5	5.0	0.5	20	24	11	12		
Italy	4.5	4.7	0.2	21	27	12	13	4	4
Mexico	4.2	5.3	1.1	22	18				
Czech Republic	4.2	4.4	0.2	23	28				
Luxembourg	3.9			24		13			
Korea	3.7	5.0	1.4	25	23				
Japan	3.5	3.8	0.3	26	29				
Greece	3.1			27		14			

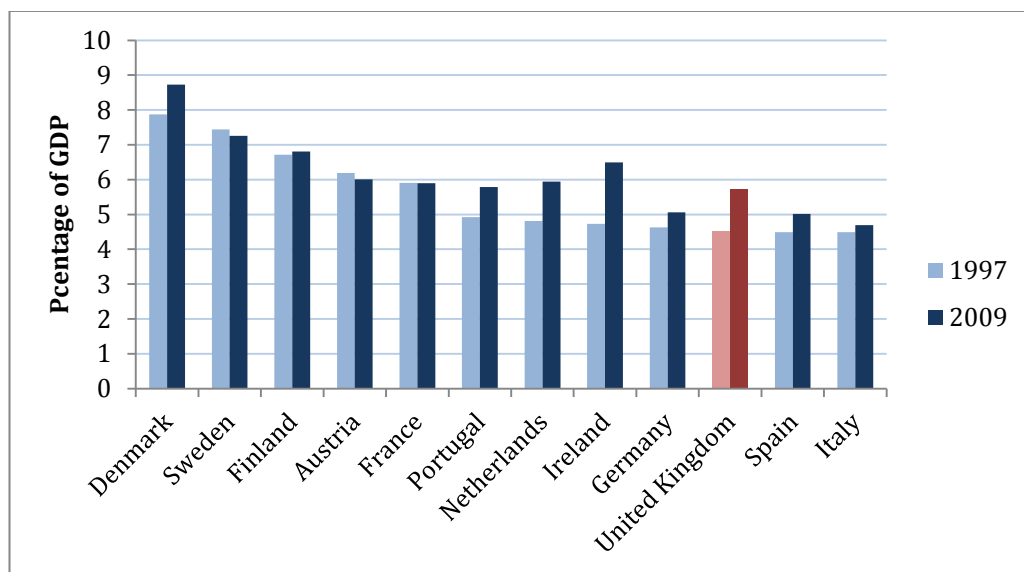
Source: OECD data library (extracted May 2013)

Notes: All Government Expenditure on Education (All levels and expenditure not allocated to a level).

Against all these comparators, the UK was a low spender at the start (19th of OECD, 10th of EU15, and 3rd of the big four). Its increase in spending was relatively large. However, this large increase did little to move the UK up the international spending league tables. It moved up only to 14th in the OECD, remaining 10th in the EU15, and 2nd of the big four).

Figure 3, showing these data for the EU15, shows that the trend was for a flattening of the distribution. Higher spending countries tended to reduce spending or have smaller increases as a proportion of GDP, while mid and low-table countries increased their proportionate spending to bring it more into line with the higher spenders.

Figure 3: International Comparison of Education Expenditure as % of GDP 1997 and 2009



Source: OECD data library (extracted May 2013)

Notes: All Government Expenditure on Education (All levels and expenditure not allocated to a level). Luxembourg, Greece and Belgium excluded as had missing data in one of the two years

Looking at per capita spending, based on full-time equivalent numbers of pupils and students, also shows the UK being a low spender at the start of the period, again closing the gap somewhat but remaining one of the lower spending nations in 2009. We show these data for primary and secondary education separately in Figures 4 and 5. Of the fourteen EU countries that consistently supplied data on this basis, the UK was the 12th lowest spender on primary education in 1999, moving up to 7th by 2009. For secondary school pupils, the UK was the 10th lowest spender at the start, moving up to 9th.

Figure 4: International Comparison of Expenditure at Primary level per pupil 1999 and 2009

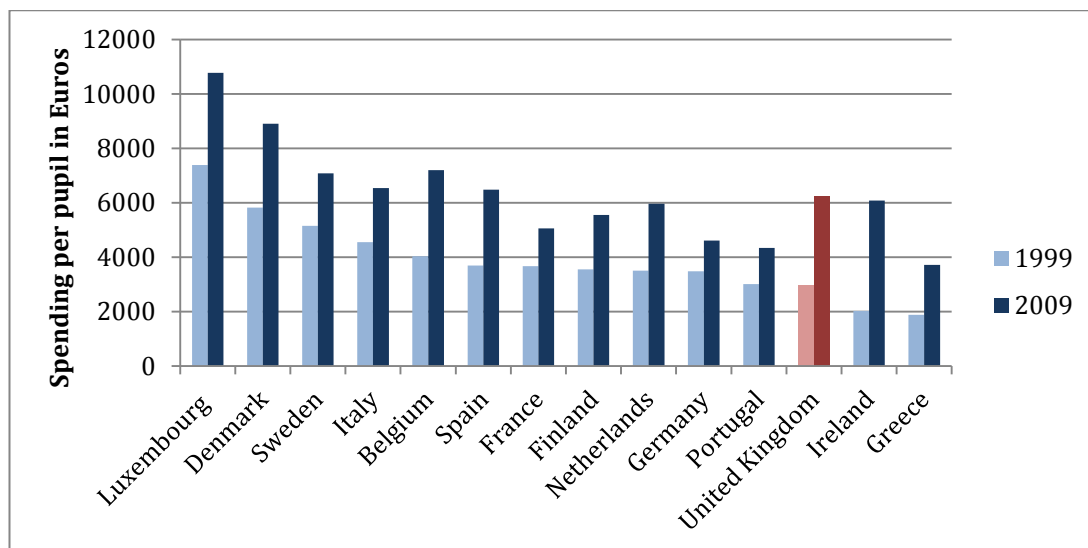
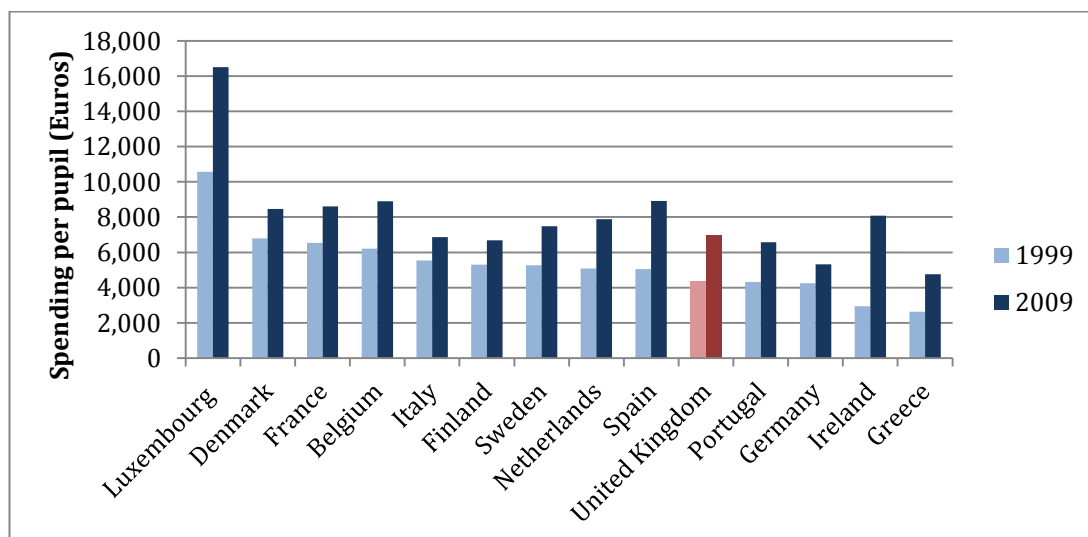


Figure 5: International Comparison of Expenditure at Secondary Level per pupil 1999 and 2009



Source for Figure 4 and 5 : Eurostat. Austria excluded as no data for later period. Data for 2009 is latest supplied by country: 2008 for Germany, 2005 for Greece, 2007 for Luxembourg

Spending on different aspects of education

UK –wide data do not enable a consistent comparison over time showing which components of education benefited most from extra spending. For England the question can be partly answered by analysis of data from the Department for Education, which breaks down spending by tier for the period up to 2009. These are shown in Table 5 and summarised in Figure 6.

According to these data, total education spending in England was up 82 per cent in real terms (2009/10 prices). The biggest increase was for secondary education, which grew from around £10 billion per year to £18 billion in real terms, a 75 per cent rise. Primary school spending rose 56 per cent and higher education spending 38 per cent. Further education spending also shows a large rise in this table. However, because of uncertainty over the classification of expenditure categories over time we do not include this in Figure 6.

Table 5: Education expenditure by Central¹ and Local² Government by Sector in real terms in England, 1997-98 to 2008-9 (£ million)³

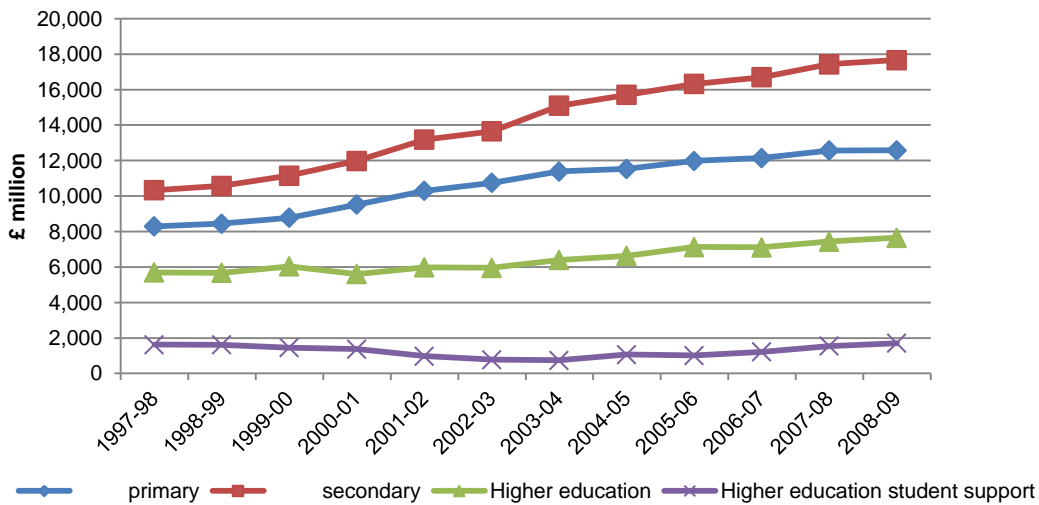
	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	provisional outturn	estimated outturn
Schools	24,882	25,787	27,676	30,586	33,804	35,624	39,632	41,233	43,289	43,638	45,436	46,685
Capital (4)	1,382	1,529	1,655	2,037	2,369	2,895	3,520	4,026	4,293	4,300	4,435	5,402
Current (5)	23,500	24,259	26,021	28,548	31,435	32,729	36,112	37,207	38,996	39,338	41,001	41,283
of which:												
under 5s (6)	2,256	2,327	2,589	2,924	3,515	3,599	4,029	4,283	4,418	4,112	4,276	4,438
primary	8,430	8,646	8,980	9,831	10,673	11,249	11,955	12,086	12,567	12,696	13,174	13,117
secondary	10,506	10,828	11,406	12,370	13,663	14,292	15,848	16,472	17,115	17,457	18,266	18,423
other (7)	2,308	2,457	3,045	3,424	3,584	3,589	4,280	4,368	4,895	5,072	5,284	5,306
Further education and Adult and Community learning (8, 9)	4,297	4,257	4,372	4,788	5,708	6,074	8,936	9,147	9,978	9,438	9,888	10,011
of which:												
FE and other lifelong learning	//	//	//	//	5,522	5,822	8,628	8,825	9,677	9,168	9,633	9,779
adult and community learning recurrent	//	//	//	//	187	230	261	267	253	238	234	218
adult and community learning capital	//	//	//	//		22	46	55	47	31	21	15
Higher education (10)	5,793	5,808	6,177	5,786	6,200	6,236	6,715	6,957	7,481	7,431	7,794	7,981
Higher education student support (11, 12)	1,652	1,660	1,489	1,418	1,014	811	776	1,119	1,064	1,275	1,618	1,783
Administration, inspection costs and miscellaneous services	1,648	1,765	1,169	1,241	1,403	1,563	1,635	1,804	1,856	1,785	1,916	2,079
Total	38,272	39,277	40,884	43,817	48,129	50,308	57,696	60,262	63,668	63,565	66,653	68,539
Other expenditure (13)												
Ofsted					196	265	271	285	285	224	223	203
Departmental Admin					292	272	276	280	254	269	264	295
Capital receipts					-178	-278	-257	-237	-240	-280	-285	-521
Other expenditure (14)					7	155	402	-12	-253	433	660	1,256
Total education spending in England (13)	38,272	39,277	40,884	43,817	48,446	50,724	58,388	60,578	63,713	64,212	67,515	69,774

