WILL WE EVER HAVE A FAIR EDUCATION FOR ALL?

The Fair Education Alliance Report Card 2014

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FOREWORD

If Britain is to become a fair society, we need to do a lot more to break the link between someone's social background and their chances of doing well in life. Too often today demography is destiny. Far too many young people are denied the opportunity to fulfil their potential – more than three out of five children from disadvantaged backgrounds leave school without achieving the basics of English and maths.

That is why I welcome the establishment of the Fair Education Alliance, the first time that a broad range of organisations – including charities, schools, unions and business – have come together to address educational inequality and help ensure that everyone is able to go as far as their talents and aspirations take them.

In our recent *State of the Nation* report, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission highlighted that, on current trends, it will take at least 30 years before the attainment gap at GCSE is even halved. I do not believe that we should settle for that. More needs to be done more quickly. The Fair Education Alliance's five Impact Goals will – if achieved – lead to a radical reduction in educational inequality.

The data in this report shows that while there has been some progress towards these Goals there is a long way still to go. The recommendations it makes need to be taken seriously by policy-makers and educational professionals alike if we are to move towards Britain becoming a more open and more fair society.

I welcome the Report and the work of the Fair Education Alliance because in the end it is education that holds the key to unlocking social mobility.

The Rt. Hon. Alan Milburn
Chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education in the UK is not fair. Young people from low income communities are much less likely to succeed than their wealthier peers. We know this. And we know that this impacts negatively on a young person's ability to achieve the health, happiness and career they aspire to. We also know that the reasons for this educational inequality are not simple and lie in an intricate web of social issues. Addressing such complex problems will take more than one institution, one organisation, or even one government.

The Fair Education Alliance (FEA) comprises over 25 of the UK's leading organisations which are not prepared to accept the status quo. Our members are committed to addressing this complicated issue. Collectively we will take action to improve the life chances of children from poorer backgrounds. We will also press for action by the government as well as parents, teachers, businesses and all those who can help support meaningful change. By raising the public profile of educational inequality, we seek to inspire more people to join us in ending it for good.

The goal of the Fair Education Alliance is to significantly narrow the achievement gap between young people from our poorest communities and their wealthier peers by 2022. Each year, the Alliance will monitor the progress made across England by measuring against the five Fair Education Impact Goals. These goals target critical stages in the education journey of a child from a poorer background and, importantly, they are measurable and time-limited.

The FEA Report Card 2014 is the first annual assessment against these goals and it shows a worrying picture – against every single Fair Education Impact Goal there is a significant gap between the most and least deprived. Our findings this year also reveal that the gaps are even bigger than we realise. Progress is being made in some areas, but forthcoming changes to the curriculum, exams and the accountability system – much of which is welcome – will unmask a wider gap than previously indicated. The inequalities outlined below are substantial. Yet, more concerning is the knowledge that they will get worse unless substantial action is taken now.

There is hope: in recent years, the gap has been narrowing – in some areas rapidly, with London leading the way. For example, if all primary schools in England performed as well as those in the capital, the gap would be reduced by 65%. However, the data shows that across the country much more needs to be done if our goals are to be met. We must strive to replicate the success of some areas across the rest of the country. But this won't be easy: regional analysis shows that affluent areas, where children on free school meals are in the minority, are least likely to support these children to achieve their potential.

There is a sound moral argument for giving every child an equal chance to succeed but this is about more than individual attainment. The potential impact on our economy as a whole makes the need to address this inequality irrefutable – studies suggest that raising the educational outcomes for poorer children would increase GDP by £6bn a year by 2030 and by £56bn a year by 2050[i]. Instead, we are currently choosing to pay twice over – firstly for a child's education and again when we have to address the consequences of failure.

The state of the nation in 2014

Educational inequality exists before a child even starts school. And then it gets worse.

- Children from poorer backgrounds are **less ready for primary school** than their more affluent peers. The poorest families are the least likely to take up their free entitlement to early years education. And, last year, only around a third of poorer pupils achieved a 'Good Level of Development' at age five compared to more than half of more affluent pupils.
- Pupils from poorer backgrounds are **twice as likely to leave primary school without basic literacy and numeracy skills** compared to their more affluent peers. This means that, at age 11, four in ten children eligible for free school meals cannot read, write or solve a maths problem at the basic level expected for their age. When looking at more advanced levels of literacy and numeracy, this gap is even wider.

If a child falls behind, they will probably stay behind – in school and in life.

- In 2013, of the children who didn't reach the expected basic level of literacy and numeracy at age 11, only 7 in every 100 went on to achieve five good GCSEs.
- **Even if a poorer pupil does succeed at primary school, they are more likely to fall behind once they get to secondary:** half of all pupils eligible for free school meals fail to develop their English and maths skills at the expected rate. Poorer pupils are **twice as likely to leave secondary school without five good GCSEs**, with two thirds not achieving this basic level.
- This has a domino effect on future life chances. Young people from lower-income families are almost **twice as likely to not be in employment, education or training** (NEET) aged 16 compared to their more affluent peers and are also less likely to go to university.

Too often, poorer children don't achieve beyond the basics and excel academically.

- Pupils from poorer homes are only **half as likely to achieve an excellent level in English and maths at primary school** compared to their wealthier peers and this gap has grown over the last three years.
- **Academic excellence is a rarity in low income communities.** Just 7% of schools serving low income communities had at least an average B grade across the school, whereas this is the case for 50% of schools serving high income communities.
- At age 18, poorer pupils are **four times less likely to attend the most selective universities**. The odds of a child from a State school who is eligible for free school meals being admitted to Oxbridge are almost 2000 to 1.

Self-esteem, wellbeing and resilience underpin success.

- And yet, poorer pupils are **more likely to have low reported wellbeing and mental ill health** than their more affluent peers. They are also less likely to feel in control of their success or failure at school.
- Children from low income families are more likely to have poorly developed social skills and exhibit negative behaviours which limit their ability to learn. Low income pupils are **four times more likely to be permanently excluded** from school following extreme behavior. Exclusion from school significantly increases the likelihood of low attainment and future unemployment.
- However, helping children develop high levels of perseverance, self-belief and self-motivation to learn can break the link between low income and low attainment. **This gives hope that disadvantage need not dictate destiny.**

What are we calling for?

The Fair Education Alliance firmly believes in action. We believe this report should ignite debate around the needs of the most disadvantaged young people in the UK, but this is about much more than just talking. Our recommendations for policy and practice are designed to bring about real change.

1. Start young and engage parents

Parents must have the right support to carry out their vital role: building strong relationships between families and nurseries and schools is essential and an area in which experienced charities can provide invaluable support. Early years childcare and education settings must have the capacity to attract more skilled staff. One way of doing this would be to link the early years pupil premium to staff quality, and concentrate this funding initially on settings with high numbers of children from the most deprived families.

2. Ensure that those who are falling behind are supported to catch up

Schools should be given more support to 'catch up' disadvantaged pupils who fall behind. The current amount of pupil premium allocated per disadvantaged pupil should be halved, and the remaining funds redistributed to those pupils who are disadvantaged and have low prior attainment. This would give double-weighting to those low income pupils most in need of intervention without raising overall pupil premium spend. The change of funding model would increase school support for 'catching up' pupils.

3. Prioritise leadership and training in schools

Primary and secondary schools serving low income communities demand high quality teachers and leaders – and yet more than a third of primary and secondary headships need to be re-advertised. It is crucial that the best head teachers are placed in schools which face challenges but less than a fifth of schools serving low income communities have Outstanding leadership and management. In secondary schools, investment in specialised middle leader training in literacy and numeracy will support whole-school development and dissemination of best practice in these crucial areas. Collaboration between schools – especially in funding Continuous Professional Development (CPD) – is vital, particularly for primary schools.

4. Deliver effective careers advice and forge links with business

Careers education must be embedded into the curriculum from the beginning of secondary school. All pupils should benefit from work experience opportunities and, at crucial points in their school journey, young people should receive professional one-to-one careers advice. Long-term relationships should be built between schools and employers. To understand the employability of school-leavers, government should ensure more data is available regarding the post-16 progression of pupils. Secondary schools should be held accountable for 'Destination 8' – tracking the destinations of pupils, eight terms after Key Stage 4.

5. Understand the importance of non-cognitive skills

The emotional wellbeing and resilience of children is an area requiring more national consideration. Research is required to better understand non-cognitive skills and effective intervention. In the meantime, national pupil surveys would enable schools to gain an understanding of their students' sense of belonging, resilience and sense of self-direction. Pupils must have access to mental health and self-esteem support, whilst schools must encourage progress and foster growth mind-sets.

6. Create clear pathways to university

Stronger targets must be given to universities to increase the intake of poorer pupils. These institutions should also allocate more of their budgets to outreach and receive support in order to better coordinate and target outreach activities. Schools should allocate more of their budgets to CPD which will allow them to stretch their highest achievers and provide better guidance regarding GCSE and A-level choices, as well as applications to universities. Third sector organisations providing enrichment opportunities should expand and target more schools in low income communities.

Next steps

The Alliance wants all education decision makers to unite behind the Impact Goals and work together; making fair education for all a priority in the 2015 general election and beyond. The Fair Education Alliance will work with government to implement the necessary policy changes outlined in this report. We will also work through our network of members to deliver on the practical changes recommended.

Every year the FEA Report Card will measure the Nation's progress in meeting the five Fair Education Impact Goals. In 2015 we will again document the latest findings and build on our knowledge of best practice to improve a young person's life chances across their whole education journey.

We need to act now to tackle this manifestly unfair situation for young people from the poorest homes. Poverty must no longer be allowed to predict a young person's success in school and in life. Together the Fair Education Alliance is committed to ending this gross inequality.

[i] Paul Marshall (2013), The Tail – How England's Schools Fail One Child in Five and what can be done

INTRODUCTION

Young people growing up in low income families can face multiple disadvantages in their education. These include under-resourced and underperforming nurseries, schools and colleges; unequal access to extra-curricular opportunities; disruptive home lives; lower levels of parental education and engagement with learning; poor health; inadequate housing; economic poverty; as well as crime and social exclusion within local communities. These interconnected problems can compound one another and effectively limit young people's opportunities: placing them on one half of an educational divide which risks harming the life chances of thousands of children across the country.

This is not only a concern for those thousands of young people: it has a powerful effect on all of us. The moral argument for equality is gathering momentum nationally, but the economic argument provides further evidence that the need to address this inequality is both irrefutable and urgent. By not getting things right the first time, the Nation pays twice – first when we fund a child's education, and again when we have to address the consequences of failure. And in addition to these costs, the country is missing out on significant benefits: studies have suggested that raising the educational outcomes for poorer children could increase GDP by £6bn a year by 2030 and by £56bn a year by 2050[1].

Addressing such complex societal problems will take more than one institution, one organisation, even one government. As the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission has recently argued, it requires a 'new national effort' including employers, parents, charities, third sector organisations and key institutions in the health, social care and education sectors if this injustice is to be effectively challenged and changed. The Fair Education Alliance is a coalition of over 25 diverse organisations – and growing – who share a commitment to ending the gross unfairness that how much a child's parents earn still predicts how well they will do at school and in life.