Source: Authors calculations using figures from DCSF (2009) Departmental Annual Report 2009, table 8.5, pp. 177-178, available: <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/departamentalinformation/reports/a00390/annual-departmental-reports-accounts-and-spending-reviews>, accessed May 2012. The DCSF (2009) figures were deflated using October 2011 GDP deflators (HM Treasury)

Abbreviated Notes to Table (full version with original source)

- Figures within Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL). Excludes DCSF administration costs and expenditure on other areas than education, for instance on children and families and on skills.
- Local authority figures drawn from returns to central government departments.
- Original figures in the DCSF 2009 were in real terms (2007-8 prices), using the March 2009 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflators. Authors converted figures back to nominal and deflated using more recent deflators (October 2011, HM Treasury 2011b)
- Excludes Private Finance Initiative (PFI) credits (£35 million in 1997-98, £130 million in 1998-99, £350 million in each of 1999-00 and 2000-01, £450 million in 2001-02, £850 million in 2002-03 and 2003-04, £1,050 million in 2004-05, £1,200 million in 2005-06 and £1,250 million in 2006-07).
- Figures from 2003-04 onwards reflect the transfer of responsibility from the Department to LAs of costs relating to teachers' pensions.
- Under Five figures include Central Government Sure Start expenditure and exclude Local Authority SureStart expenditure. From 2006-07, funding for Sure Start Local Programmes was paid through Local Authorities rather than from Central Government accounting for the fall in under 5's expenditure from that year.
- Includes local authority services to schools, expenditure on City Academies, small remodeling programmes and on teacher training.
- This line now includes FE Student Support (previously a separate line). The figures include Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) and other support for students in further education and school sixth forms. EMAs were re-classified as being within DEL rather than AME (Annually Managed Expenditure) in 2007, hence their re-introduction back into this table.
- Adult and Community learning covers Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding for ACL from 2001-02. Prior to 2001-02 reliable and consistent disaggregation of expenditure on ACL from local authority budgets is not available.
- The expenditure data in this table and those used in the calculation of funding per student in FE in table 8.11 are not directly comparable.
- HE Support includes Student Loans RAB charge, but not management of student loans provisions; all grants paid by the Student Loans Company (FT and PT Maintenance grants, HE grant and grants for vulnerable students): Access Funds; Postgraduate Awards; EUI Bursaries; Discretionary Awards; Mandatory and Student Support Awards.
- The Student Loans RAB Charge estimates the future cost to government of subsidising and writing off the student loans issued in that year. It does not represent the amount of cash lent to students, which has risen each year since the introduction of student loans.
- As recorded in the Total Education Spending in England line of Table 8.3.
- The 2008-09 Education Spending is Estimated Outturn, therefore not consistent with planned spend shown in other tables.

Figure 6: Total Public Expenditure on Different Tiers of Education 1997/98 to 2008/9



Source and notes as Table 5.

Table 6 takes a closer focus on school-age spending. We include nursery school spending in this table although this is covered in much more detail by Stewart (2013). Although the overall spending increase on secondary schools was greater than for primary schools (up 75 per cent over the period in real terms compared with 56 per cent), the fall in numbers of primary school age children and increase in secondary meant that per capita spending increased more for primary (73 per cent) than secondary (64 per cent). This is the same pattern as shown in the Eurostat data (Figure 3 and 4) although the actual figures differ due to a difference in the basis of calculation (Eurostat uses the numbers of pupils in schools rather than the numbers in the age group) The table also shows the growth in capital expenditure. Although capital spending remained a much smaller proportion of overall schools spending than current spending, it grew substantially during this period, by a factor of nearly four. This reflects Labour's investment in the school estate. By 2009, capital spending on schools comprised 11.6 per cent of the school budget, compared with 5.5 per cent in 1998.

A final point to make on spending is that, over time, funding became more redistributive to schools with more disadvantaged students. Lupton, Heath and Salter (2009) showed this change at the local authority level up to 2005/6. Subsequently, (Sibieta, Chowdry, and Muriel 2008) estimated that the extra amount in the secondary school funding settlement for FSM pupils (what they called the 'FSM premium') rose in real terms by nearly 13 per cent per year between 2003/4 and 2006/7, such that schools received an extra 77 per cent over the base amount for each FSM pupil, up from 61 per cent in 2003/4. (Chowdry and Sibieta 2011b) estimated that by 2010/11 this had risen to 83 per cent for primary schools and 95 per cent for secondary schools. They attribute this partly to changes in the main funding formula for schools but mainly to the increase in specific targeted grants.

Table 6: Education expenditure 1997-98 to 2008-9, by age group

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	outturn	provisional outturn	estimated outturn
Schools: capital spending	1,382	1,529	1,655	2,037	2,369	2,895	3,520	4,026	4,293	4,300	4,435	5,402
Schools: Current spending	23,500	24,259	26,021	28,548	31,435	32,729	36,112	37,207	38,996	39,338	41,001	41,283
of which:												
under 5s	2,256	2,327	2,589	2,924	3,515	3,599	4,029	4,283	4,418	4,112	4,276	4,438
primary	8,430	8,646	8,980	9,831	10,673	11,249	11,955	12,086	12,567	12,696	13,174	13,117
secondary	10,506	10,828	11,406	12,370	13,663	14,292	15,848	16,472	17,115	17,457	18,266	18,423
other	2,308	2,457	3,045	3,424	3,584	3,589	4,280	4,368	4,895	5,072	5,284	5,306
Per head capital spending (0-18)	117	129	140	173	202	247	300	344	367	369	380	463
Per head current spending												
under 5s (ages 0 to 4)	731	763	858	981	1,202	1,254	1,414	1,498	1,526	1,391	1,407	1,418
primary (ages 5 to 11)	1,874	1,917	1,990	2,200	2,408	2,557	2,755	2,828	2,986	3,068	3,222	3,234
secondary (ages 12 to 18)	2,494	2,548	2,666	2,868	3,117	3,202	3,489	3,601	3,732	3,816	4,028	4,100
ALL age (0 to 18)	1,992	2,054	2,203	2,427	2,678	2,790	3,078	3,178	3,336	3,372	3,516	3,535
Per head current and capital	2,109	2,183	2,343	2,600	2,880	3,036	3,379	3,522	3,703	3,740	3,896	3,997

Sources: Authors calculations using figures from DCSF (Table 5 above) and population estimates for school-age age groups obtained from ONS via personal communication. Notes as Table 5.

Inputs

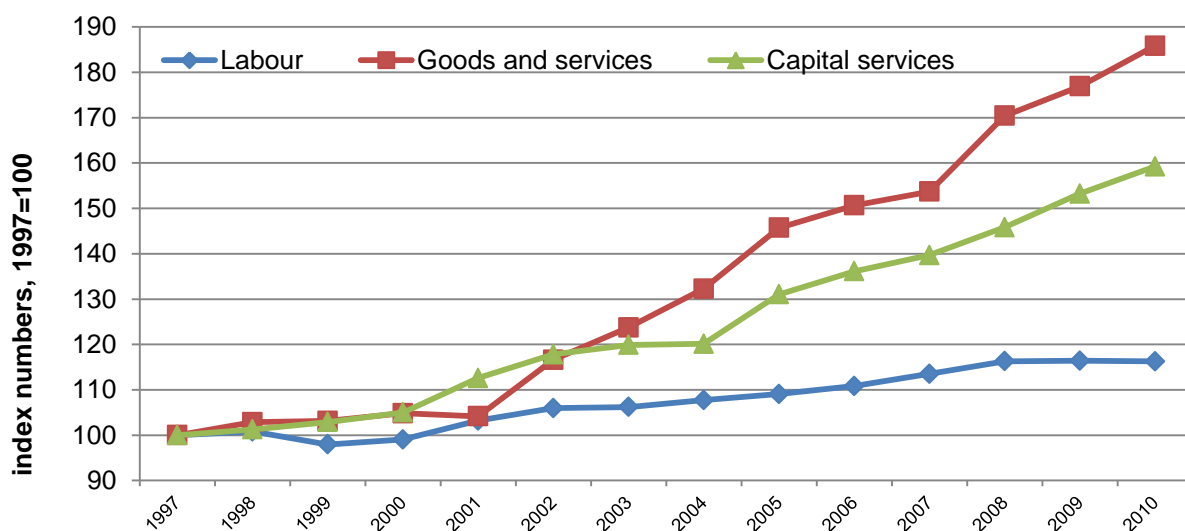
What was provided with the money expended? For an overall picture, we can look to the Office for National Statistics estimates of education productivity (Massey 2012a), which counts 'inputs' into public education, in order to be able to compare these to outputs and calculate productivity.

ONS defines inputs in three ways: labour inputs (teachers, support staff and government administration); goods and services (equipment including IT, energy costs, and also specific policy driven expenditure such as subsidised sessions in private and voluntary settings); and capital services inputs (the services received each year by using the capital stock present in the education system). Labour costs make up by far the biggest share of education inputs (60 per cent in 2010), with goods and services at 28 per cent and capital services at 12 per cent (Massey 2012a, Table 5).

Note that these definitions of 'inputs' are not the same as 'expenditure' as described in the last section. Expenditure is a direct measure of funds expended, including capital. The 'inputs' measure costs inputs into the system either directly (eg numbers of teachers multiplied by average salary) or indirectly (spending on items adjusted for inflation). Capital services (use) is measured, not capital expenditure.

Figure 7 shows the growth in these different types of inputs over the period 1997 to 2010. None of the three components show any significant volume growth over the period to 2000, when Labour's spending was constrained to the previous government's limits. After 2000, capital services volume started to grow at an annual average of 4.3 percentage points, with accelerated growth from 2004 coinciding with the Building Schools for the Future programme. Goods and services volume grew by an annual average of 6.6 percentage points from 2001. Overall, the volume of goods and services expenditure had grown by 85 percentage points by 2010, and the volume of capital services by 59 percentage points. The volume of labour index grew at a slower rate (an average of 2 per cent) between 2000 and 2008, with no further growth to 2010, and was 16 percentage points higher in 2010 than 1997. From these three components, ONS calculates a figure for overall input, weighting each of the three types of input by its share in overall education expenditure. Overall, education inputs grew by 35 percentage points over the period.

Figure 7: Volume of Inputs by type of input, United Kingdom, 1997–2010, Index numbers 1997=100



Source ONS (Massey 2012a, Figure 8)

These data cover nurseries, primary and secondary schools, further education and professional training in higher education. Looking more closely just at the school system gives a fuller picture of the scale of expansion and the extent to which the system changed as a result of Labour's expenditure. Despite falling numbers of pupils, the overall number of teachers in England increased by 11.9 per cent, an increase of nearly 48,000 regular FTE teachers (Table 7).

Table 7: Total Numbers of Regular FTE Teachers and Support Staff in Maintained Schools 1997-2010 (thousands)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	percent change	numbers (thousands)
Teaching Assistants																
Nursery and Primary	41.9	44.8	46.6	53.4	65.5	71.8	82.3	89.2	97.9	99.0	105.8	115.0	118.3	126.3	301%	84.4
Secondary	7.8	9.0	10.6	12.5	15.5	19.5	22.3	25.3	30.0	33.5	35.7	37.8	39.3	39.9	512%	32.1
Special schools	10.6	11.4	11.9	12.7	13.4	13.2	15.3	15.7	17.1	18.6	19.4	20.5	21.3	22.0	208%	11.4
PRUs/ elsewhere	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.9	1.3	1.8	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.7	2.3	767%	2.0
Academies and CTCs						0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.8	1.3	2.1	3.7		3.7
TOTAL	60.6	65.6	69.6	79.0	95.0	105.4	121.3	132.2	147.2	153.5	163.8	176.9	183.7	194.2	320%	133.6
All secondary (incl academies and CTCs)	7.8	9.0	10.6	12.5	15.5	19.6	22.4	25.5	30.2	33.9	36.5	39.1	41.4	43.6	559%	35.8
Other support staff																
Nursery and Primary	33.9	35.2	37.6	39.1	42.5	51.0	45.3	45.0	46.6	55.3	57.4	57.6	63.2	63.4	187%	29.5
Secondary	34.7	35.7	36.9	38.7	43.0	49.2	50.5	56.0	63.1	70.7	76.4	79.9	83.8	86.1	248%	51.4
Special schools	4.0	4.1	4.4	4.4	4.9	7.5	5.7	7.0	7.4	7.5	7.9	8.0	9.0	9.4	235%	5.4
PRUs/ elsewhere	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.4	2.0	667%	1.7
Academies and CTCs	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.9	1.2	1.8	2.9	4.9	7.7	1925%	7.3
TOTAL	73.3	75.5	79.5	83.0	91.2	108.4	102.5	109.2	118.7	135.6	144.4	149.7	162.3	168.6	230%	95.3
All secondary (incl academies and CTCs)	35.1	36.1	37.3	39.1	43.4	49.6	50.9	56.6	64.0	71.9	78.2	82.8	88.7	93.8	267%	58.7
Teachers																
Nursery and primary	191.7	190.1	191.1	193.1	195.0	197.4	197.4	196.6	196.3	198.2	197.1	198.1	198.5	200.9	4.8%	9.2
Secondary	189.4	189.6	191.8	193.2	196.7	203.2	206.9	211.0	215.1	216.3	216.8	215.3	212.6	210.3	11.0%	20.9
Special	14.8	14.4	14.4	14.3	14.3	14.3	14.2	14.6	14.3	14.5	14.5	14.8	14.9	15.1	2.0%	0.3
PRUs/ elsewhere	3.2	3.6	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.8	5.1	5.5	6.2	6.6	6.8	6.7	6.8	6.5	103.1%	3.3
Academies and CTCs	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.9	2.3	2.9	4.0	6.2	9.8	15.2	1281.8%	14.1
Total	400.2	398.8	402.3	405.7	411.4	420.8	425	429.6	434.2	438.5	439.2	441.1	442.6	448	11.9%	47.8
All secondary (incl academies and CTCs)	190.5	190.7	192.9	194.3	197.9	204.3	208.3	212.9	217.4	219.2	220.8	221.5	222.4	225.5	18.4%	35

The growth was primarily in the secondary sector (including academies), up 18 per cent, or 35,000 extra teachers, while the nursery and primary sector saw an increase of 4.8 per cent (9,000 extra teachers). In addition, there was a huge growth in the numbers of support staff). The regular FTE numbers of teaching assistants (TAs), overall, increased by over 133,000, from 61,000 in 1997 to 194,000 in 2010. The numbers of other support staff also increased very substantially, from 73,000 in 1997 to 169,000 in 2010. In the case of teaching assistants, the increase was greatest in the primary sector (up 84 per cent over the period compared with 36 per cent in secondary, including Academies). The reverse was true for other support staff: up 59 per cent in secondary and 30 per cent in primary. Other staff working more occasionally with pupils and not employed by schools, such as those from voluntary organisations running sessions in extended schools, or volunteer readers, would not be counted in either figure.

The increase in the numbers of teaching assistants has been a controversial policy. Wade and Easton (2007) reported that Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HTLAs) tended to be deployed in secondary schools to work with individuals and small groups, including monitoring pupil progress and developing materials to use with these 'intervention groups'. In primary schools they more often worked with groups than individuals and were also often used to work with whole classes without a teacher present. Both this study and Ofsted (2010) reported well trained support staff working with groups or individuals made a considerable difference to pupils' learning. Blatchford et. al (2011), evaluating the policy, found that teaching assistants improved teacher productivity, which might be expected to have an impact on standards overall. However, the deployment of teaching assistants to sit with the lowest attaining learners and often to manage their behaviour, meant that these pupils effectively got less attention from the teacher, and learned less than similar pupils who did not have teaching assistant support. This suggests either that money would be better spent deploying qualified teachers rather than TAs, or that TAs need to be better trained, or that they need to be deployed more effectively.⁵

In total there were over 275,000 additional FTE regular teachers and support staff in English schools in 2010 compared with 1997, amounting to a 56 per cent increase in the secondary sector and 46 per cent nursery and primary. These were consolidated in rather fewer schools, about 93 per cent of the number there had been 1997. School sizes increased. In 1998 16 per cent of secondary schools had 500 pupils or fewer. This had fallen to 10 per cent by 2010, while the proportion with more than 1500 pupils rose from 4.2 per cent to 9.3 per cent. Teacher vacancies, which were rising the late 1990s, peaked in 2001 at 1.2 per cent in nursery and primary and 1.4 per cent in secondary before steadily falling. By 2010, vacancies stood at around their 1997 position (0.4 per cent in nursery and primary and 0.5 per cent in secondary).

For both teaching staff and support staff, a striking feature is the increase in the numbers of staff working with disaffected pupils being taught in Pupil Referral Units or other settings. Around 6,500 teachers and 4,300 support staff (FTE) were working in such schools in 2010 compared with 3,200 teachers and just 600 support staff in 1997. Partly this reflects an increase in the number of such settings and pupils in them. The number of PRUs increased from 309 to 452, and the number of FTE pupils in them from 7,500 to just over 13,000. However, the increase in support staff considerably exceeds the increase in pupil numbers.

Some of Labour's other policy changes had not come so fully into effect by 2010 as the expansion of the school workforce. Despite the furore over Academies, there were only 203 in existence by 2010, educating 5 per cent of

⁵ The evaluation controlled for measured factors that might be expected to affect both pupil progress and likelihood of being allocated support: including their special educational needs status, gender and family income. More research would be needed to identify whether factors unobserved in the data (such as the nature of a pupils' social, emotional or behavioural needs) were at play. Pupils with complex and disruptive behaviours might be those most likely to be allocated support and least likely to make good progress, even compared with pupils of similar formal SEN status, gender and socio-economic circumstances.

secondary pupils, although as these were targeted at the poorest areas, as was Building Schools for the Future, we would expect to see more dramatic transformations there. The full impact of Labour's introduction of Academies was not to be seen in during the lifetime of the Labour government, but later, when as the Coalition took up and extended the policy. Specialist schools were a much more widespread, although less transformatory, change in the 1997-2010 period, all schools having a specialism in at least one subject area by the end of the period.

Outputs

For the purposes of this project we define outputs as the goods and services delivered as a result of the inputs - a measure of changes in the quantity and quality of delivery (Lupton et al. 2013). To what extent did we see these changing over the Labour period?

Given that pupil numbers are largely driven by demographic change, the numbers of pupils in schools is not a particularly useful indicator of output. Of more interest is whether there was any change in the amount or quality of education received by the pupils in the system, particularly the most disadvantaged. Unfortunately, data are weak here – the government does not collect information on hours of education received, either in school or in homework assignments, and indicators of process quality are hard to compare over time. The move to extended schooling may suggest a potential increase in the amount of time spent in school, but this is impossible to quantify.

For pupils in mainstream education, the result of extra investments in staffing was a reduction in pupil-teacher ratios, class sizes and pupil adult ratios (see Figure 8). The average primary school pupil in 1997 experienced a teacher to pupil ratio of 1 to 23.4, and an adult to pupil ratio of 1 to 17.9, with an average class size of 27.7 pupils. By 2010 these numbers had fallen to 1: 21.3 (teacher to pupil) 1:11.4 (adult to pupil) and 26.4 (class size). As Figure 9 shows, the early years of the Labour administration saw a rapid reduction in the proportion of primary school pupils taught in classes of more than 30, a high profile political initiative funded by the abolition of the Assisted Places Scheme in 1997.

The decline in the secondary sector was smaller, because the number of pupils was rising at the same time as the number of teachers, and class sizes were smaller to begin with. Nevertheless, teacher:pupil ratios fell from 1: 16.7 to 1: 15.7, and adult to pupil ratios from 1: 14.5 and to 1: 10.4. The average class size in secondary schools fell from 21.7 in 1998 to 20.5 in 2010. Unfortunately the data do not permit a closer look at the experience of the most disadvantaged or lowest attaining pupils. The direction of policy suggests that these pupils should have been receiving more small group and one-to-one tuition, making use of additional teachers and support staff in targeted ways, even though average class size reductions were modest, but we are unable to quantify the extent to which this is the case.

Figure 8: Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTR), Pupil-Adult Ratios (PAR) and Average Class Sizes, England 1997-2010

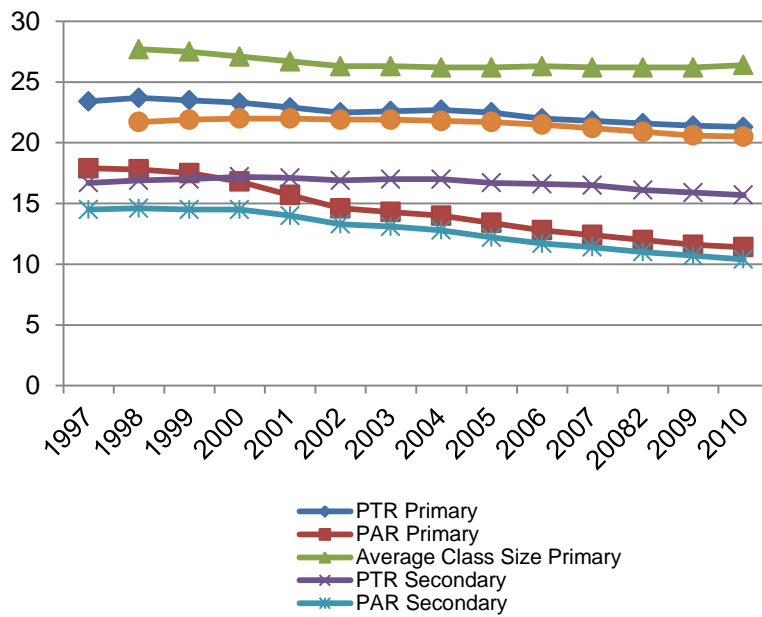
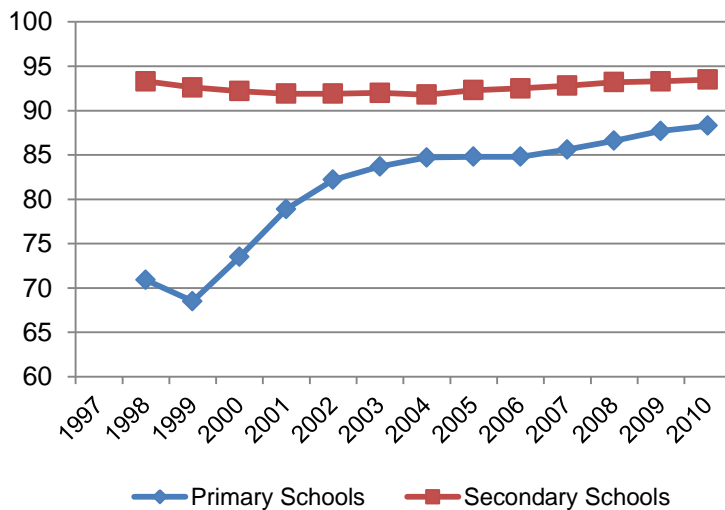


Figure 9: Percentage of Pupils Taught in Classes of Thirty or Fewer 1997-2010



Absence and exclusion data suggest that the system became more successful at securing participation. Absence rates remained fairly constant at between 7.2 and 7.5 per cent of sessions missed from the early 1990s to 2000/01, but reduced gradually and fairly steadily thereafter. From a high point of 7.4 per cent in 2000/01, absence had dropped to 6 per cent in 2009/10. Since pupil-level data was first collected in 2006/07, the proportion of pupils persistently absent (missing 46 or more sessions) fell slightly from 4.8 per cent to 4.4 per cent in primary schools, and more in secondary schools, from 12.5 per cent to 9.2 per cent. The number of pupils in PRUs did not rise significantly over this period so the reduction would appear to reflect a genuine increase in attendance, rather than a removal of persistently absent pupils into alternative provision.