The Fair Education Alliance

The Fair Education Alliance was formed in response to the growing demand for a national debate on why thousands of children do not get a fair education. In England, despite having some of the world's best schools, colleges and universities, an uneven system is leaving children suffering from an education divide based on family income. All members of the Alliance have committed to working towards their shared Fair Education Impact Goals. Created after consultation with over 1,700 teachers, national and international experts, charities and businesses, the Goals follow the educational journey of a child. If achieved by 2022, the Alliance believes educational inequality will be substantially reduced[a]. The Alliance hopes that all education decision makers can unite behind the Impact Goals and work together; making fair education for all a priority in the 2015 general election and beyond.

£56bn

Raising the educational outcomes for poorer children could increase GDP by £56bn a year by 2050

[a] Ultimately the Fair Education Alliance would like to see all gaps in achievement, aspiration, and access to opportunities closed entirely. However, given the complexity of addressing educational inequality in England, the Alliance believes that goals to "narrow" current gaps recognises this difficulty and explains what we want the Nation to achieve by 2022.

The Fair Education Impact Goals are:

Impact Goal One:

Narrow the gap in literacy and numeracy at primary school

The Fair Education Alliance is committed to closing the attainment gap between primary schools serving lower income pupils and those educating higher income pupils. Our goal is for this gap to be narrowed by 90% by 2022.

Impact Goal Two:

Narrow the gap in GCSE attainment at secondary school

The Fair Education Alliance is committed to closing the attainment gap between secondary schools serving lower income pupils and those educating higher income pupils. Our goal is to close 44% of this gap by 2022.

Impact Goal Three:

Ensure young people develop key strengths, including resilience and wellbeing, to support high aspirations

The Fair Education Alliance is committed to ensuring young people develop non-cognitive skills, including the positive wellbeing and resilience they need to succeed in life. The Alliance will be working with other organisations to develop measurement tools which will allow the development of these key skills to be captured.

Impact Goal Four:

Narrow the gap in the proportion of young people taking part in further education or employment-based training after finishing their GCSEs

The Fair Education Alliance wants to see an increase in the number of young people from low-income communities who stay in further education or employment-based training once they have completed Key Stage 4. Our goal is for 90% of young people from schools serving low income communities to be in post-16 education or employment-based training by 2022.

Impact Goal Five:

Narrow the gap in university graduation, including from the 25% most selective universities

The Fair Education Alliance is committed to closing the graduation gap between young people from low income backgrounds and those from high income backgrounds. Our goal is for at least 5,000 more pupils from low income backgrounds to graduate each year, with 1,600 of these young people graduating from the most selective universities.

90%

Impact Goal One: Narrow the gap in literacy and numeracy at primary school by 90% by 2022

44%

Impact Goal Two: Narrow the gap in GCSE attainment at secondary school by 44% by 2022

FEA Report Card 2014

The FEA Report Card will track the progress of the Nation towards these Fair Education Impact Goals. Each year, the Alliance will report the latest findings, capture and share best practice, and highlight practical ways that different stakeholders can support the Impact Goals. The annual report will also set out clear policy recommendations for the government.

A note on the data

Where data is available, this report details the progress made since the 2010/2011 academic year up to 2012/2013.

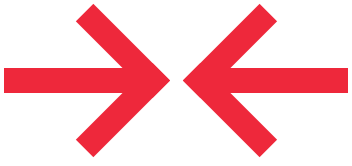
For the purposes of measuring Impact Goals One, Two and Four, the Alliance has analysed the gap between schools serving high and low income communities. *Schools serving low income communities* refers to State schools where 50% or more of the pupils attending come from the most deprived 30% of families according to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). *Schools serving high income communities* refers to State schools where 50% or more of the pupils attending come from the least deprived 30% of families according to IDACI. The comparison excludes private schools as there is insufficient pupil-level data available for effective comparisons to be made.

The Alliance has decided to measure the gap between schools serving high and low income communities rather than between poorer and more affluent pupils. This is in order to better capture data that includes those pupils whose families are on a low income but are just above the income threshold for free school meals (the poverty measure in schooling). This measurement also helps monitor the impact of the Alliance's efforts towards meeting the goals as many members work with and through schools to tackle educational inequality, rather than with individual pupils. In this report, school-level data is at times supplemented with pupil-level data in order to get a fuller picture of the gap or in order to examine it where school level data is not easily available. In this data, the definition of low income is free school meal eligibility (FSM) – in the report, pupils eligible for FSM are referred to as *poorer students* and those who are not eligible as *their more affluent peers*.

For Impact Goals One and Two, the gap has been measured in terms of *average point score* (APS). In order to calculate APS, national curriculum levels (at primary) or GCSE grades (at secondary) are each given a numerical score (as with A-level grades, which are converted into UCAS points for university entry requirements). This means that an average 'score' for the grades of all pupils within a school can be calculated. This has been chosen as a measure because it captures more information than numbers of pupils getting over a 'benchmark' grade (like the current government measure of success in GCSE, which measures the percentage of pupils achieving five GCSE grades at C or above).

RESILIENCE WELLBEING

Impact Goal Three: Ensure all young people develop key skills including resilience and wellbeing



Impact Goal Four: Narrow the gap in the proportion of young people taking part in further education or employment-based training after finishing their GCSEs

As an example, two schools may each have 70% of their pupils achieving a C grade or above and so appear to have similar levels of attainment. However, one school may be achieving a high number of A and A* grades, with the majority of those who don't manage a C grade attaining a D grade; whilst the other school may just be ensuring 70% of pupils cross the D-C grade borderline, but with the rest of the pupils attaining G and F grades. Using an APS measure of schools exposes these differences and gives us a fairer picture of how a school serves all of its pupils: ideal for a school-to-school comparison measure.

For Impact Goal Five, school-level data has not previously been available, although a new dataset has just been released by government. This will soon allow this goal to be measured in the same way as the others: the Alliance will be able to track pupils from schools serving low/high income communities through university to graduation. For this report, however, information has been gathered from a range of sources some of which use different measures of low income, including FSM eligibility, postcode analysis (POLAR) and Socio-Economic Status (SES). Although these measures are not directly comparable, the fact that different datasets reveal similar trends should give us confidence in their findings.

For Impact Goal Three there is insufficient national research into non-cognitive skills and, as yet, no effective method of measuring them. The Alliance has drawn from a range of sources to build a – not yet complete – picture of how low income intersects with the development of a range of non-cognitive skills including resilience, self-direction and self-esteem. Again, the literature reviewed in this chapter uses different measures of low income, including SES, FSM and IDACI.

5,000

Impact Goal Five: 5,000 more pupils from low income backgrounds to graduate each year

IMPACT GOAL ONE:

NARROW THE GAP IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY AT PRIMARY SCHOOL

The headlines

The Fair Education Alliance is committed to closing the 'attainment gap' between primary schools serving lower income pupils and those serving higher income pupils[b]. The goal is for this gap to be narrowed by 90% by 2022.

Attainment in English and maths at age 11 (end of Key Stage 2) is a strong predictor of later success at secondary school. For those who fall behind at this crucial primary hurdle, it is likely they will stay behind their peers. For those that do not excel by this stage, it is unlikely that they will excel later on. The gap must be closed between schools serving low and high income communities in terms of preparing their pupils for success in secondary school and in later life.

To monitor the size of this attainment gap over the coming years, the Alliance will be focusing on the gap as measured by average point score (APS)[c]. To understand the context of this gap, this chapter also explores the gap as measured by the current 'expected' basic level of attainment, the new 'secondary ready' level of attainment and also a 'high' level of attainment[d] at both school and pupil level.

According to Alliance measures **the gap is currently 1.82 APS points – roughly the difference between an average grade of a Level 4a and a Level 4b[e]**. This gap has narrowed by 9.5% over the last three years. However, new accountability measures could see this closing gap appear to widen again.

Key statistics from our analysis show that:

- Poorer pupils are twice as likely to leave primary school without the basic expected literacy and numeracy skills compared to their more affluent peers.
- This gap is even worse at the top: a 'class ceiling' currently locks poorer pupils out of high attainment – those in schools serving low income communities are only half as likely to achieve a Level 5 compared to those in schools serving high income communities.
- The attainment gap has been closing nationally, although only by 9.5% since 2011[f].
- Schools in inner London are most successful in achieving with low income intakes.
- If all schools nationally did as well as those in London, next year the gap would immediately be reduced by 65%.
- Schools in areas where poorer pupils are in the minority of the population are most likely to fail these students.
- A change in the measure of primary success, coming into effect this year, will unmask a wider gap and changes to national curriculum levels could make the gap widen further.

A **quarter** of low income families entitled to free child care for two year olds did not use it in 2013

1/2

Pupils from poorer homes are only half as likely to achieve an 'excellent' level in English and maths at primary school

[b] See the Introduction of this report for definition of terms.
[c] See the Introduction for a more detailed explanation.
[d] Current national curriculum Levels 4, 4b and 5 respectively.
[e] A pupil whose skills are at the top of Level 4, on the cusp of achieving a higher Level 5, and a pupil whose skills are at a secure Level 4.
[f] Measured between academic years 2011/2012 and 2012 /2013.

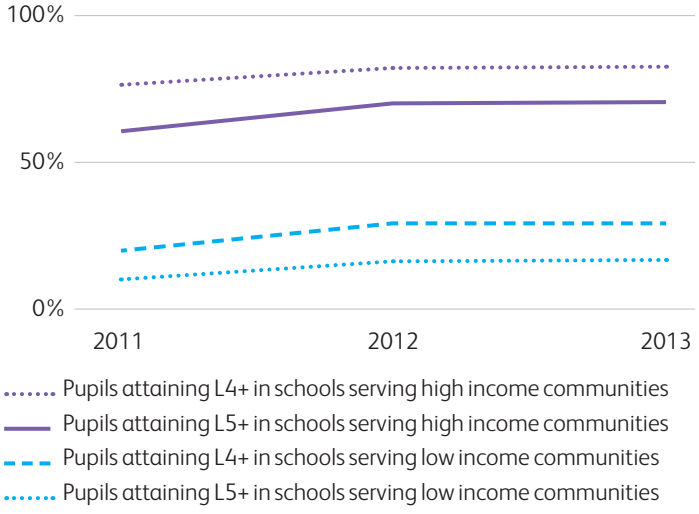
1

The national picture

Poverty too often predicts children's attainment: if a child is eligible for free school meals (FSM – the standard measure of family poverty in schooling) then they are less likely to leave primary school able to read, write or solve maths problems at the basic expected level for their age. Two in five poorer children leave primary school without basic expected skills, double the percentage of their more affluent peers[3]. Once a child falls behind, it is hard to catch up. In 2013, of the children who didn't get their basic expected results at age 11, only 7% went on to achieve the basic minimum level of success expected at GCSE[g,4].

Figure 1.1

Change in pupil attainment



This domino effect means that these children are more likely to become not in employment, education or training (NEET), more vulnerable to involvement in crime and less likely to break out of a cycle of poverty[5]. This is an injustice that we as a Nation cannot continue to ignore.