There was also a substantial decrease in the number of pupils permanently excluded from schools, reversing an increasing trend during the 1990s (Ogg and Kaill 2010). In primary schools, the number of permanently excluded pupils fell by 60 per cent to only 620 by 2010. The vast majority of exclusions take place at secondary school. These reduced by one third since 2000/01 (earliest data), to around 5000 per year at the end of the period. Reducing the number of permanent exclusions was an early Labour target. As an alternative to excluding pupils, and as part of the personalised learning agenda, schools were encouraged to make greater use of referrals to alternative provision and PRUs (which partly accounts for the increase in the number of staff in such provision), and also to use managed moves, to other schools and PRUs. They were also required to set up internal units for pupils excluded from mainstream classrooms. However, as we noted earlier, the quality of such provision is not uniformly good, and attainment is low. Given that the cost of educating a permanently excluded pupil in a PRU is about four times that available to a school per pupil (implying more complex needs for such pupils), it would appear that retaining pupils in schools with referrals to alternative provision might not necessarily go all the way to meeting their needs. A reduction in exclusions probably does reflect greater 'inclusion' in the system, although not necessarily a big improvement in the extent to which pupils needs are being fully met, as the government's Back on Track White Paper in 2008 recognised.

Combined Effects of Policies and Spending

Looking at policies, inputs and outputs together suggests that the experience of schooling for children in 2010 would have been substantially different from that of their counterparts in 1997, especially if they lived in disadvantaged areas.

The evidence points to a clear increase in the capacity of the system. Pupils completing their secondary education in 2010 would almost certainly have been educated in a school specialising in a particular curriculum area. Five per cent would have been in an Academy with an external sponsor, and perhaps one in five⁶ would have been in a brand new or extensively refurbished building or one that was being refurbished. Electronic whiteboards, linking to the internet and a wider range of learning resources, would have been the norm, replacing chalk and blackboards in most classrooms. Pupils' access to teachers would have increased: one teacher per 15.7 pupils in 2010 compared with 1 per 16.7 in 1997, and their access to teaching assistants and other support staff would have been much greater. As a result, those with additional learning needs would have been more likely to have small group or individual support, building on similar programmes in the primary school, although not all of this support would have been of the highest quality.

⁶ An approximate figure based on the proportion of secondary schools included in the BSF programme.

Almost all would have been in schools offering extended services from 8am to 6pm, and been able to follow a wider range of subjects and undertake some of their learning in out-of-school settings. Their teachers would have been better paid and had more access to professional development than they would have been in 1997. Pupils who were disaffected and/or with behavioural problems would have been less likely to be permanently excluded, although more likely to be educated outside school in a pupil referral unit or alternative setting. Such pupils would be far more likely to receive support from other agencies, as well as in school support for social and emotional issues. All pupils had a guarantee of a learning place after leaving school and pupils from low income backgrounds would have had access to programmes of university outreach, extra tuition and mentoring, to encourage them to consider higher education. Those who did opt for university would have faced tuition fees, unlike their peers in 1997, but would not need to pay these back unless their earnings reached a certain level, and would only have had to pay back maintenance costs after university and as a proportion of their income above a certain level. The real losers from Labour's HE reforms were middle and higher income students who would have to pay for a proportion of the cost of their own tuition rather than having it met out of general taxation.

Research evidence tends to support the view that the system was 'better' as well as bigger and better funded, but it is not unequivocal. Both possible sources of evidence on this - objective measures of the quality of inputs and outputs and evidence of relationships between policy, spending and outcomes - are not as strong as one would wish.

Detailed data on teacher qualifications were not available in this period. School inspection data also does not provide a time series. Due to a change in the Ofsted inspection framework from 2005/6 it is impossible to compare the numbers of schools deemed 'failing' after this date with those before. Moreover Ofsted changed its approach in 2009/10, inspecting more frequently those schools deemed to be at risk than those deemed to be doing well. Unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of schools inspected were deemed inadequate. The period from 2005/6 to 2008/9 (before the new framework) saw a halving of the percentage of secondary schools deemed inadequate, from 13 per cent to 6 per cent, and a doubling of the proportion deemed outstanding, from 10 per cent to 22 per cent (Francis 2011). Changes to schools may have been noticed by pupils and parents, although very few families will have had children in the same tier of schooling both in 1997 and 2010, in order to make a comparison, and in any case their views are not recorded. Overall, according to the British Social Attitudes Survey there was a slight increase between 1998 and 2008 from 20 per cent to 25 per cent of people saying they have 'a great deal of confidence' in schools/the education system. This was achieved at the expense of people having 'some confidence', while the numbers with no confidence remained the same.

Equally, not all programmes and policies have been evaluated in ways that deliver unequivocal evidence. Heath et al. (2013) include a useful summary of some of the main research evidence in their recent paper, pointing out that few policies have been researched using robust quantitative designs. Some programmes that were subject to robust research show positive effects, for example the Literacy Hour (Machin and McNally 2008) and the Education Maintenance Allowance (Dearden et al. 2005, Aitken et al. 2005). Blatchford et al.'s (2011) evaluation of deployment of support staff is the only well designed quantitative evaluation to suggest a possible *negative* effect of policy. There is some evidence that Academies had more success than similar schools (although given the different nature of Labour's and the Coalition's academy policy, the results cannot be readily read across to the current context). Machin and Veroit (2011) found evidence for improved intakes and, for early converters to academy status, positive effects on achievement. Interestingly they also found negative effects on the quality of intakes to neighbouring schools but positive impacts on achievement within those neighbouring schools.

Heath et al. largely disregard other (qualitative) work as uninformative. We take a rounder view, following Spicker's (2011) conviction that quantitative evidence of the causal effect of policy is not the only kind of evidence of whether policies are effective or not. The Full Service Extended Schools Evaluation (Cummings et al. 2007) is an interesting example. This study reported on 148 FSES's, offering a wide range of services including access to

health services, adult learning and community activities as well as study support and wraparound childcare. Survey data and case study respondents revealed positive outcomes for children, young people and adults facing difficulties. These included better attainment but also personal, social and health outcomes as well as improvements to family stability and functioning. Attainment was no higher for pupils in FSES schools than other schools. The evaluators suggested that this might be because individually-targeted interventions for the most challenging students to help them begin to learn (e.g. by involvement in alternative provision or out-of-school hours learning) might not show through in school attainment data, and because non-targeted provision tended to focus on issues that might be expected to have longer term effects, such as changing attitudes to learning, or curriculum enrichment. However, the analysis also showed that in FSES schools, compared with other schools, gaps between FSM and non-FSM students were reduced and in some cases eliminated, holding other factors such as gender, ethnicity, language and SEN constant. The evaluators concluded that FSES interventions could not be described as transformational in the sense that they brought about widespread and significant differences to large numbers of people or to school performance, but their effects justified the investment required.

Evidence of this kind emerges from many of the other qualitative evaluations we have reviewed, although we do not claim to have conducted a systematic review⁷. In other words, people at ground level tended to welcome the deployment of extra money and staff for specific purposes and to report that it was making a difference, even if this could not be demonstrated quantitatively in the short term. This is unsurprising given that spending on schools had previously been low and that there were large socio-economic gaps to be addressed and does not in itself mean that the money was used in ways that achieved change. Practitioner evidence does seem to be supported by recent economic research on Labour's school spending. Although Hanushek (2008) has characterised the international evidence as tending to show no clear effect of extra school spending, recent English work finds the opposite. Holmlund et al. (2010), found that school expenditure at primary level had a consistent and positive effect on test results, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Gibbons (2011) also found a large positive effect of school spending, especially in schools with large proportions of disadvantaged pupils.

Allen and Burgess (2010) have reviewed the evidence on school competition in England. They find no consistent positive effect of competition – that is schools 'raising their game' in order to attract pupils from other neighbouring schools – although studies in the US and Sweden have found such effects. On the other hand, claims that school intakes have been socio-economically polarised by increasing competition are not well supported by statistical evidence either. A number of studies (eg Ball 2003b, Harris 2010) have shown that middle class parents are more likely to exercise choice towards high attaining schools, and that high-performing schools tend to become more middle class. However, taken together, studies looking at the period 1989-95 (Gorard et al 2003), 1994 -1999 (Goldstein and Noden 2003) and 2006-9 (Chen and Gorard 2010) seem to indicate mainly that school segregation increased during times of economic growth rather than showing any particular policy effect. Thus Labour's commitment to choice and diversity in education is not clearly demonstrated to be either beneficial or harmful.

What constitutes 'better' in education is also contested. Taking GCSE outcomes as an indication of better performance, Burgess et al. (2010) showed that Labour's persistence with league tables in England accounted for an extra 1.92 GCSE grades per student per year for English pupils compared with those in Wales where league tables were abolished in 2001. Since targets in education were about raising the level of lower attainers, an equity effect can also be implied. However, there is also a large body of educational research which suggests that gains in grades from Labour's performativity regime (and that of its Conservative predecessors) were costly, leading to the disengagement of some of the lowest attaining pupils, the prioritisation of pupils at grade boundaries, loss of curriculum breath and 'teaching to the test' (see West 2010 for a useful overview of the arguments and evidence). Whether a higher attaining system is necessarily 'better' is in dispute.

⁷ We propose to make available a summary of the evaluation evidence as a research note at a later date.

Outcomes

Overall standards of school attainment

We now turn to trends in educational outcomes. Headline measures of academic attainment improved substantially over the Labour period. The patterns are different at primary (Key Stage 2) and secondary (Key Stage 4).

At Key Stage 2, the 'expected level' of attainment is 'Level 4'. There was a sharp improvement in the proportion achieving Level 4 in the late 1990s. Achievement then seemed to plateau between 1999/00 and 2002/03, before rising again slightly through to 2008, and stalling again thereafter (Table 8 and Figure 9). By 2009/10, 80 per cent of pupils were achieving Level 4 in English and in maths, compared with 63 per cent in English and 62 per cent in maths in 1996/7. However this was adrift of Labour's target of 85 per cent.

At Key Stage 4 (GCSE) the standard measure is the achievement of 'five good GCSEs', meaning five GCSEs or equivalent qualifications at grades A*-C. From 2005/06, the proportion achieving five good GCSEs including English and Maths was also monitored (also shown in Table 8 and Figure 10).⁸

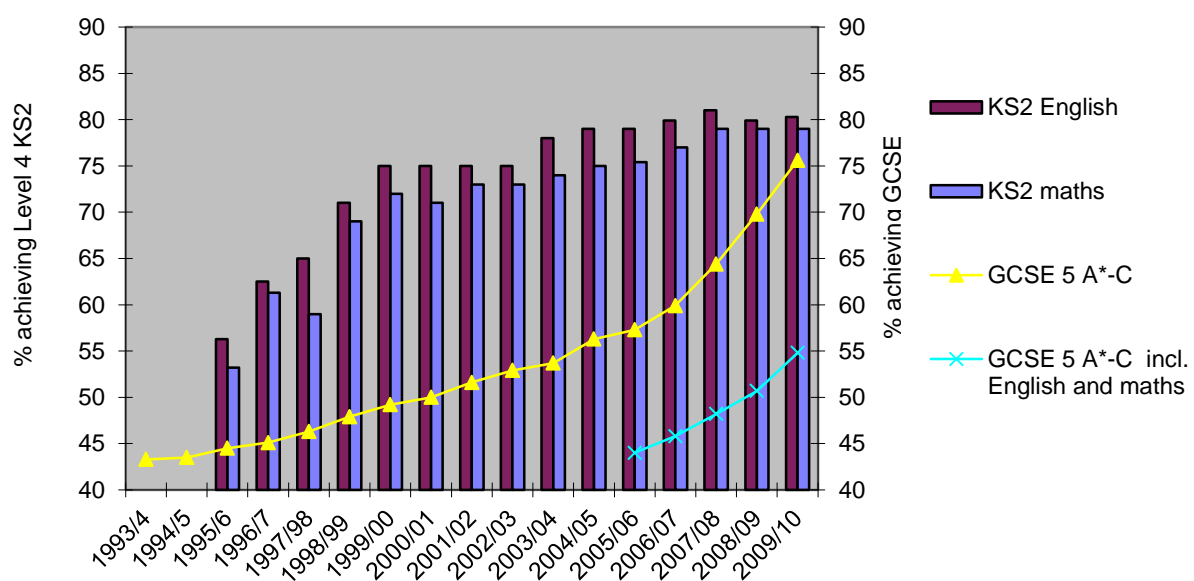
On the standard measure, GCSE results increased steadily at a rate of between one and two percentage points each year until 2003/4. After 2003/4 they began to improve more sharply, and then with a step change upwards after 2007. On this measure, Labour met its target. By 2010, 76 per cent were achieving 5 A*-C, compared with 45 per cent in 1997. The proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs including English and Maths also increased, and more so after 2007, but less rapidly than the proportion achieving the qualifications in any combination of subjects.

⁸ The Coalition has since introduced a further measure, the proportion achieving qualifications equivalent of an 'English baccalaureate' – five good GCSEs including English, mathematics, a science, language and humanities subject.

Table 8: Percentage Achieving Expected Levels at Key Stage 2 and GCSE 1993/4 to 2009/10

	KS2 English	KS2 maths	Annual improvement english	Annual improvement maths	GCSE 5 A*-C	GCSE 5 A*-C incl. English and maths	Annual Improvement GCSE % A*-C	Annual Improvement GCSE % A*-C incl English and maths
1993/4					43.3			
1994/5					43.5		0.2	
1995/6	56.3	53.2			44.5		1	
1996/7	62.5	61.3	6.2	8.1	45.1		0.6	
1997/98	65	59	2.5	-2.3	46.3		1.2	
1998/99	71	69	6.0	10	47.9		1.6	
1999/00	75	72	4.0	3	49.2		1.3	
2000/01	75	71	0.0	-1	50.0		0.8	
2001/02	75	73	0.0	2	51.6		1.6	
2002/03	75	73	0.0	0	52.9		1.3	
2003/04	78	74	3.0	1	53.7		0.8	
2004/05	79	75	1.0	1	56.3		2.6	
2005/06	79	75.4	0.0	0.4	57.3	44.0	1	
2006/07	79.9	77	0.9	1.6	59.9	45.8	2.6	1.8
2007/08	81	79	1.1	2	64.4	48.2	4.5	2.4
2008/09	79.9	79	-1.1	0	69.8	50.7	5.4	2.5
2009/10	80.3	79	0.4	0	75.6	54.8	5.8	4.1

Figure 10: Percentage of Pupils Achieving Expected Levels at Key Stage 2 and 4, 1993/4 to 2009/10



For primary schools, the trend does not show a discernible break with what was already happening in the years immediately prior to Labour taking office. Key Stage 2 results rose very sharply between 1995/6 and 1996/7, possibly due to the impact of the introduction of league tables and of Conservative literacy and numeracy policies. Slower progress after 2000, however, does not necessarily mean that Labour's policies and spending on primary schools had no impact. One explanation is that, on this measure, attainment might have reached its 'ceiling'. For various reasons (learning difficulties, absence from school, new arrival from another country) not all children will reach Level 4 by the time they are 11. Improvements in learning below Level 4 for these children and deepening of knowledge and understanding for those who are at Level 4 would not be picked up in the headline measure. The slight dip in progress in KS2 English could be read as a decline in 'standards', as a sign that the broadening of the primary curriculum in this period and the increasing criticism of 'teaching to the test' enabled a less test-specific education, for good or bad. 2010 results need, in any case, to be treated with some caution, as thousands of schools boycotted the KS2 SATS tests in protest at excessive testing. The extent to which this affects the data we see here is unknown.

For secondary schools, year-on-year improvements from 1997 to 2004 were a little greater than in the mid-1990s. After 2004 and particularly after 2007 the trend is clearly different, with a marked improvement on what was already happening (Table 8 and Figure 10). Between 2007 and 2010 the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C rose from 59.9 per cent to 75.6 per cent.

The change in GCSE grades accounts for a very slight improvement in the productivity of the education system according to the Office for National Statistics (up 4.5 percentage points over the whole period 1997-2010 – an improvement small enough to be described by ONS as 'broadly constant')(Pope 2013). Productivity is calculated by dividing an index of outputs by an index of inputs. Inputs, as we showed earlier, consist of labour, goods and services and capital services. Outputs, in ONS terminology, consist of an estimate of volume (or quantity) of education, (measured by pupil and student numbers) adjusted for quality. The main component of the quality adjustment is the change in uncapped average points scores at GCSE and equivalent. Productivity would be lower if quality is more tightly defined but higher thresholds of attainment (Massey 2012b).

Various explanations have been offered for the increase in GCSE attainment from the middle of the decade. One is the increasing attention given to teaching at secondary level, through the Secondary National Strategies, along with the wider improvements to schools, teacher training and professional development. Increasing performance pressures could also have played a part, particularly the announcement of the National Challenge in 2008 which put renewed pressure on the lowest performing schools to improve or be shut down as well as providing additional support for these schools.

Another explanation is that the cohort of children experiencing better teaching at Key Stage 2 were beginning to reach their GCSE years. Heath et al (2013) note that this cannot be the whole explanation, since big improvements in KS2 from 1995/6 should have been expected to be reflected in improved GCSE results in the early 2000s, whereas in fact they were not seen until after 2004. However, the cohort of children taking GCSE in 2004 were the first to have had *all* their Key Stage 2 teaching under Labour, which could have resulted in the acquisition of knowledge and learning skills beneficial in secondary school even if not completely reflected in KS2 Maths and English. One would expect benefits to be increasingly seen over time as improvements at primary school became embedded.

A further explanation is that rising levels of attainment reflect so-called 'grade inflation' rather than real improvements in pupils knowledge at age 16. This argument has two main variants. One is that because schools concentrated more on tests, pupils increasingly gained the specific skills and knowledge required to pass these tests, but not necessarily greater depth and breadth of learning that could be more broadly applied. Another

is that examinations became easier and specifically that the wider range of vocational qualifications introduced from the mid-2000s were not really equivalent to traditional GCSEs in their level of difficulty. Both of these arguments influence perspectives on how the productivity of the system should be assessed.

Evidence on 'grade inflation' is not particularly strong. To establish whether increases in GCSE attainment reflect real increases in learning, some other measure of learning is needed. Attempts have been made to compare GCSE trends with other data both in England and internationally. Taking the English data first, Tymms (2004) compared data from a collection of independent studies of primary school achievement in the late 1990s with KS2 attainment data, showing that the independent studies did not show the same large improvements as the official data. This suggested that increases in test performance were due to the tests becoming more pupil-friendly and schools concentrating more on them. To our knowledge similar work has been not been done for the later part of the Labour period, covering most of its reforms, nor for secondary education. Coe (2007) examined the relationship between a test of general academic ability taken at the start of Year 10 and GCSE results nearly two years later. His data showed that pupils with the same measured ability did better in GCSEs from 2004 onwards than they had previously. The analysis finished in 2006, before the second major jump seen in GCSE scores in 2008. This might demonstrate 'grade inflation' but it might also demonstrate more effective conversion of measured ability at Year 10 into GCSE results in Year 11 through higher engagement, better teaching, closer monitoring of progress, different subject choices or many other real improvements.

International data from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are available from 2000 to 2009, showing decline in performance, and fall in international rankings. However, comparison of 2000 and 2009 results cannot be regarded as reliable, partly because the response rate in 2000 did not meet the OECD's requirements and partly for other technical reasons including a change in the target population and in survey procedures (Jerrim 2012a). No conclusion can therefore be drawn about that period.

The results for 2006 and 2009 can be compared. In the 2009 PISA survey, performance for English students in maths, literacy and science showed virtually no change from that in 2006, and a slight fall in the international rankings, even though GCSE attainment went up substantially in this period. This is suggestive of 'grade inflation' in this period. On the other hand, performance in another international survey, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), seemed to show an improvement in scores and rankings.

The use of international studies for comparison is not, in any case, straightforward. They measure different things from one another, and from national examinations. PISA, for example, attempts to test functional literacy and numeracy – the ability to apply skills in real life situations - while TIMSS tests what is known and understood. Because of the correspondence between national modes of learning and testing and these international tests, some countries do better in PISA and others in TIMSS. Furthermore, small changes in scores can lead to moves of several places in ranks, and rank positions can also be affected by changes in the sample of countries taking part (Smithers 2012). Overall, the international data do not enable any firm conclusion to be drawn about whether the increases in GCSE performance were 'real' or not.

Socio-Economic Inequalities

The gap between the attainments of children on FSM and others can only be monitored from 2001/2. Table 9 and Figure 11 shows the overall trend at Key Stage 2.

Figure 11: Percentage Achieving Level 4 at Key Stage 2, by FSM status 2002-2010

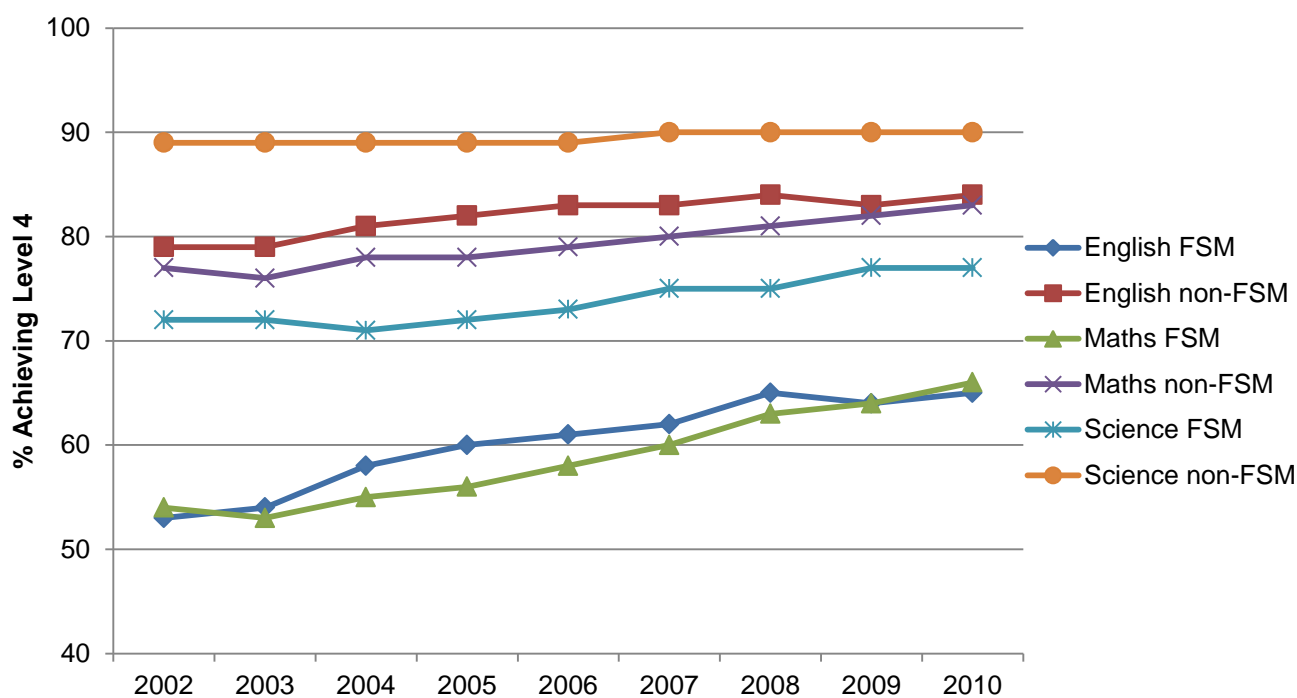


Table 9: Percentage Achieving Level 4 at Key Stage 2, by FSM status, 2002-2010

	English FSM	English non-FSM	Maths FSM	Maths non-FSM	Science FSM	Science non-FSM	Gap English	Gap Maths	Gap Science
2002	53	79	54	77	72	89	26	23	17
2003	54	79	53	76	72	89	25	23	17
2004	58	81	55	78	71	89	23	23	18
2005	60	82	56	78	72	89	22	22	17
2006	61	83	58	79	73	89	22	21	16
2007	62	83	60	80	75	90	21	20	15
2008	65	84	63	81	75	90	19	18	15
2009	64	83	64	82	77	90	19	18	13
2010	65	84	66	83	77	90	19	17	13

Gaps in all subjects fell over the period to 2010: in English from 26 to 19 points, in maths from 23 to 17 points and in science from 17 to 13 points. Figure 11 shows that that only very small gains were made by non-FSM pupils in science and in English from 2005 onwards, indicating perhaps that levels of attainment were reaching their ceiling. Gains in maths for non-FSM pupils were a little stronger. FSM pupils, by contrast, made gains of one or two

percentage points per year after 2003 in English and maths, and a bigger gain between 2007 and 2008. After 2008, gains continued to be made in maths but not in English.