But it doesn't have to be like this. London's schools, in particular, have improved the attainment of poorer pupils, and there have been smaller but nevertheless important increases in attainment for similar schools in other big cities such as Birmingham and Manchester.

As shown in Figure 1.1[6], the gap in basic expected attainment between schools serving the most and least deprived is narrowing: with an increasing proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in reading, writing and maths in schools serving low income communities. Between 2010/2011 and 2012/2013, this Level 4 gap closed by nearly 5 percentage points.

However, although Level 4 was previously the nationally expected level of attainment in primary schools, it is not a strong predictor of success in later education: in 2012, less than half the pupils who had reached Level 4 at the end of primary school went on to get five good[h] GCSEs. Level 4 can be broken down into sub-levels: 4c (the bottom of Level 4), 4b (the middle) and 4a (the top of Level 4 – nearly a Level 5). Level 4b is a much better predictor of success at GCSE and in recognition of this, the government has set a new 'secondary school readiness' expectation which will be equivalent to a Level 4b. Whilst the Fair Education Alliance welcomes this change, we predict it will reveal an even greater attainment gap.

At age 11, four in ten children eligible for free school meals cannot read, write or solve a maths problem at the basic level expected for their age

[g] See below.

[h] This was the previous national benchmark for secondary school attainment – five GCSEs (including English and maths) graded at C or above. This is due to be replaced in 2016 with the 'Progress 8' and 'Attainment 8' measures which will be explored further in the chapter on Impact Goal Two.

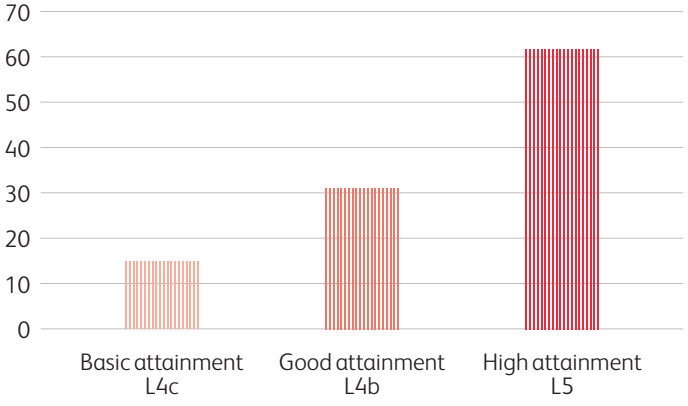
IMPACT GOAL ONE

Although there has been a reduction of the gap between poorer and more affluent pupils, this is only when measured by the basic 'expected' Level 4. It seems that that FSM eligible pupils are more likely to be 'pushed over the grade boundary' to achieve the minimum requirement Level 4c, but schools are not always ensuring these pupils leave primary at the more secure and challenging Level 4b. In 2014, when measured against Level 4c, 75% of FSM eligible pupils achieved well, compared with 88% non-FSM eligible, a gap of 13 percentage points. But when measured against the 'good' Level 4b, only 46% of FSM eligible pupils achieved this level, against 67% non-FSM: a gap of 20 percentage points[7]. This suggests that once the new accountability framework is in place, the national picture will show a serious falling back in terms of progress towards this goal, as can be seen in Figure 1.2[8]. This highlights that much more must be done to ensure that primary schools truly support poorer pupils for future success.

Figure 1.2

Attainment gap

The percentage point gap between FSM eligible and non-eligible pupils



When comparing the proportion of pupils who go beyond the basic level and achieve the higher Level 5, an even bigger gap emerges: pupils in schools serving low income communities are only half as likely to achieve this high level when compared to those in schools serving high income communities. Moreover, this gap has grown rather than shrunk over the last three years. Although the schools serving deprived communities are beginning to achieve slightly better by this measure, they have been outstripped by those serving high income pupils, who are improving by this measure at a faster rate. In the race for skills, qualifications and ultimately employment, pupils from low income communities are lagging behind those from high income communities at this key first hurdle. If a pupil does not achieve Level 5 across subjects when they leave primary, they are not expected to get above C grades across subjects at GCSE[i].

Average Point Score (APS) is a more detailed measure of achievement, which captures the success being made with all students, rather than just those who get over a 'borderline'. Measured by APS, the attainment gap between schools serving low and high income communities has narrowed by 9.5% over the past three years (less than by Level 4 measurements) and is currently 1.82 points. If the gap continued to narrow at this rate, it would only have closed by 50% in 2022. This shows there is a lot more work to do in order to meet the Impact Goal of 90%. Impending changes to the way the government measures success at Key Stage 2 (with levels removed and scaled scores[j] replacing APS) will also complicate comparison over time.

The gap could also widen in real terms, following recent changes to national assessment which have removed curriculum levels and materials to assess pupil progress (APP) that support formative feedback (feedback which helps pupils identify next steps for improvement, rather than just give them a grade). It is encouraging that there is now a consultation on performance indicators which may replace these levels. However, the draft indicators are much less finely detailed in comparison to National Curriculum levels, which will mean that schools may have to develop their own measures to monitor pupil progress, with descriptions of a 'national standard' for the end of each Key Stage from which to estimate an 'end point' of this progress.

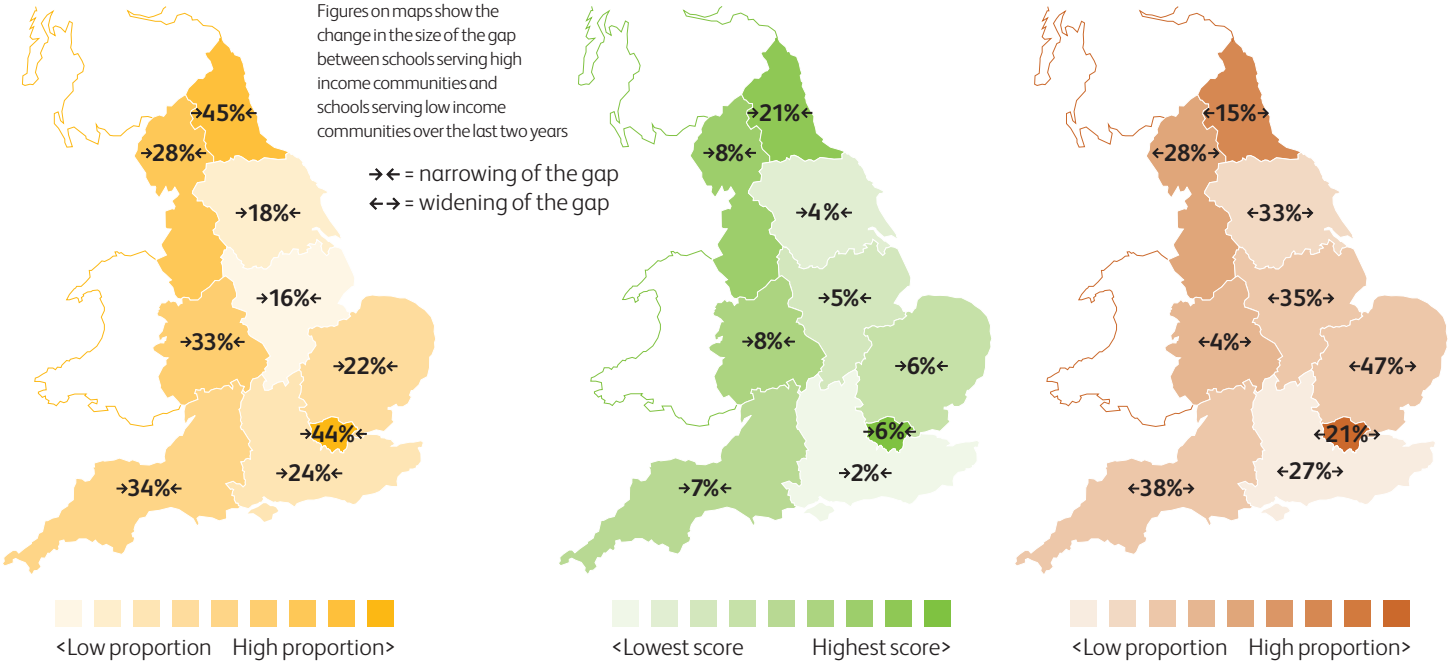
[i] According to nationally expected progress.

Figure 1.3

Pupils in schools serving low income communities achieving Level 4+ in English & maths

Average point score in schools serving low income communities

Pupils in schools serving low income communities achieving Level 5+ in English & maths



Where gaps have narrowed or widened, this has been expressed as a percentage of the original gap within the region.
Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

Without a clear framework to measure gradual improvement in skills, it will be harder to identify early those pupils falling behind and to recognise and reward incremental success. Outstanding schools are more likely to have resources to address this new challenge and develop their own detailed pupil progress indicators whereas schools in more challenging circumstances will not. Outstanding schools are more likely to be serving high income communities, whilst struggling schools are more likely to be serving poor income communities[9], meaning this change in policy could hit the most vulnerable pupils the hardest.

The regional picture

The regional picture, as outlined in Figure 1.3, shows that the APS and Level 4 gaps between schools serving low income communities and those serving high income communities are closing in all regions, as indicated by the inward-pointing arrows. Worryingly, though, the Level 5 gap is widening in all regions: revealing the 'class ceiling' whereby inequality becomes more pronounced at the higher ends of attainment. The intensity of colour in each map indicates which regions have the highest and lowest percentage of attainment by each measure. The map shows that London schools serving low income communities have high attainment against all measures (i.e. the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 and Level 5, as well as APS). There have been

[9] Key Stage 2 test results from 2016 will be expressed as a scaled score with pupils achieving a score above or below 100. The national expectation will be set at 100 which will be equivalent to a current Level 4b.

IMPACT GOAL ONE

various explanations put forward as to why London performs so highly and is particularly good at closing the gap between its most and least affluent State school students[10]. Factors which are agreed on include its wealth, relative to the rest of the country, and the initiatives to improve the capital's schools, which have received generous funding[11].

When broken down by local authority, those areas successful at supporting attainment for deprived pupils are often those with higher levels of poverty[12]. This could be because areas with high concentrations of FSM eligible children are more accountable for the attainment of deprived children, as they make up a greater proportion of a school's intake or a local authority's pupil population. The introduction of the pupil premium has increased accountability for the progress of the country's poorest children and since this was introduced, an increase in attainment has been seen in those areas where they are the minority, though they still significantly underperform their wealthier peers[12]. However, difference in attainment between areas with high and low concentrations of poverty may not solely be attributable to accountability; it may also be the case that areas with a greater concentration of poorer pupils have developed best practice in making progress with these pupils. This points to the pressing need for strong leadership and collaboration across regions, to share best practice in raising attainment for pupils from low income backgrounds.

Closing the gap

Some progress has been made in reducing the attainment gap at primary level, however, there is still a long way to go before life chances are equal for children coming from the most and least deprived backgrounds. A poor start can set in motion a domino effect which continues through a child's life. This chapter identifies four key themes where work can be done to address this gap: parenting, early years education, teaching and learning in schools and primary leadership.