It is hard to relate these trends to the timing of any particular policy, although the improvements after 2004 do coincide with the beginning of the decline of pupil:teacher and pupil:adult ratios in primary schools. The very first of the 'Sure Start generation' (aged 4 in 1999) would have arrived at their KS2 exams in 2006, which may have contributed to bigger increases from then on, but if this is the explanation, the slowing down of progress in English from 2008 onwards is hard to explain. The benefits of the 'Every Child' programmes have yet to be seen. The KS2 boycott may have had an effect on the trend, although that cannot be quantified.

In Figures 12 to 15, we look more closely at the trends by region, using data for 2002, 2004, 2008 and 2010, and proportions achieving Level 4 in English and Maths. Again the SATS boycott may affect these data to an unknown degree. The first pair of graphs (Figures 12 and 13), by region, show that the national pattern of a gentle increase 2002-2004, sharper increase 2004-2008 and plateau after 2008,⁹ was mirrored in all regions, except in London where FSM pupils and non-FSM pupils continued to make gains after 2008. The increasing performance of London's FSM pupils meant that the inter-regional gaps among FSM pupils actually widened during the 2000s, with London breaking away from the rest. In fact, continuing gains in London at the end of the period offset slight declines in the performance of FSM pupils in some other regions – the North East, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber.

The second pair of graphs (Figure 14 and 15) illuminates the London story. For non-FSM pupils, three subregions (Inner London West, Outer London South and Outer London West and North West) had similar high performance in 2002 (around 75 per cent achieving level 4) and were again similar but slightly higher in 2010. The lower attaining subregions for non-FSM pupils, particularly Inner London East, had almost caught up by 2010¹⁰, virtually eliminating the sub-regional attainment gap. For FSM pupils, four subregions had similar attainment in 2002 with only Inner London West standing out as higher. All the lower attaining subregions saw increases over the decade, and three of them continuing after 2008, but it was again Inner East London which saw the most rapid gains, becoming the top performing subregion for FSM pupils by 2010. These results tend to suggest that in London there were both school improvement effects (both general and those stimulated by the London Challenge after 2006) and compositional effects (big gains being made by children from certain minority ethnic groups).

⁹ 2005/6 data was not supplied to us by DfE. This makes the increase between 2004 and 2008 look steeper on these graphs, because a four year period is compared with two two-year periods.

¹⁰ Non-FSM pupils in Inner East London would be a less heterogeneous group in 2002 than those in more affluent outer London Boroughs, and more similar on average to FSM pupils. Gentrification is likely to have altered their profile by 2010, although this is not something we have tested here.

Figure 12: % achieving Level 4 in English and Maths at KS2, by region.

Pupils not eligible for FSM

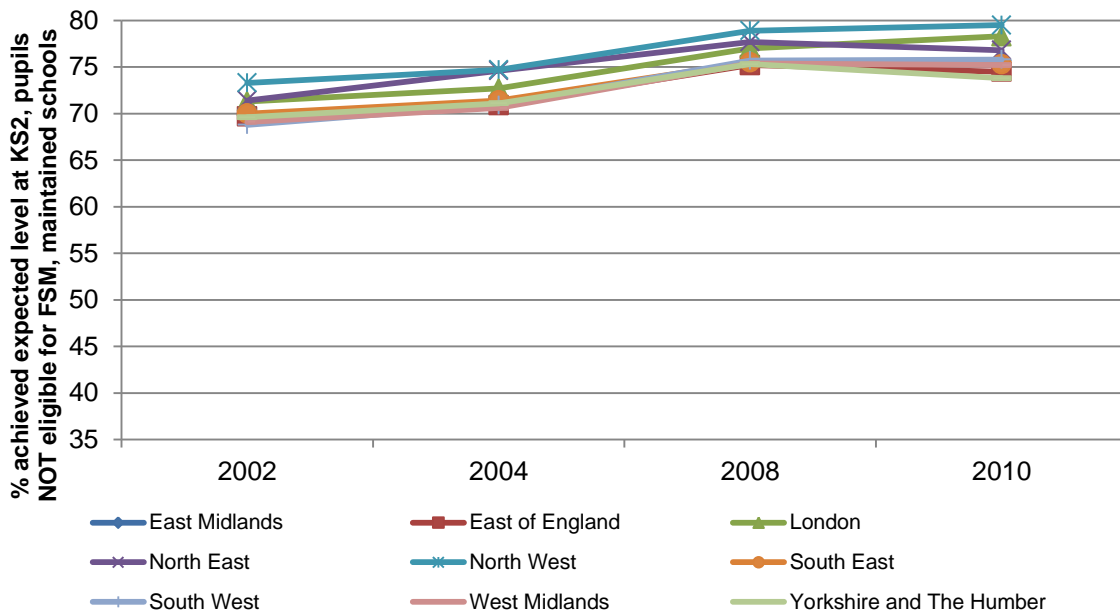


Figure 13: % achieving Level 4 in English and Maths at KS2, by region

Pupils Eligible for FSM

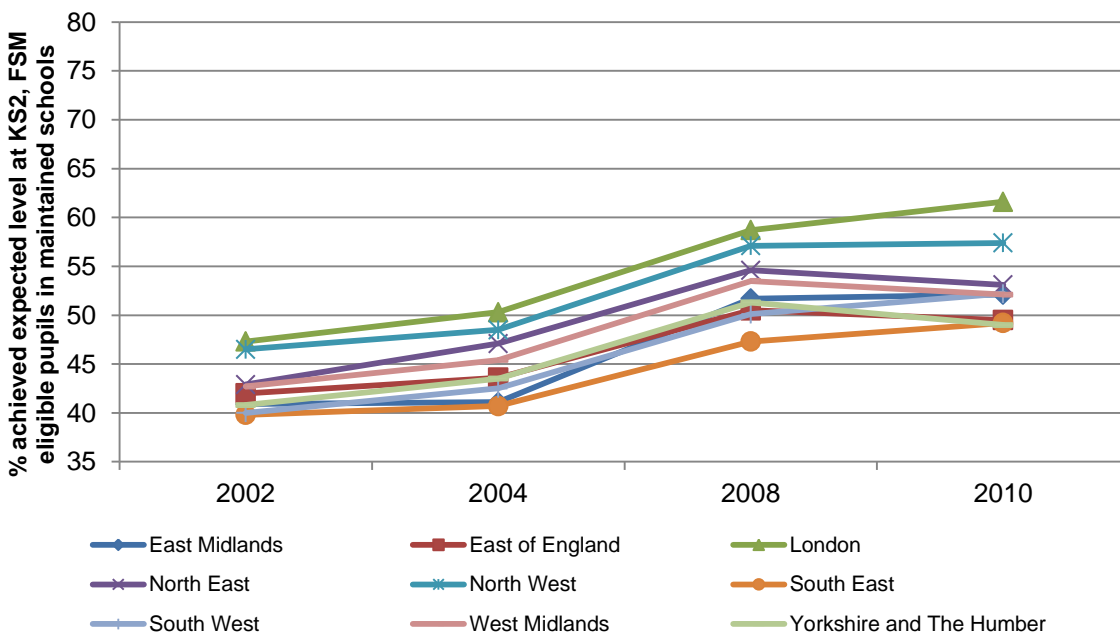


Figure 14: % achieving Level 4 in English and Maths at KS2, by London sub-region

Pupils not eligible for FSM

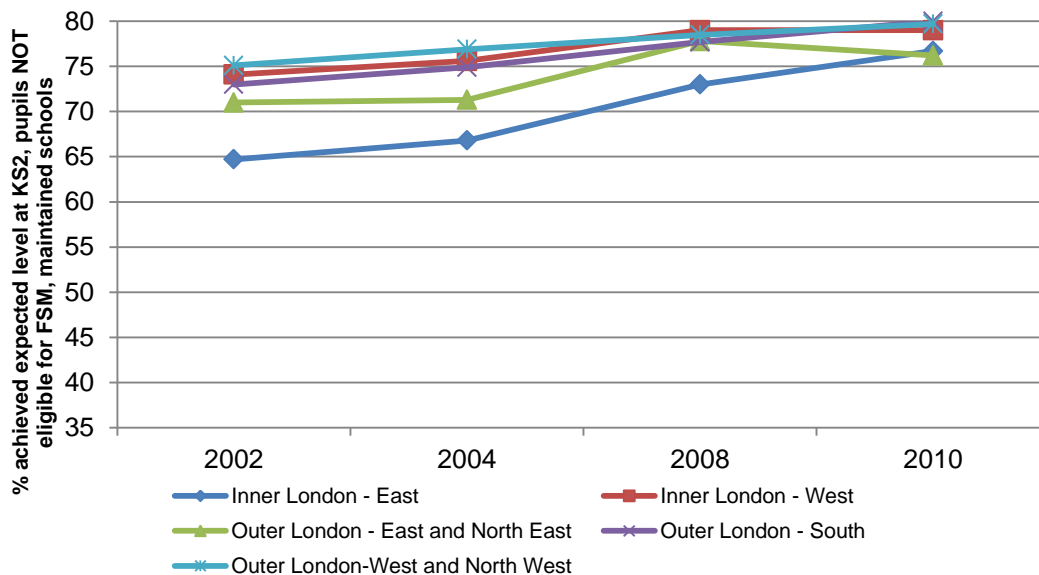
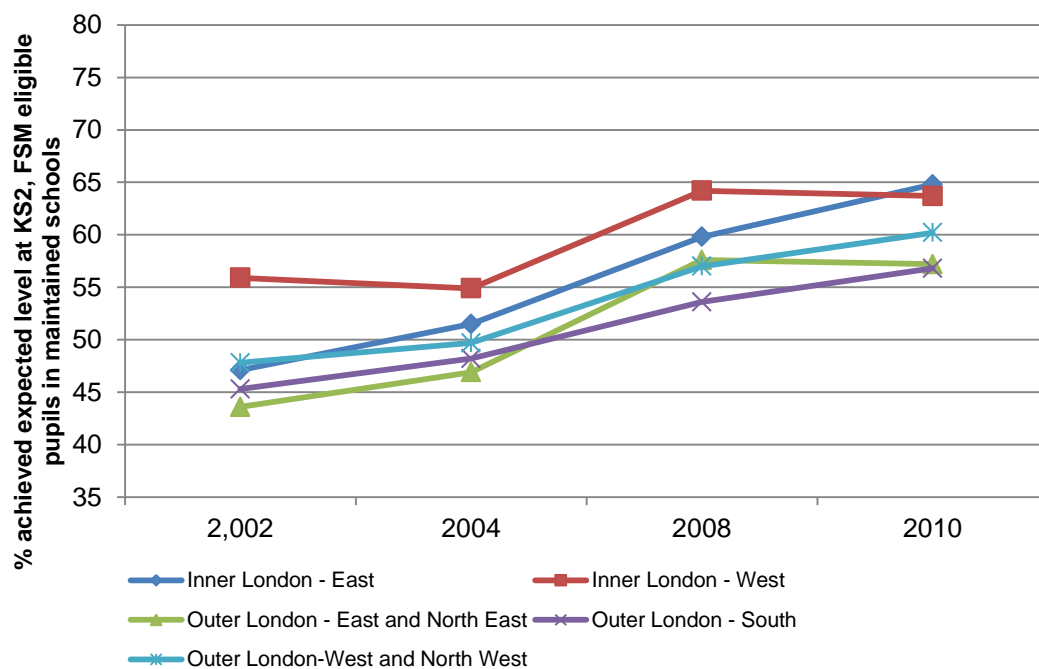


Figure 15: % achieving Level 4 in English and Maths at KS2, by London sub-region

Pupils eligible for FSM



At Key Stage 4, remarkable progress was made in raising the attainments of pupils at the bottom of the distribution, many of whom were on Free School Meals. In 2002, nearly 13 per cent of FSM pupils achieved no GCSE passes. By 2010 this had fallen to just over 2 per cent and the FSM gap had been nearly eliminated (Table 10 and Figure 16). At the level of five good GCSEs (the level achieved by around half of pupils at the start of the period), there was also substantial progress in closing the FSM gap, from 30.7 percentage points in 2002 to 20.2 in 2010. In contrast to the results at Key Stage 2 and for pupils achieving no GCSEs, the greatest progress was made later in the period. The rate of improvement for FSM pupils started to increase after 2004, possibly reflecting their stronger achievements in primary school in the late 1990s and/or the wider range of GCSE equivalent qualifications becoming available at that time.