Just as GCSEs can be predicted by attainment at the end of primary school, so too can success at the end of primary school be predicted by the literacy and numeracy skills with which pupils start school – as measured at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage at age 5. If a young child is well-equipped with skills, developed at home and in quality early years settings, then they are better able to enter into a 'virtuous cycle' of learning in their school career. From birth to five, it is therefore vital to teach literacy and numeracy both in the home and via quality education provision.

The role of parents

An attainment gap exists before a child enters primary school. Last year, only around a third (36%) of FSM eligible pupils achieved a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) across the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), compared to 55% of more affluent pupils: a gap of 19 percentage points. The Foundation Stage measures 17 early learning goals and worryingly, the biggest attainment gap is in the literacy goals of reading and writing with a 20 percentage point gap in both these skills. In numeracy, the attainment gap is slightly narrower but still very worrying, at 18 percentage points. As with Key Stage 2 assessments, the EYFS measures have just changed, becoming more challenging, and therefore attainment for both groups has dropped back (in 2012, 48% of FSM eligible pupils achieved a good level of development and 67% of non-FSM pupils). As a percentage, the gap has therefore widened from 28% in 2012 to 35% last year.

Case study:
I-CAN Early Communication project in Barnardo's Children's Centres

In partnership with I-CAN and The Communication Trust, Barnardo's has initiated training for a Champion in each Children's Centre Group, to enable them to embed a language-rich approach in all sessions and cascade the I-CAN Early Language Development Programme to partner services. The Champion will undertake a Level 3 qualification offered by The Communication Trust to accredit their skill.

Centres in Newcastle (Byker and East) have undertaken a significant rollout programme to all types of services, affecting different groups:

- Stay and play activities open to all parents
- Antenatal, postnatal and diversity groups for invited families with child protection plans in place for some of their children
- Work with local early years providers
- Training for volunteers and staff working in the Children's Centre crèches

Families said:

"I didn't know that children should only watch a small amount of TV per day. Now I have cut that down and I don't have the TV on when the children are playing."

"It is good to know that what I am doing with my child is helping him to communicate with others."

The foundations for language acquisition are laid in the early years and are crucial: studies have shown how early language development affects later reading attainment[14]. This is affected by language exposure in the home: Hart and Risley's influential report[15] famously estimated the 'word gap' between poorer children and their more affluent peers aged three to be 30mn word occurrences. This points to two potential barriers. Firstly, the initial literacy skills of parents, which have a knock on effect on a child's ability (though this may be mitigated through quality early years education, explained below). Secondly, parenting knowledge and skills, such as understanding the importance of songs, rhyme and talk in developing language skills of babies.

Parental support and encouragement also help a child succeed once they get to school. The national campaign 'Read On. Get On.' has drawn attention to the importance of all primary school children being able to read well and with enjoyment, and particularly highlighted the need for parents to encourage reading in the home[16]. There are challenges: poorer parents are likely to have lower literacy skills and so they may lack confidence in reading with their children. Numbers of books in the home is also correlated with attainment[17] and this, too, is a barrier for poorer families who may not be able to afford the resources to make their home environment educationally stimulating. This indicates the importance of information, resources and support for parents in how to help their child, which is provided by the best early education settings and schools, often in collaboration with charities.

IMPACT GOAL ONE

Early years education

Successive governments have articulated two main intentions behind policies to expand free early years education: to boost maternal employment (and thus reduce child poverty) and to reduce the 'attainment gap' at age 5. However, the poorest families are least likely to take up their entitlement to free provision. Last year, free childcare for two year olds was available for the poorest 20% of families but over a quarter did not use this entitlement[18]. In thirty-seven local authorities less than 60% of these families took up their entitlement. In most cases, the reasons were a significant shortage of places coupled with a lack of awareness about this entitlement[19].

For three year olds, the picture looks better: only 3% of the Nation's three to four year olds are not taking up their free education entitlement[20]. However, universal entitlement may not be the best way to ensure the neediest families access care: a recent Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) report found that for every six children given a free place, only one additional child began to use early education where they had not previously done so[21]. This raises a question mark over the cost-effectiveness of universal provision in closing the gap and highlights that more must be done in supporting the hardest-to-reach families to access free childcare.

There are conflicting studies of pre-school education, some showing a positive long term impact on attainment and behaviour[22] and others showing a beneficial impact which fades over time[23]. Quality pre-school education appears to have the biggest impact on children whose parents have low qualifications: suggesting that quality is a crucial lever in narrowing the gap[24].

The quality of early education is linked to the qualifications of staff in early years settings[25]. On average, poorer three and four year olds benefit from higher quality early years education because they are more likely to be in a State maintained setting with a qualified teacher[26]. However, this type of provision can be a barrier to employment for these families because this provision often only offers care for three hours a day – lacking the flexibility needed by low income parents, who are more likely to work shift patterns or atypical hours. This is corroborated by a recent IFS finding that maternal employment amongst mothers with three year olds has only been boosted by 3% since the introduction of universal entitlement[27]. This points to a need for more than 15 free hours free childcare for the poorest families, if it is to be effective in boosting maternal employment and so lower family poverty.

For three and four year olds not in a school nursery, and for many two year olds, childcare and early education is taken up in the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector (PVI). In low income areas, these settings are more likely to be judged Requires Improvement or Inadequate by Ofsted[28]. Those settings catering to the poorest families charge the lowest rates and so struggle to afford to hire graduates or staff with basic literacy or numeracy qualifications[k], which affects the quality of education they provide. Previously some settings in poorer areas used the Graduate Leader Fund to hire more qualified staff or train current staff. This was ended in 2010, although a welcome new Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) has been recently introduced. The EYPP is, however, currently only £300 per pupil each year – too little to fund the salary of a graduate. The EYPP does not currently have any qualification requirements attached to it. This means settings can offer places but there is no requirement for them to improve the quality of provision on offer by enhancing the qualifications of their staff.

The coalition government has also introduced Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS), in a welcome attempt to increase the quality and status of the early years workforce. However, EYTS does not yet have pay and status parity with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), which has proven much more effective in attracting high quality graduates. Nor does it provide the same portability as QTS, which enables the holder to work across a greater number of settings.

[k] Level 3 qualifications (GCSE or equivalent).

Figure 1.4

Percentage of headteachers posts needing re-advertising

Education Data Surveys, 2014

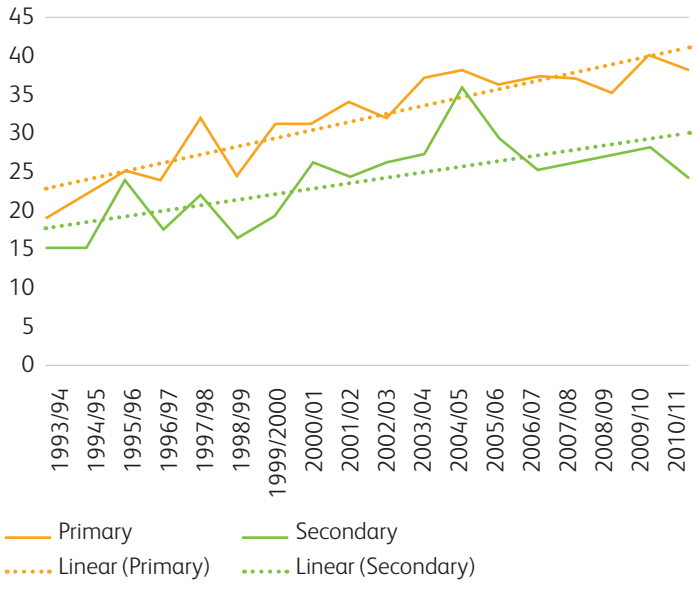
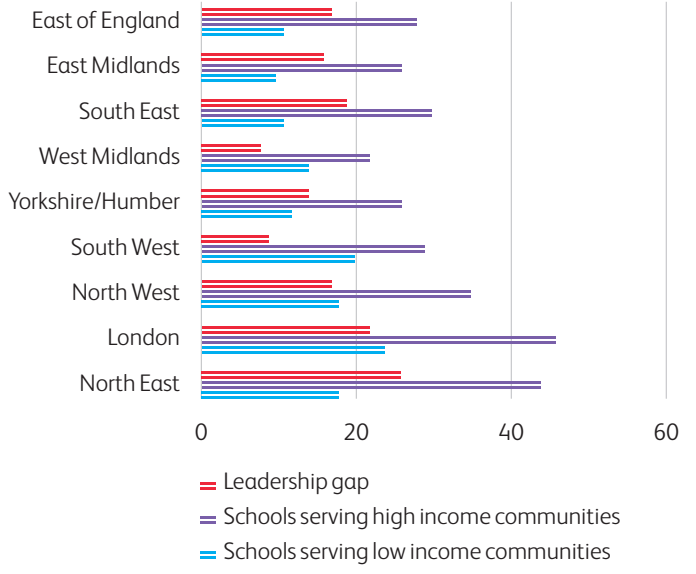


Figure 1.5

Outstanding leadership & management in primary schools

(Ofsted March 2014 data, top and bottom quintiles of IDACI)



Teaching & learning

Once children get to school, the reasons they may struggle with basic skills vary. For example, in reading some children battle with basic decoding while others find comprehension difficult due to limited vocabulary or slower cognitive development. Others still are able to decode text but do not enjoy reading so do not develop fluency. Research shows that targeted intervention is most effective and that different approaches are needed for different children[29]. The Education Endowment Fund is developing an evidence base for the best interventions in literacy and numeracy and many schools are leading the way in developing best practice in intervention and making reading enjoyable, as highlighted by Ofsted[30]. More can be done to disseminate this practice so the weakest schools can be supported in addressing illiteracy and innumeracy.

As the Level 5 attainment gap highlights, there is not only a need to catch up those 'slipping behind' but also an imperative to 'stretch the top' when looking at pupils from low income communities. Some schools do well by this measure: sharing best practice in making better than expected levels of progress and stretching the highest attainers is crucial for ensuring all schools can replicate the successes some have already developed.

Using best practice in classrooms is important in driving success, particularly in teaching and learning practices. Good quality teaching has the potential to have the biggest impact on attainment for pupils from low income communities[31]. Continuous Professional Development for teachers is vital, and specialist training can be easier to resource when schools collaborate with one another.

IMPACT GOAL ONE

School leadership

Collaborative leadership of groups of schools can help spread best practice amongst chains, federations, cooperatives and local families of schools, leading to success with poorer pupils in notable instances[33].

Strong leadership is vital if an individual school is to achieve the best progress with its pupils. However, there is a supply problem in primary leadership: in 2010/11 more than a third of advertised primary headships needed to be re-advertised[34]. This is set to worsen, with few teachers wanting to progress into headship[35] and an increasing number of existing heads approaching pensionable age[36].

The problem of school leadership quality disproportionately affects disadvantaged pupils: leadership is judged Outstanding in less than a fifth of schools serving the most disadvantaged pupils – a large contributing factor in the academic underperformance of these schools. Ultimately, the deprived pupils who most need high quality leadership and management in order to catch up with those from high income backgrounds are the least likely to get this transformative leadership. Encouragingly, the quality of leadership and management in schools serving low income communities has been increasing over recent years, even though it has recently been measured against a new and more rigorous Ofsted framework.

Middle leadership is also crucial in driving up the quality of teaching and learning across a school. Excellent classroom practice improves student attainment and has a particularly significant impact on poorer pupils[37]. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers is therefore vital, and training for middle leaders to lead this CPD within schools is equally important.

RECOMMENDATIONS 1

Recommendations for policy

1. Make Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) so it attracts the same pay and status.

2. Attach a qualification requirement to the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) so that the settings which receive it are additionally required to employ a graduate staff member. **Initially concentrate the EYPP on settings with high numbers of eligible children** to help poorest settings hire a graduate and **aim to increase the amount given per pupil** by the end of the next parliament.

3. Develop collaborative models which target schools in challenging circumstances which will particularly help primary schools share best practice and benefit from economies of scale in funding Continuous Professional Development.

Recommendations for practice

1. Children's Centres to train language development champions to support parents and carers in developing the language of their children, as with the work of I-CAN – the children's communication charity.

2. Children's Centres to register births so that parents have a point of contact with the State and are able to get information about when their child is eligible for free childcare, as well as other support available before their child is two.

3. Ensure high quality teachers and leaders are trained and deployed in schools serving disadvantaged communities, as with the work of Teach First, Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders.

4. Charities to work together with schools to support parental engagement as with the evidence-based Achieving Early programme delivered by Achievement for All and Save the Children's award-winning Families and Schools Together programme (FAST).

IMPACT GOAL TWO:

NARROW THE GAP IN GCSE ATTAINMENT AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

The headlines

The Fair Education Alliance is committed to closing the 'attainment gap' between the secondary schools serving lower income pupils and those educating higher income pupils[l].

Our goal is to close 44% of this gap by 2022.

GCSE achievement prepares pupils for the lives ahead of them: those without five good GCSEs[m] are twice as likely to feel that 'life is not worth living' and almost five times more likely to be 'not in education employment or training' (NEET) at the age of 19[38]. Yet poorer pupils are almost twice as likely to be in this low-attaining group, compared to their more affluent peers[39].

As with primary schools, the Alliance will measure the gap in Average Point Score (APS – where each GCSE grade is given a numerical score) across eight GCSE subjects, with extra weighting for English and maths. This is because there is evidence that pupils with eight or more GCSEs are more likely to progress successfully and because English and maths are so crucial both for further study and employment. As with primary APS, this helps us capture the progress made with all pupils at all levels of attainment, instead of focusing on a 'benchmark' grade. In our data analysis, 'equivalences' (e.g. BTECs) have not been included because although these can be valuable for individuals, there is evidence that in a broader measure they can mask a large part of the achievement gap.

According to Alliance measures **the gap is currently 101.7 average points[n] – the difference between 8 C grades and 8 A grades**. It has narrowed over the last three years by a healthy 10.5%, which would put us on track to meet our goal by 2022. However, new accountability measures could see this closing gap appear to widen again.

Key statistics from our analysis show that:

- Poorer pupils are much more likely to leave school without the necessary skills in English and maths and the qualifications they need to access post-16 employment.
- Pupils from low income communities are less likely to reach the top grades at GCSE and progress to A-levels and university.
- If all schools nationally did as well as those in inner London this year, then the gap would have been reduced by 58% – comfortably exceeding our goal.
- New attainment measures are set to reveal a wider attainment gap, demonstrating that much more must be done to ensure all secondary pupils are prepared for a successful future, regardless of family income.

7/100

In 2013, of the children who didn't reach the expected basic level of literacy and numeracy at age 11, only 7 in every 100 went on to achieve five good GCSEs

[l] See the Introduction of this report for definition of terms.

[m] Throughout this chapter the term 'five good GCSEs' refers to five or more GCSEs at A*– C including English and maths: the government's benchmark measurement of Key Stage 4 success from 2008 to 2014

[n] Measured using most recent available data: 2012/2013. Progress measured since academic year 2010/2011.

The national picture

At age 16, poverty is still a strong predictor of a child's educational outcome: well over half of all pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) failed to get the basic five good GCSEs last year – a shocking 63%. Poorer pupils fail to get these vital qualifications at nearly the same rate as their more affluent counterparts succeed: 65% of more affluent pupils did achieve these five good grades[40]. If this attainment gap is going to close, it is important that poorer pupils make accelerated progress across their secondary career, in order to catch up with their wealthier peers. However, at the moment poorer pupils are less likely to even make expected progress at secondary school: only around half of these pupils currently make that progress in English and maths, whilst more than three quarters of their more affluent peers meet expectations[41].

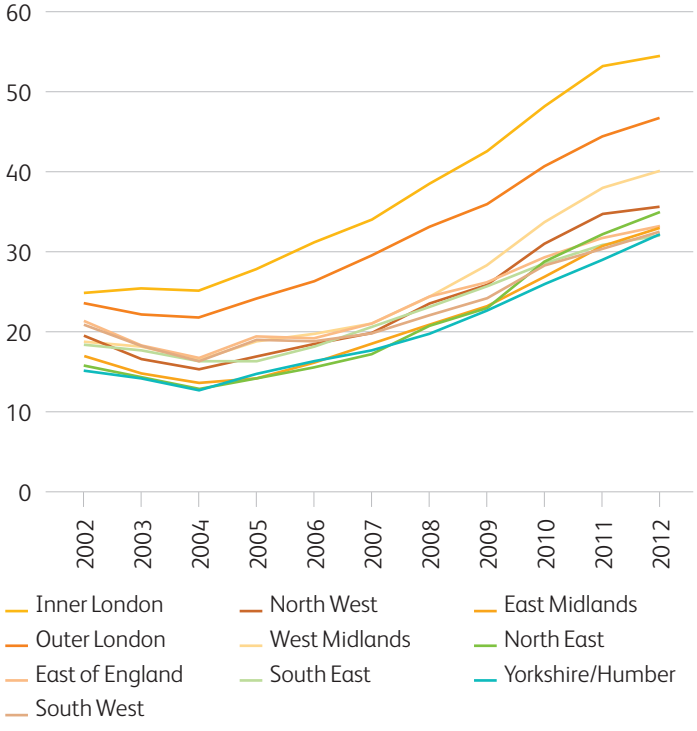
Despite these shocking statistics, attainment of poorer pupils has been increasing nationally, over recent years, as Figure 2.1[42] shows.

A reduction in the gap can be seen, even when it is measured by APS. This suggests real improvements rather than an increase in pupils being pushed over a 'boundary' C grade: nationally, poorer pupils are catching up with their wealthier peers. Since 2011, the gap between schools serving low income communities and those serving high income communities has decreased by a healthy 10.5%. This excellent rate of progress would put us on track to exceed our 2022 goal.

Figure 2.1

% FSM eligible pupils achieving five or more good GCSEs (including equivalents) by region 2002–2012

Taken from Geaves et al. (2014)



Data from the National Pupil Database 2002–2012

37%

65% of more affluent children achieved five good GCSEs but just 37% of poorer children achieve this

15

Just 15 schools serving low income communities outside of London had at least an average B grade across the school. 50% of schools serving high income communities achieved this

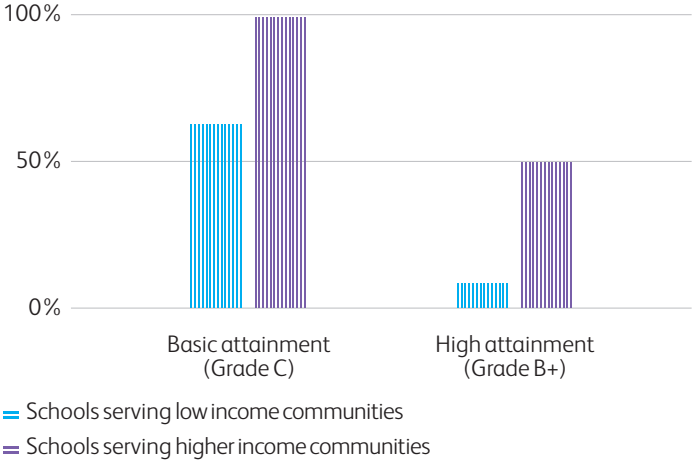
IMPACT GOAL TWO

Yet, when looking at the highest levels of attainment, the same worrying gap is present, as seen in primary high attainment. The government does not currently publish Key Stage 4 data broken down by GCSE grade, only by those achieving five A*–C including English and maths, which means the high performance of pupils across the country or within a school cannot easily be compared, in the same way that the primary school data allowed comparison between Level 4 and Level 5 attainment. The nearest comparison is to analyse schools where the APS shows that the average GCSE grade in the school is a B grade or more, i.e. that is the average GCSE attainment for pupils in the school. When the data is analysed like this, there is an appalling picture (see Figure 2.2[43]). Of 1,100 schools across the country serving the lowest income communities, only 7% have an APS of Grade B or above – just 83 schools across the country. There is big regional disparity in this data: 82% of those high-performing schools serving low income communities are in London. Only 18% – just 15 schools in total – offer this transformative education to low income pupils outside of London. When this is compared to schools serving high income communities, 50% have an APS of Grade B or above: 269 schools across the country[44]. Worryingly, there has been almost no increase in the proportion of schools serving low income communities achieving an average of Grade B or above. In Figure 2.3, where arrows on the maps suggest a narrowing of the regional gap in this high attainment, this is more often due to a decrease in average attainment amongst those schools serving high income communities, rather than increased average attainment in those schools serving the most deprived intakes. It is important to acknowledge that those secondary schools serving high income communities will be required to add less value than their counterparts serving more deprived communities: as the analysis of primary data shows, these pupils from high income backgrounds are more likely to enter secondary with high prior attainment. Therefore the difficulty in closing this gap is closely linked to prior attainment: currently if a pupil in an English school falls behind, they often stay behind. If a pupil doesn't excel in primary, sadly it is unlikely they will excel at secondary.