There was then another step up after 2008. In 2009 fully 8.9 per cent more FSM pupils gained 5 A*-C than in 2008, with another 9.7 percentage point rise in 2010. The effect was that the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils on this measure reduced from 27 points in 2008 (having come down from 30.7 in 2002), to 20.2 points in 2010. Gaps between pupils living in neighbourhoods with differing levels of deprivation also reduced (not shown). So too did regional gaps, on this measure.

Figure 16: Percentage Achieving GCSE Passes, by FSM Status 2002-2010

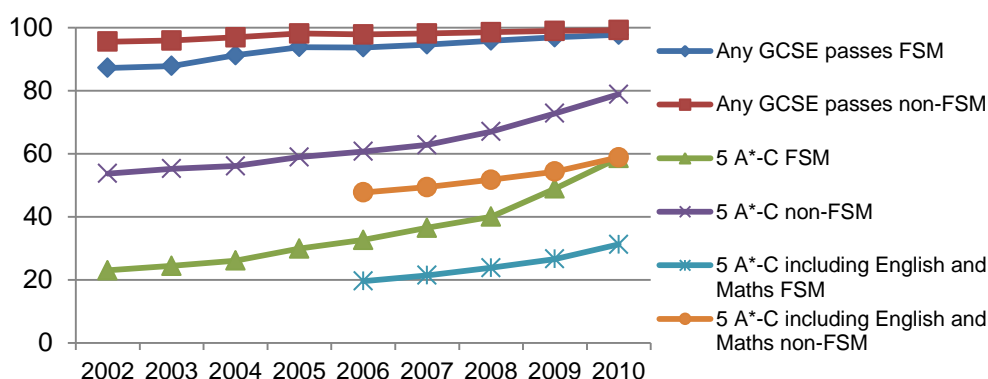


Table 10: Percentage achieving different levels at GCSE, by FSM status, 2002 to 2010

	Any GCSE passes		5 A*-C		5 A*-C incl. English and Maths		Gap any GCSEs	Gap 5 A*-C	Gap 5 A*-C incl. English and maths
	FSM	non-FSM	FSM	non-FSM	FSM	non-FSM			
2002	87.2	95.5	23.0	53.7			8.3	30.7	
2003	87.8	95.9	24.4	55.2			8.1	30.8	
2004	91.2	96.9	26.1	56.1			5.7	30.0	
2005	93.8	98.1	29.9	58.9			4.3	29.0	
2006	93.7	97.8	32.6	60.7	19.6	47.7	4.1	28.1	28.1
2007	94.6	98.1	36.5	62.8	21.4	49.4	3.5	26.3	28
2008	95.8	98.5	40.0	67.0	23.8	51.7	2.7	27.0	27.9
2009	96.9	98.9	48.9	72.8	26.6	54.3	2	23.9	27.7
2010	97.7	99.2	58.6	78.8	31.2	58.8	1.5	20.2	27.6

The step up after 2008 is harder to explain than the one from 2004. It may simply reflect the cumulative effect of the many initiatives aimed at disadvantaged pupils since the early 2000s. Those taking GCSEs in 2008 would have benefited from an entire secondary school career under the national strategies, and much of it under the school workforce agreement, changes to teacher professional development and improved support to headteachers. Most would have benefited from extended services in schools and from Excellence in Cities. Some would have received targeted help at Key Stage 3 from the Pupil Learning Credits program, and others would have been better supported as a result of Every Child Matters. In their GCSE years, they would have increasingly followed 'personalised' learning plans including, for some, opportunities for work-based learning alongside school subjects. Those in London were the first cohort to have experienced all their secondary school career under the London Challenge. The National Challenge might also have made a difference - this was announced after GCSEs were taken in 2008 so its first effects would have been seen in 2009. Those taking GCSEs between 2008 and 2010 in some of the most disadvantaged schools would have benefited from the Extra Mile and Narrowing the Gap programme. On the other hand, economic and compositional factors might also be at work, for example, increased effort by GCSE students facing a more competitive labour market, and a change in the ethnic composition of the FSM population.

Despite the substantial improvements in Labour's third term, socio-economic gaps at secondary school, as at primary school, remained substantial. Three points in particular stand out from the GCSE results. One is that on the rather tougher test of five good GCSEs including English and maths, a measure introduced in 2006, the FSM gap hardly closed at all. In 2006, the size of this gap, 28.1 percentage points, was exactly the same as the gap at 5 A*-C in any combination of subjects. However, while the gap on the standard measure closed by eight percentage points over the next four years, the gap on the higher measure closed only by 0.5 percentage points. Attainments by FSM pupils did increase a lot, from 19.6 per cent achieving this level to 31.2 per cent, (an 11.6 percentage point increase) but so did the attainments of non FSM pupils. This corroborates the picture painted by Jerrim (2012b) based on a comparative analysis of scores in the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA). Jerrim's analysis shows that by 2009, England appeared not to have particularly high social inequality among lower attainers and this had improved since 2001. However, it had high inequality among high attainers and this had not improved.

This links to a second point, about the different curriculum routes being taken by pupils of different social backgrounds. There is no doubt that the closure of the gap at lower and middle levels of the attainment distribution was accelerated by the disproportionate take-up of vocational qualifications by disadvantaged pupils. Clifton and Cook (2012) calculate a gap of about 60 points in capped GCSE points scores in 2011 between pupils living in the most deprived postcodes and the least when all GCSE equivalent qualifications are included, increasing to about 125 points when vocational equivalents are excluded. This does not in itself imply that vocational qualifications are easier, nor that they have less value in the labour market. Nor, if these things were both true, would it necessarily be the case that vocational qualifications were of no value, if they enabled students who would otherwise have no qualifications or engagement with education to have some, and therefore potentially to be better prepared for future employment and learning. However, there must remain some uncertainty about whether the success Labour had in closing gaps at GCSE will really translate into smaller socio-economic gaps in later life chances. Finally, despite all the improvement, there remained a group of pupils from low income families, albeit a small one, with very low attainment. The bottom ten per cent of achievers on FSM achieved only the equivalent of one GCSE at grade G in 2002. By 2010 this had risen to three D grades, in contrast to the bottom ten per cent of non-FSM learners, who were getting the equivalent of six C grades.

Post-School Pathways

Given these latter points, it is also worth exploring the immediate post-school outcomes of Labour’s schoolchildren between 1997 and 2010. One thing that is evident is that a substantially higher proportion of young people aged 16-18 were staying on in full-time education at the end of this period than the beginning. For the 16-18 age group as a whole, there was an increase from 56 per cent to 69 per cent, with the biggest increases for 16 year-olds (84 (up fourteen and fifteen percentage points respectively)). As Figures 17 and 18 show, participation in full time education for these age groups had fallen very slightly from 1994-1997, so the Labour administration certainly presided over a break in trend. The bulk of the improvement came after 2004, coinciding with increases in GCSE results.

Figure 17: Estimated Economic Activity of 16-18 Year Olds 1994-2010, 16 year olds

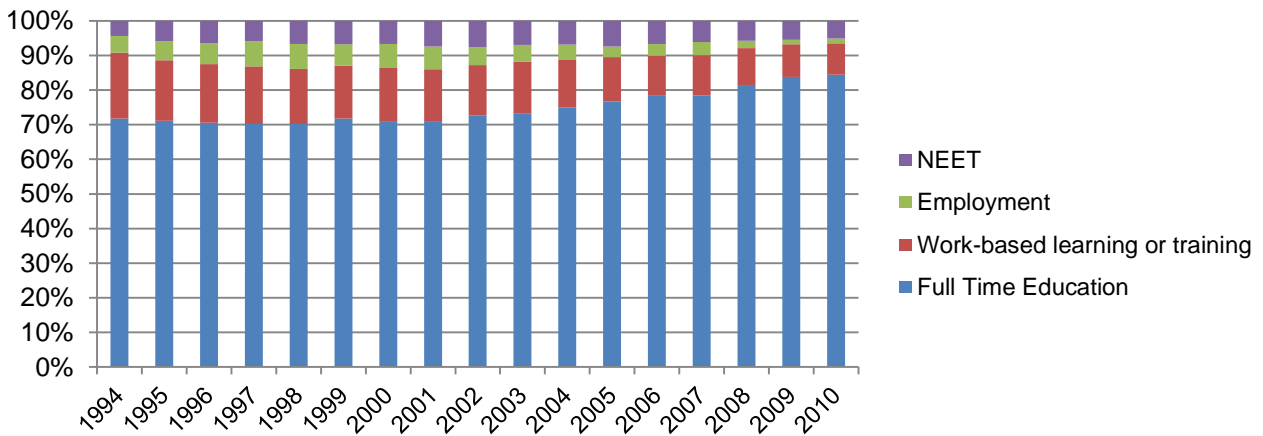
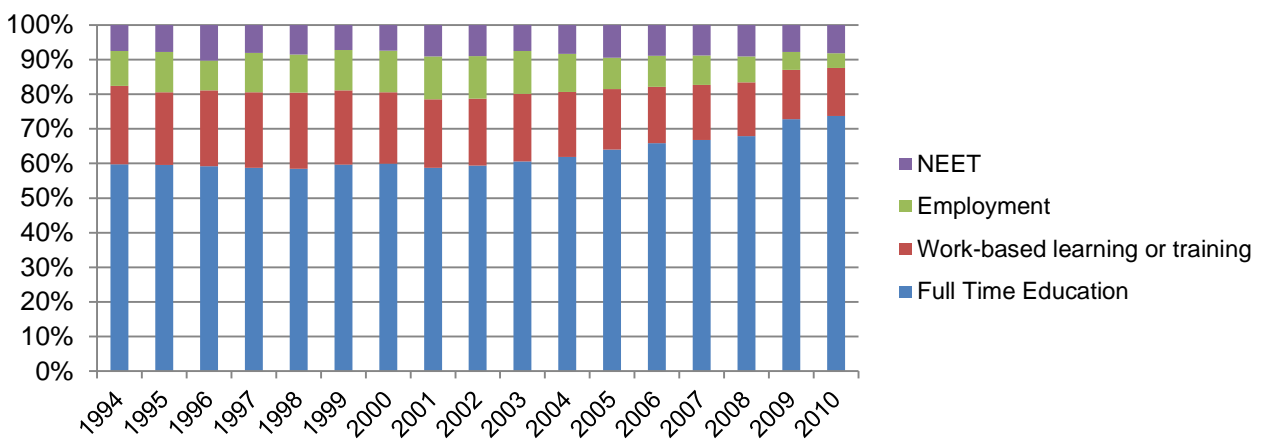


Figure 18: Estimated Economic Activity of 16-18 Year Olds 1994-2010, 17 year olds



Participation rates in higher education also increased and gaps between socio-economic groups declined slightly, despite tuition fees, although not quite as much as the government had hoped.

One way to look at this is the number of young people from lower social classes as a proportion of university students. At English and Welsh Universities, this proportion increased slightly between 2002/3 and 2009/10, although it declined slightly at Scottish and Northern Irish Universities (Table 11). The proportion of state school entrants to first degree courses also increased slightly (from 85 per cent in 1998/99 to 89 per cent in 2009/10)¹¹, and the percentage of students coming from high deprivation areas also rose, from 9.4 per cent in 2006/7 when this data started to be collected and top-up fees came into effect, to 10.7 per cent in 2009/10 (HESA Table 1b, based on POLAR2 method).

Table 11: : Percentage of young full time first degree entrants from NS-SEC classes 4,5,6 or 7, by country of institution, 2002/3 to 2009/10

Location of Institution	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10
UK	28.4	28.6	28.2	29.3	29.8	29.5	n/a	30.7
England	27.9	28.2	27.9	29.1	29.8	29.4	n/a	30.9
Wales	29.8	29.5	28.4	29.0	30.1	30.4	n/a	30.7
Scotland	28.0	26.9	26.7	27.3	25.9	26.3	n/a	26.4
Northern Ireland	41.3	42.4	41.2	41.0	41.7	40.6	n/a	39.1

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

Another approach is to ask what proportion of any given social class group goes to university. This data was collected for English domiciled young people from 2002/3, with FSM/non-FSM data also available from 2005/6. On either measure, participation rates of young people from lower social classes/poorer homes appeared to increase, and gaps to reduce (Table 12). Dearden et al. (2011) concluded that fees did affect demand for university places, but the main dampening effect was on students from higher social class groups with already very high access rates. Nevertheless, substantial social class gaps remained, particularly in access to Russell Group universities and to courses with high entry requirements. Boliver (2013) demonstrates that between 1996 and 2006 pupils from state schools and lower social class backgrounds remained much less likely to apply to Russell Group universities than comparably qualified peers from more advantaged backgrounds and private schools. We do not have this analysis through to 2010, but HESA data show no change in the proportion of students from state schools and lower social class backgrounds in Russell group universities from 2002/3 to 2009/10.

¹¹ <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1897/239/> (Accessed 23rd June 2013)

Table 12: Participation in HE by social class and poverty, 2002/3 to 2008/9

Academic Year	Rate of participation of 18 year olds (FYPSEC-18)			Rate of participation by FSM		
	NS-SEC 1-3	NS-SEC 4-7	Gap	FSM	Non-FSM	Gap
	2002/03	28.4	10.5	17.8		
2003/04	26.0	11.1	14.9			
2004/05	27.0	11.2	15.8			
2005/06	28.3	12.7	15.6	13	33	20
2006/07	26.9	12.3	14.7	14	33	19
2007/08	26.7	12.9	13.8	15	33	18
2008/09	27.8	13.7	14.1			

Source: BIS (2011) Consultation on statistics that measure the progress of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education

In addition, despite these successes in retaining more students in education after 16 and increasing access to HE, there also remained a problem with young people who neither stayed on at school or college, took up an apprenticeship or managed to find employment. Returning to Figures 17 and 18, we can see that staying on in education appeared to replace employment and to a certain extent work-based learning. It did not replace unemployment. The proportion of young people who were 'NEET' – not in education, employment or training – fell only very slightly for 16 year olds, was unchanged for 17 year olds, and rose for 18 year olds, starting in around 2005. Overall the percentage of the 16-18 year group who were NEET rose very slightly under Labour (from 9.1 per cent to 8.9 per cent) and was higher than when the time series began in 1994. Although more young people were gaining some qualifications at school, the reduction in employment opportunities for young people clearly continued to hit those with the lowest qualifications very hard. Given the potentially damaging effects of post-school unemployment, Labour's failure to achieve progress on this issue must be seen as disappointing for a government so prominently concerned with social exclusion.

Wider Outcomes

Labour's Every Child Matters agenda introduced a range of new indicators of child outcomes in addition to these indicators of cognitive attainment and participation. ECM was accompanied by a new outcomes framework defining desired outcomes relating to each of the five ECM objectives: that children should 'be healthy', 'stay safe', 'enjoy and achieve', 'achieve economic well-being' and 'make a positive contribution'. A set of 41 indicators of progress was put in place.

Approximately half of these indicators were already monitored by government and are reported elsewhere in this paper (for example NEET rates or exclusions), or elsewhere in our research programme. For example Vizard and Obolenskaya (2013) report reductions in infant mortality and closing of socio economic gaps and a halt in the long-run trend towards greater child obesity after 2006-2008. However, many of the remaining indicators were only established in the mid 2000s, with a baseline year of 2007 or even 2008. Some had no baseline data and required the development of bespoke data gathering, in particular the new Tellus survey, starting in 2007, which provided an annual source of information about children's experiences until it was discontinued by the Coalition. Given continuing interest across the political spectrum in children's outcomes, we propose to report on these indicators to the extent possible (and show where it is not possible) in our ongoing work.

Conclusion

When Labour came to power in 1997, education spending was at a historic low. Labour set out to increase the capacity and quality of the education system, through a programme of investment and reform, in order to raise standards overall and to reduce socio-economic inequalities.

Schools (and early years) were prioritised for public spending over higher education, where Labour shifted more of the financial burden to students. Labour started a project of modernising the entire school building stock, substantially increased the numbers of teachers and support staff, and put in place a large number of targeted funds and initiatives to support the education of pupils from the most disadvantaged homes. Funding became more redistributive towards more disadvantaged schools.

The government also pursued a centralised approach to school improvement, with targets and pressure on low attaining schools, and new national strategy teams to develop and spread good practice. In England, school performance tables were retained as an increasingly important mechanism, while they were abolished in Scotland and Wales. Tensions within the Labour party over other aspects of education policy were evident over time, with Tony Blair particularly keen to extend choice and diversify the school system, and Gordon Brown and Ed Balls more closely associated with the shift to a wider 'children's agenda' after 2007, and with increased efforts to target support on those falling behind or becoming marginalised or excluded.

Delivering this agenda was costly. Education spending overall rose by 78 percentage points, with labour inputs up by 16 percentage points, goods and services by 85 percentage points and capital services by 59 percentage points. Expressed as a percentage of GDP, this brought the UK back to the post-war spending high point of 1973/4, although only causing a small rise up the international spending league table. Capital spending on education went from 5.5 per cent to 11.6 per cent of the school budget.

There is no doubt that system capacity improved as a result of this spending, with large increases in the numbers of teachers and support staff, new school buildings and IT facilities. More systematic arrangements and funding were in place to target disadvantage, particularly towards the end of the period. Thus a lot was bought with the money expended. Whether quality was better is harder to establish, partly because time series data on the quality of school processes are not available for the whole period, and partly because the notion of what constitutes high quality is contested. Systematic efforts were pursued to improve quality through support to teachers and leaders, continuing professional development, improvements to teachers' pay and conditions, and ultimately, replacement of 'failing' schools.

Most of the attainment targets that Labour set at the start were met. Attainment overall increased and socio-economic gaps were reduced on every measure. While it is impossible to say with certainty that the government's policies caused the changes in outcomes, the indicators point in that direction. The changes in policy and spending were associated with a break in pre-existing trends at secondary level. Increased effort and targeting coincided with accelerated improvement, especially in respect of narrowing socio-economic gaps. Recent research points to a positive effect from extra spending on schools, while evaluation showed positive effects of a number of specific initiatives. There is also no well-evidenced alternative explanation for the narrowing of socio-economic gaps, although economic and compositional factors demand more investigation.

Evidence that standards England improved or declined relative to other countries is not conclusive, providing no substance for claims that much money was spent only to see English pupils plummet down the international league tables. Nor is there any evidence of a strong relative improvement, although this would not be expected given that spending increases were not sufficient to move England or the UK up the international rankings in any significant

way either. The difference in trend between GCSE results and results in the PISA international student assessment between 2006-2009 is suggestive of 'grade inflation' in that period, although the difficulties in comparing two different modes and styles of assessment make it impossible to draw a firm conclusion.

Whatever its achievements, as Labour left office, much remained to be achieved, a point recognised by all political parties in their election pledges. High levels of social inequality still existed, especially at the higher end of the attainment distribution – a point which must raise questions about future social mobility. A persistent minority of young people remained disaffected with school, achieving little and facing very poor post-school prospects. It is of course, impossible to know whether enough was achieved over Labour's thirteen years. Many people would have hoped that gaps would have narrowed more given the efforts made both in education policy and wider social policy, while others will point to the fact that some of the factors underpinning educational inequality (in particular income inequality), did not change during Labour's terms (Hills 2013a). Labour left office with critics on both left and right advocating different kinds of policies to achieve greater change: from the left calls for a withdrawal from high-stakes testing and market principles; from the right calls for greater curriculum rigour and less central direction in delivery.

The Coalition inherited a stronger system which to deal with which to tackle its educational priorities, but also a much tougher fiscal climate, with less room to expand spending in order to achieve further improvement. In early 2015, we will return to this topic to assess their record on the same issues.

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Appendix Table A 1

Table A1: Specific Targets for School Years						
Date of Spending Review	Date target to be met	Key Stage 2 (Age 11)	Key Stage 3 (Age 14)	Key Stage 4 (Age 16)	Key Stage 5 (Age 19)	Other
1998	2001 or 2002	The number of pupils aged 5,6 or 7 in infant classes to fall from 477,000 to zero by Sept 2001 at the latest. Increase from 63% to 80% in the proportion of pupils reaching level 4 in numeracy and 62% to 75% in numeracy by 2002.		Increase in the proportion achieving one or more GCSE from 92% to 95% by 2002. Increase the proportion gaining 5 GCSEs or equivalent at A*-C from 45% to 50% by 2002.	Increase the proportion aged 19 who have achieved NVQ Level 2 or equivalent from 72% to 85%.	Reduce school truancies by one third (from 0.7% to 0.5% half days missed) by 2002 and exclusions from 12,500 to 8,400 per year.
2000	2004	Increase the percentage of 11-year-olds at or above the expected standard of literacy and numeracy for their age. Reduce to zero the number of LEAs where fewer than 78% achieve these standards	80% at Level 5 in Maths 75% at Level 5 in English and ICT. At least 65% to achieve level 5 and above in English and maths, and 60% in science in each LEA; and By 2004, no more than 15% of pupils will fail to attain at least one level 5.	Increase the proportion gaining 5 GCSEs or equivalent at A*-C by four percentage points 2002-2004. 38% to reach the standard in every LEA. 92% to gain 5 or more at grades A*-G	Increase by 3 percentage points (over 2002) the numbers achieving this level (Level 2) by age 19	Reduce school truancies by a further 10% from the level achieved by 2002 and ensure that all pupils who are permanently excluded obtain an appropriate full- time education
2002	2004, 2006 or 2007	85% at Level 4 in maths and English and 35% at Level 5. Significant reduction in number of schools where fewer than 65% achieve Level 4 and above.	85% at Level 5 in maths and English and ICT 80% at Level 5 in science. Significant reduction in the number of schools where fewer than 60% achieve Level 5 and above. 90% reach Level 4 in English and maths by age 12.	Increase the proportion gaining 5 GCSEs or equivalent at A*-C by 2 percentage points each year In all schools 20% to reach this target by 2004 rising to 25% by 2006	Increase by a further 3 percentage points (over 2004) the numbers achieving this level (level 2) by age 19	By 2004 reduce school truancies by a further 10% from the level achieved by 2002, sustain the new level and improve overall attendance levels thereafter. By 2006, increase the percentage of children who spend a minimum of two hours a week on high quality PE and school sport from 25% to 75%
Date of Spending Review	Date target to be met	Key Stage 2 (Age 11)	Key Stage 3 (Age 14)	Key Stage 4 (Age 16)	Key Stage 5 (Age 19)	Other
2004	2008 or 2010	85% at Level 4 in maths and English Reduce the proportion of schools in which fewer than 65% of pupils achieve level 4 and above by 40%	85% at Level 5 in maths and English and ICT 80% at Level 5 in science. By 2008 in all schools at least 50% of pupils achieve level 5 or above in each of English, maths and science	By 2008, 60% of those aged 16 to achieve gaining 5 GCSEs or equivalent at A*-C In all schools 20% to reach this target by 2004 rising to 25% by 2006 and 30% by 2008.	By 2008, increase by a further 2 percentage points (over 2006) the numbers achieving this level by age 19. Reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training by 2 percentage points by 2010 (from 2004).	Reduce the under-18 conception rate by 50% by 2010 from 1998. Halt the year on year rise in obesity in children under 11 by 2010. Narrow the gap in achievement between looked after children and their peers. By 2008 reduce school absence by 8% compared with 2003. By 2006, increase the percentage of children who spend a minimum of two hours a week on high quality PE and school sport to 85% by 2008.

Note: In 2007 the government also formally began to monitor the gap in attainment between children eligible for Free School Meals and their peers, and the gap between the initial participation rate in fulltime higher education for young people aged 18, 19 and 20 from the top three and bottom four socio-economic classes, although no specific targets were set. In the same vein it began to monitor child emotional health and well-being, substance misuse, and participation in positive activities using the Tellus survey, the proportion of children taking school lunches, and the numbers of new entrants to the criminal justice system who are aged 10-17, without setting specific targets