Figure 2.2

Average school attainment gap

The proportion of schools serving low/high income communities achieving basic or high average grades



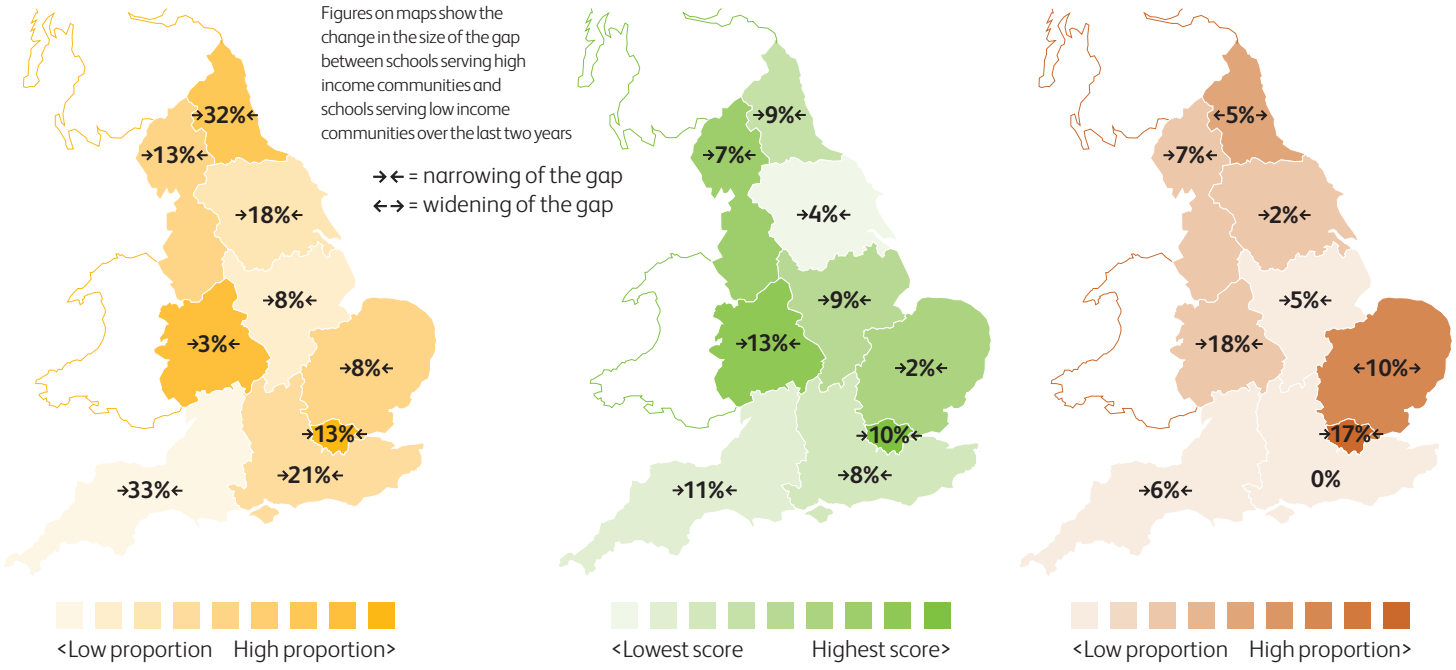
As with primary, the government has recently changed the attainment measures and the accountability system for secondary schools. The welcome new measurement will assess progress (instead of attainment) across 8 GCSE subjects, to reduce schools focusing on the 'boundary grade' of a C and encourage them instead to push all pupils to the highest level they can reach, across a range of subjects. We are hopeful that this will particularly help and support the achievement of pupils from low income communities. However, the new grading system is more finely graded for the highest attainers (for instance where there was one A* GCSE grade, there will now be a Grade 8 and a higher Grade 9). Conversely, the new system will measure progress at the bottom end of attainment less carefully (for instance where there were two GCSE grades F and G, there will now only be one: Grade 1). Data shows that the attainment gap is closing faster at the lower ends of attainment, but that it is still very wide at the higher ends of attainment. Therefore, under the reformed accountability system, future APS scores will reveal a wider gap between the most and least affluent pupils. In addition, from now on, starting with 2014 attainment data (to be

Figure 2.3

Pupils in schools serving low income communities achieving the basic five good GCSEs

Average point score in schools serving low income communities

Proportion of schools serving low income communities who have a high APS equivalent eight B grades



Where gaps have narrowed or widened, this has been expressed as a percentage of the original gap within the region.
Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

published in January 2015), only first attempts at GCSEs will be counted towards a school's results – a change which is most likely to affect schools serving low income pupils, who were more likely to use retakes. The Fair Education Alliance will re-assess how to monitor progress once these new measures come into place, but any meaningful average of the new grades will likely show a much wider gap than has been previously seen.

The regional picture

Figure 2.3 shows that every region is reducing its internal attainment gap as measured by five good GCSEs and by APS: an encouraging trend. Of schools serving low income communities, those in London are again the most successful. If all schools nationally did as well as those in inner London this year, then the gap would have been reduced by 58% comfortably exceeding the 2022 goal eight years early.

It is pleasing to see that some regions with the largest gaps in 2010/11 have made particularly impressive progress in narrowing them over the past three years: for instance, the North East has narrowed its initially wide gap by 20%. However, other regions have made very slow progress: the East and Yorkshire and the Humber in particular. Some individual schools in Yorkshire have actually seen the gap within their schools widen in the past two years. These worrying trends needs to be addressed if the goal is to be met and fewer children are to have poverty dictate their life chances.

IMPACT GOAL TWO

Closing the gap

Overall, although progress has been made in reducing the national attainment gap at secondary, there is still a long way to go before opportunities are equal for children attending the most and least deprived schools – with some areas having much more work to do than others to reduce this inequality. This report has shown how poverty can have long-term repercussions. But strong early years, primary and secondary education can radically change a child's life trajectory. The second part of this chapter identifies two key themes – teaching & learning and secondary leadership – which should be taken alongside those themes highlighted in Chapter 3 as areas where work can be done to narrow the secondary gap.

Teaching & learning

As discussed in the previous chapter, exciting research is being undertaken by the Education Endowment Fund into effective interventions to boost pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Using the findings of this research to deliver targeted intervention is as crucial in secondary as it is in primary. As the 'Read on. Get on.' campaign has powerfully argued, this is especially true in the key skill of reading, as pupils need to learn to read before they are able to 'read to learn[46]' across a range of subjects in secondary school. As seen in the previous chapter, far too many poorer children enter secondary school without this crucial skill. A further challenge is that there is less best practice in secondary than in primary at effectively catching up these pupils, as fewer secondary teachers are trained to teach English outside of their own specialist subject, nor to teach literacy skills at a level below that expected in secondary[47].

Case study:
Premier League Reading Stars

Premier League Reading Stars (PLRS) is a partnership between the National Literacy Trust and the Premier League. Reading skills are vital to success at secondary, but pupils are most likely to be confident readers if they think reading is 'cool' and enjoyable. PLRS captures the motivational power of football to change attitudes to reading, inspiring young people to read more and improve their literacy skills.

Targeting Year 7 and 8 pupils who did not meet Level 4b at the end of primary school, PLRS works with libraries to deliver a programme with Premier League branded incentives such as reading journals, badges and certificates. Online, students can watch films of players talking about what and why they like reading, access book lists and undertake comprehension challenges to win prizes.

Premier League Reading Stars builds on evidence that footballers can influence the way young people view reading, and has particular impact on boys and on those receiving free school meals. In 2013, nearly 9 out of 10 participants said that seeing Premier League footballers read made them want to read more. An opportunity for parental engagement as part of the programme has increased parents' confidence in supporting their child's reading, with 84% reading more with their child after taking part.

Acknowledging the importance of catching up these pupils, the government has instigated a 'catch-up' premium for students leaving primary without having reached Level 4. This is alongside the much needed and welcomed new funding allocated to schools with disadvantaged intakes: the pupil premium is now allocated to every student who, in the past six years, has ever been either a recipient of free school meals or a looked after child (in care). This new category is known as 'FSM Ever 6'. Currently school leaders are free to choose how to spend this additional money most effectively for disadvantaged pupils in their school, based on their local circumstance. Schools are held accountable for this through Ofsted, to whom they must demonstrate how it has contributed to improved attainment of eligible pupils. There is, however, some evidence that pupil premium is not always being used effectively[48] – in some instances plugging gaps in school budgets – and that it is not always meeting the needs of those who are falling furthest behind[49].

It is clearly important that funding is directed disproportionately towards disadvantage, as with the pupil premium. It is particularly positive that the definition of disadvantage in education has recently expanded from those eligible for free school meals to include those in care and those previously eligible or in care. However, this measure of disadvantage in the UK is still not comprehensive and other forms of socio-economic disadvantage are given less recognition in the current funding system. For instance FSM Ever 6 does not include low income families who just miss the eligibility criteria for free school meals; and the national funding formula is not able to compensate for geographical isolation and high transport costs which can compound low incomes in parts of the country. Consequently – due to the combination of a high intake of pupils attracting the premium and a currently unequal national school funding formula – there are a small number of very successful schools building up large surpluses. Meanwhile some schools with arguably greater need, where pupils suffer different socio-economic disadvantages that affect their attainment, are receiving comparatively little extra funding. This hampers their ability to deal with the challenges that their students face and to prevent those vulnerable pupils from falling behind their peers.

School leadership

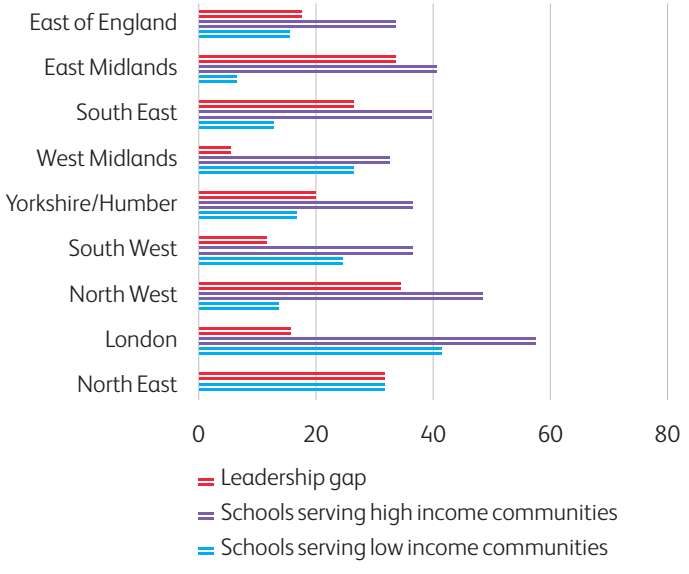
To bring about the change needed in some of our secondary schools serving low income communities, truly inspirational school leadership is needed. However, the headship crisis is affecting secondary schools, as well as primary: in 2012/13 over a third of secondary headships needed to be re-advertised[50].

Again, where headships are filled, poorer leadership quality disproportionately affects poorer pupils. Figure 2.4[51] shows that, of schools serving the most deprived, 27% have their 'Leadership and Management' categorised by Ofsted as Requires Improvement or Inadequate. Of those schools serving the least deprived, the likelihood of a school having the same low leadership grading is halved: only 13% are in this situation[52]. This problem is much greater in some parts of the country than others: whereas leadership and management is judged Outstanding in 42% of London's schools serving the most deprived, in the North East not one of the 23 schools serving these low income communities achieved this judgement in a recent inspection.

Figure 2.4

Outstanding secondary leadership and management

(Ofsted March 2014 data, top and bottom quintiles of IDACI)



IMPACT GOAL TWO

Case study:
Lilian Baylis Technology School

Lilian Baylis Technology School is a mixed secondary school in Lambeth, south London. Of its 700 pupils, 97% are classified as disadvantaged (having been eligible for free school meals or been in care in the past six years) and 57% have English as an Additional Language (EAL).

Shamim is Head of Maths at the school and on the Teaching Leaders programme, which helps develop outstanding middle leaders. In his first year of the programme, he decided to focus on an intervention to impact 40% of Year 10 pupils who had arrived at the school with low prior attainment. Shamim created a three-strand initiative with his team, to raise the target group's attainment in maths:

- Peer-to-peer teacher coaching was used to improve the quality of teaching and learning, focusing on classroom intervention;
- Student mentoring gave individual pupils a confidence boost and positive role models provided motivation;
- Student progress was tracked more regularly and communicated with pupils' families.

When the programme was finished, 72% of pupils achieved A*–C grades: an 8 percentage point improvement within one year. Ofsted graded the department Outstanding and praised its 'highly effective teaching and carefully tailored support'. Shamim has set his department an even more challenging target for the coming year.

The success of Shamim's maths team is one of many across the country which demonstrates the power of middle leadership in driving pupil progress and school improvement. Shamim had a clear vision for what he wanted to achieve for his pupils, inspired his team and the student body, and together they achieved fantastic results.

The Alliance welcomes recent initiatives such as the Talented Leaders programme, which works with the Future Leaders Trust to train excellent head teachers and place them in areas of most need. Under the government's new plan, top-performing head teachers will be expected to work within a network of schools: leading collaboration, sharing best practice and driving up standards across a local area. A National Teaching Service policy has recently been recommended to attract the best classroom teachers to schools in the most need. Linking this scheme with the Talented Leaders programme would ensure that struggling schools can attract and develop talented staff across their leadership and classroom teams. Collaboration of this kind could bring about meaningful systemic change in schools which serve low income communities[53].

Middle leadership is also crucial in driving the quality of teaching and learning across a school. Good quality teaching has the potential to have the biggest impact on attainment for pupils from low income communities[54]. Targeted middle leadership training can develop this capacity and amplify the impact of these key staff in improving teaching and learning across a school; such as Teaching Leaders programme, which works exclusively with staff in schools that serve low income communities. Continuous Professional Development for teachers is vital, and can particularly help address the attainment gap when it is geared towards the needs of pupils in low income communities, such as low literacy and numeracy. Specialist training can be easier to resource when schools collaborate with one another. For instance, the National Literacy Trust is working with two academy chains to develop a Masters-level accreditation in literacy leadership, which has the potential to spread best practice in whole-school approaches and targeted interventions for literacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS 2

Recommendations for policy

1. Target pupil premium by attainment as well as disadvantage measures. This could be achieved through halving current funding per pupil for FSM Ever 6. Half of this funding could then be re-allocated to pupils eligible for FSM Ever 6 who have low prior attainment. This would give double-weighting to those low income pupils most in need of intervention without raising overall pupil premium spend. The change of funding model would increase school accountability for 'catching up' pupils.

2. Expand programmes which help place the best leaders in the most challenging schools, driving change where it is most needed.

3. Commission specialised literacy and numeracy middle leadership training to drive whole-school improvement in these areas and spread evidence-based best practice.

Recommendations for practice

1. Schools should allocate greater parts of their budget to high quality CPD and measure its impact on pupil attainment, using support such as that provided by the Teacher Development Trust.

2. Collaborative networks should target the most challenging schools as in the model proposed with the Talented Leaders programme and successful chains, cooperatives, federations and local families of schools.

3. Charities should expand the number of schools which benefit from evidence-based interventions particularly in literacy and numeracy, as with the excellent innovations of the National Literacy Trust such as Talk for Writing, currently under trial and evaluation by the Education Endowment Foundation.

4. Charities to work with schools to support parental engagement as with the highly effective Achievement for All Schools programme.

IMPACT GOAL THREE:

ENSURE YOUNG PEOPLE DEVELOP KEY STRENGTHS, INCLUDING RESILIENCE AND WELLBEING, TO SUPPORT HIGH ASPIRATIONS

The headlines

The Fair Education Alliance is committed to ensuring young people develop non-cognitive skills, including resilience and wellbeing, necessary to succeed in life. While exam results are crucial to the life chances of pupils they are not the only thing that matter in their educational career: development of character and of emotional health is also crucial, and underpins educational achievement.

Research shows that children from low income backgrounds are more likely to have low levels of self-belief and are less likely to feel in control of their success at school or to persevere when challenges become difficult[55]. These young people are also three times more likely to have a mental illness than children in the most affluent households[56].

At the moment, **there is insufficient data to identify a definitive 'gap' in non-academic skills and mental health** and more must be done to develop understanding of non-cognitive skills, so that inequality can be better measured and addressed. The Alliance is working to develop appropriate measurements.

This chapter will use available data to identify the current evidence of 'gaps' between low income and high income pupils in terms of non-cognitive skills and mental health. Our analysis shows that:

- Children from low income families are more likely to have low reported wellbeing[57] and mental ill health[58].
- Children from low income families are more likely to have poor development of social skills and positive behaviours[59] which affects their resilience and academic success.
- Following behaviour issues, low income pupils are four times more likely to be permanently excluded from school compared to their more affluent peers[60].
- Personal and social skills have increasing importance in determining future life chances, yet poorer young people are less likely to develop these skills[61].

The national picture

There is increasing consensus that social, behavioural and emotional skills affect learning and that *"personal resilience and emotional wellbeing are the missing link in the chain"*[62] in terms of social mobility. To learn, a pupil must be motivated, curious and able to persist at a task despite setbacks. This group of abilities is broadly termed 'non-cognitive skills'. The recent Demos report The Character Inquiry[63] details key 'character capabilities' which are part of non-cognitive skills including:

– Application – the ability to see things through;
– Self-direction – a sense of control over one's actions and their consequences, an ability to evaluate one's strengths and weaknesses and understand one's responsibilities to others;
– Self-control – an ability to regulate one's emotions appropriately;
– Empathy – an ability to respond sensitively to others' needs and views[64].

71% vs 59%

Family demands and problems prevent me putting time into my classwork: 71 % high socio-economic status (SES) pupils disagreed, 59 % low SES pupils disagreed

Excluded: Low income pupils are four times more likely to be permanently excluded from school following extreme behaviour

Non-cognitive skills have also been linked to success at school, as well as to social inclusion and success in later life. For example, high scores for non-cognitive skills have been associated with self-control and school engagement (which are both correlated with academic outcomes)[65]. A lack of these skills has also been linked to school truancy, anti-social behaviour, vandalism, illegal drug use and crime including theft[66]. In adulthood, there are clear links between well-developed non-cognitive skills and increased wages[67], financial stability in adulthood and reduced engagement in crime[68]. Yet, despite much evidence of correlation, there is limited research which proves causation[69]. More must be done to identify the extent to which low non-cognitive skills result in negative outcomes and to understand ways of effectively intervening to increase non-cognitive skills and alter these negative outcomes.

Available data does show that there is a link between poverty and the development of these skills. For instance, PISA data seems to reveal a 'self-direction gap' in the UK, with pupils from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds° less likely to feel in control of their own success or failure at school[70]. Pupils from low income backgrounds were more likely to believe they would perform badly at school, regardless of how much they studied and more likely to say their own effort was contingent on their teacher. The largest difference was for those pupils who felt 'family demands and problems prevented them from putting time into their classwork' – 71 % of high SES pupils disagreed with this statement, where only 59 % of low SES pupils felt that this didn't represent them.

The report also revealed a gap between more and less affluent pupils' resilience and likelihood to persevere. Worryingly, low income pupils were much more likely to identify with character statements to do with giving up – 70 % of high SES pupils said that they didn't agree that they would give up easily when presented with a problem, compared to 50 % of low SES pupils. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement 'I put off difficult problems', 50 % of high SES pupils disagreed, whilst only 38 % of low SES pupils did. This is one of very few datasets capturing this qualitative difference between pupils from high and low socio-economic backgrounds in the UK. Although these gaps appear relatively small, they point to an area which merits more research and reveals an underlying difference between pupils which is linked to their academic attainment.

PISA found that self-belief was positively correlated with attainment outcomes, suggesting that a student's perception of self-direction and their level of perseverance might directly shape their ability to learn[71]. PISA also found that emotional measurements were correlated to school success, yet worryingly another 'gap' emerged in the UK: low income pupils were less likely to agree that they felt like they belonged at school and less likely to agree that they were happy at school, when compared to their more affluent peers[72].

The most important of PISA's findings was regarding what they term 'resilient students' – pupils with low socio-economic status who nevertheless score highly academically. The 'resilient students' shared something in common with all other high-achievers: they had much higher levels of perseverance, self-belief and intrinsic motivation to learn[73]. This suggests

NEET

Of pupils leaving Alternative Provision (exclusion centres) age 16, 50 % become NEET

° Socio-economic status as defined by PISA.

IMPACT GOAL THREE

that helping children develop these skills can break the link between low income and low attainment: these skills can prevent disadvantage dictating destiny.

PISA indicates that strong non-cognitive skills could allow students to break the 'class ceiling', academically, but weak non-cognitive skills could hamper pupils learning or shut them out altogether. Family poverty has been found to be a predictor of social-behavioural[p] outcomes, with those from low income families – on average – demonstrating poorer behaviour in school[74]. Persistent or extreme poor behaviour in school leads to pupils being excluded – an eventuality which disproportionately affects pupils from low income backgrounds. Pupils are over three times more likely to be excluded for a fixed period and four times more likely to be permanently excluded if they are eligible for free school meals[75]. If exclusion rates were equal, 13,000 poorer pupils across the country would not have missed out on their education in 2013/14.

Closing the gap

Current evidence suggests young people from low income backgrounds are disproportionately affected by low non-cognitive skills including emotional and social-behavioural development. However, the need to develop these skills cuts across income distribution. Therefore, the key themes below point to solutions which will benefit all children, although the Alliance also hopes they will be instrumental in closing the gap between children from high and low income communities. Four key themes are identified: the role of parenting, early years, in-school support and support beyond school.

The role of parents

The building blocks of a child's success are laid down in infancy through the development of secure attachment to a care-giver: *"When parents tune into and respond to their [baby's] needs, cries or distress and are a dependable source of comfort, children learn how to manage their own feelings and behaviour, and develop confidence and self-reliance."*[76] Emotional health is linked to this early attachment, as is an infant's ability to explore and learn from the world around it[77]. Children without secure attachment are more likely to have behavioural problems including aggression, defiance and hyperactivity[78]. But good parenting skills, leading to strong attachment, can counter the development of these problems. The Sutton Trust found that, particularly for boys growing up in low income households, secure attachment makes a crucial difference. Those with strong parental bonds are two and a half times less likely to display behavioural problems at school. Whereas, those with insecure attachment are more likely to be NEET and less likely to be upwardly socially mobile[79].

Parents' beliefs about parenting and child development[80] can shape their interactions with their children and these are often linked to income. For instance, parenting language has been correlated to a family's socio-economic status: one study found children in professional families experience a ratio of six encouragements to one discouragement per hour whilst in low income families the ratio is inverted with one encouragement to two discouragements[81]. Interventions can help parents understand how to give their children the best start in life: the Marmot Review reports evidence of improved parenting skills, child development, reduced behavioural problems and improved maternal mental health and social functioning, following home visiting programmes[82]. There is strong evidence that Family Nurse Partnerships are very effective in targeting vulnerable mothers and bringing about a range of benefits for both them and their children[83].

Early years education

The quality of early years education is formative in terms of cognitive and non-cognitive development. A longitudinal study into the impact of pre-school showed that the quality of pre-schooling was linked, alongside better academic outcomes, to better self-regulation, more pro-social activity and a reduction in hyperactivity[84]. Most significantly, the link between quality pre-school and these outcomes could still be observed at age 16. Importantly, there was no link between attending any pre-school and these outcomes: reinforcing, once again, that the quality of early years provision is paramount.

[p] The four behaviours measured in the EPPSE study were self-regulation, pro-social behaviour (e.g. consideration of others' feelings), hyperactivity and anti-social behaviour (e.g. stealing). For more information, see Sammons et al (2014).

Case study:
Family Links

Family Links is a national emotional health and wellbeing charity that provides professional development and curriculum resources to schools and initial teacher education providers, alongside its work with parents and families.

The Family Links programme for schools provides a consistent, community wide set of strategies to support the social and emotional wellbeing and resilience of young people. Family Links schools adopt a set of curriculum resources for PSHE and Circle Time; embed clear and positive approaches to behaviour for learning; and integrate pedagogical tools to build a more empathic and emotionally literate classroom and school climate. Family Links has trained over 2000 trainee teachers and staff in over 300 schools since 1997, and is a sponsor of the Blackbird Academy Trust. The three schools that comprise the Blackbird Academy Trust have all embedded the Family Links programme at the heart of their work with children and parents: in school policies and structures; through staff training; weekly Circle Time sessions for every class; and the termly 10-week parent groups run by the Home-School Link workers.

Family Links' work with schools has been independently evaluated and has consistently been found to have a positive impact on outcomes for children, teachers and parents. A 2013 study with two primary schools serving a deprived community in east Oxford, noted that during the first year of implementation, there was a significant improvement in pupil social and emotional health – especially around prosocial skills, assertiveness, confidence, conflict resolution, and positive behaviour choices.

Aside from the importance of driving up staff qualifications, there is little knowledge about 'what works' in closing the gap in early years education. It is good news, therefore, that the remit of the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) has recently been expanded to investigate effective interventions and allow the dissemination of best practice.

In-school support

The work of Professor Carol Dweck has been crucial in understanding how children's perception of intelligence can affect their resilience and motivation[85]. Those with 'fixed mindsets' feel that intelligence is innate and cannot be changed; those with 'growth mindsets' perceive intelligence to be linked to effort, practice and experience. Those who respond to failure by thinking they are 'stupid' are less motivated to work hard or to recover from setbacks, whereas those who understand failure as a necessary step in learning are better able to learn from mistakes, persevere with a challenge and make progress[q]. This psychology is borne out in PISA's findings, where researchers saw a correlation between countries with high academic performance and high levels of pupils who felt that their effort determined their grades[86].

Pupils' experiences at school can affect whether they have a 'growth' or a 'fixed' mindset. For instance, communicating grades to pupils which emphasises judgement ("You are a D grade student") is more likely to create a fixed mindset than focusing on progress ("This work is a D grade, to move to a C grade you need to…"). This is reflected in the EPPSE[r] study which showed that formative feedback (where pupils are told how to improve rather than simply being graded) was linked to positive socio-behavioural outcomes[87]. Hattie's meta-analysis of factors affecting attainment also found that formative feedback was the most significant in raising attainment[88].

Opportunities to learn new skills more generally are crucial in helping young people see that practice and effort dictate success: learning to play a new instrument, developing skills in a new sport or game or taking part in team challenges, where mistakes and failure are a natural part of learning. Engagement in 'enrichment activities' is known to be a predicator of better mental well-being, leading to "*improvements in self-regulation and pro-social behaviour, and reductions in hyperactivity and antisocial behaviour*[89]". This engagement also correlates with attainment[90].

[q] It is important to note that these mindsets are also linked to attachment.
[r] Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE).
[s] Where a special educational need (SEN) requires support beyond a school and a Statement of SEN is issued.

IMPACT GOAL THREE

If young people do not develop emotional resilience and high self-esteem, they are more vulnerable to mental health problems. This disproportionately affects low income pupils: they are more likely to have feelings of self-loathing, panic attacks and suicidal thoughts[91]. Pastoral support in schools is very important, including supplementary coaching, mentoring and counselling services. In instances of statemented emotional, social and communication issues[5], the Fair Education Alliance welcomes the emphasis in the new SEN Code of Practice on service providers (such as schools, social services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) working together to support children and families. However, it is important that this is more than a legislative change and a re-branding of pupil support, it is vital these theoretical changes happen in practice.

Pupils with low self-esteem and without self-regulation, resilience and motivation, are also more vulnerable to antisocial behaviours and exclusion. Early intervention with these pupils and close family-school collaboration is vital in reducing exclusions.

Support beyond school

There are a number of third sector organisations that help young people to build personal resilience and other aspects of character. Many of these offer experience of volunteering, building community relations, and taking part in social action, as with the work of the National Citizens Service, London Citizens, Girlguides UK, The Scouts and others. At the moment, there is not universal coverage of these programmes and they can struggle to reach those most vulnerable students, but for those who receive their support, they are an invaluable opportunity for personal and social growth. The charity Step up to Serve has recently been established in order to coordinate the increase of quality, quantity and frequency of social action for young people, in a bid to develop the Nation's non-cognitive skills. They believe social action is an important mechanism for young people to develop their character whilst benefiting others. The charity aims to double the number of 10 to 20 year olds involved in meaningful social action by 2020 as part of the #iwill campaign, bringing together over 100 cross-sector organisations.

Case study:
Place2Be

Place2Be provides a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. Place2Be places an experienced clinician in each school it works in. This Project Manager oversees the delivery of a range of services including individual and group counselling for students, dedicated therapeutic support for parents and carers plus training and advice for staff to strengthen their capacity to deal with the emotional and learning needs of their pupils. Their work shows that pupils who are stronger psychologically, learn better and achieve more.

After Place2Be counselling, over two-thirds of children had improved wellbeing as reported by parents, teachers and the children themselves. Children with the most severe difficulties made the most improvement. Negative emotional symptoms improved for all respondents.

In 2012/13 Place2Be's services were established in 168 schools. In that year, nearly 24,000 children attended at least one counselling session through the charity's self-referral service. A high proportion of children accessing counselling were receiving free school meals and many were looked after by the local authority, fostered or the subject of a child protection plan. More than 40 % of children had special educational needs. Almost half had emotional, behavioural and social problems.

The development of interpersonal skills is crucial to employment. IPPR's research suggests that the UK economy underwent a shift in which "personal and social skills became 33 times more important in determining life chances" and yet they argue that *"young people from less affluent backgrounds became less likely than their more fortunate peers to develop these skills"*[92]. Indeed, nine out of ten employers rate attitudes towards work and character as the most important factors when recruiting school or college leavers but a third say they are not satisfied in this area. This points to more work between employers and schools developing these personal, social 'employability' skills, a topic which is explored in more detail in the following chapter.

RECOMMENDATIONS 3

Recommendations for policy

1. Ensure long-term sustainability of Children's Centre funding to allow those who need it to access intensive and targeted cross-agency support.

2. Develop research into non-cognitive skills and effective interventions, drawing on existing best practice, to determine what works and where there is a causal link between the development of non-cognitive skills and other positive outcomes, and how long term the impact is.

3. Capture data on pupils' wellbeing and self-esteem using a pupil survey which captures pupils' sense of belonging within their school, their perseverance and sense of self-direction.

Recommendations for practice

1. Charities should expand mental health support and self-esteem building programmes as with the excellent work of Place2Be and the Prince's Trust programmes.

2. Schools to ensure behaviour and assessment for learning programmes foster growth mind-sets by celebrating the progress and achievements of all students.

IMPACT GOAL FOUR:

NARROW THE GAP IN THE PROPORTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE TAKING PART IN FURTHER EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT-BASED TRAINING AFTER FINISHING THEIR GCSES

The headlines

The Fair Education Alliance wants to see an increase in the number of young people from low-income backgrounds who stay in further education or employment-based training once they have completed Key Stage 4. Our goal is for 90 % of pupils in schools serving low income communities[t] to be in education, employment or training by 2022.

In a period of high youth unemployment, where 16 to 24 year olds are four times more likely to be unemployed than older adults[93], it is more important than ever that young people leave compulsory education with high skill levels and positive early employment experiences that prepare them for a prosperous future. Young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) for a long time are more likely to have lower-paid jobs when they do find employment, develop drug addictions or go to prison[94]. Yet young people from poorer backgrounds are almost twice as likely to be NEET between the ages of 16 and 18, when compared to their more affluent peers. One generation of young people who are NEET costs the UK taxpayer an estimated £35 bn[95], but for each individual who finds themselves dependent on benefits and facing bleak career prospects at a young age, the personal costs are huge.

The Alliance has measured progress against this goal through pupil destinations data, which is currently available for two terms after completing GCSEs. This data, however, does not offer a full picture of student destinations post-16: the Alliance would like to see data available on employment, education or training for eight terms after young people complete their GCSEs, to assess whether these outcomes have been sustained in a way which heightens the chance of future employment.

According to Alliance measures **the gap is currently[u] 7 percentage points**. This represents approximately **14,000 young people not in education or training** two terms after leaving Key Stage 4. Gratifyingly this gap between schools serving high and low income communities has narrowed by 1.2 percentage points over the first year destination data has been recorded. Worryingly though, the gap between individual poorer and more affluent students has widened by 1 % in the same time period.

NEET: Young people from lower income families are almost twice as likely to not be in employment, education or training (NEET) aged 16

[t] See the Introduction of this report for definition of terms.

[u] Pupil destination data is published over a year after it is collected; analysis in this chapter is primarily of those who completed their GCSEs in the academic year 2010/2011 and entered further education, employment or training in 2011/2012, taken from government data sets published in 2014 (DfE).

Key statistics from our analysis show that:

- Following the 'attainment gaps' at primary and secondary, those pupils who have fallen behind aged 16 are still behind and vulnerable to future unemployment – part of the current domino effect of poor attainment for poorer pupils.
- Low income young people are much more likely to be NEET post-16 – and for those in education or employment, they are more vulnerable to dropping out.
- Of those in sustained[v] education post-16, poorer young people are more likely to re-take maths and English[w], yet are unlikely to do better than their first attempt – reinforcing the pattern where those who fall behind academically, too often stay behind.
- Of those in sustained education, students from poorer communities are held back by a 'class ceiling' where they are less likely to access academic institutions leading to better paid jobs and more likely to study low quality vocational courses with lower probability of leading to secure employment[96], thus trapping them in a cycle of poverty.
- In London, 87.5 % of pupils from schools with poorer intakes already go on to education, employment or training aged 16. If this were to be true in all parts of the country, the Nation would already be over halfway towards meeting this goal.
- Nationally, 83 % of pupils in schools serving low income communities go on to education or training. It is pleasing to see that the gap between schools serving low and high income communities has narrowed but the gap between pupils has widened: This suggests once again that where poorer pupils are the majority in a school, that school meets their needs and closes the gap better than in schools where those pupils are a minority.

2x

Post-16, poorer young people are twice as likely to drop out of a course or job within the first two terms

40%

40 % of employers say a lack of basic skills is the main reason for entry-level vacancies

[v] The term 'Sustained destinations' refers to education, employment or training that pupils have stayed in, two terms after beginning the placement or course.

[w] Level 3 qualifications.

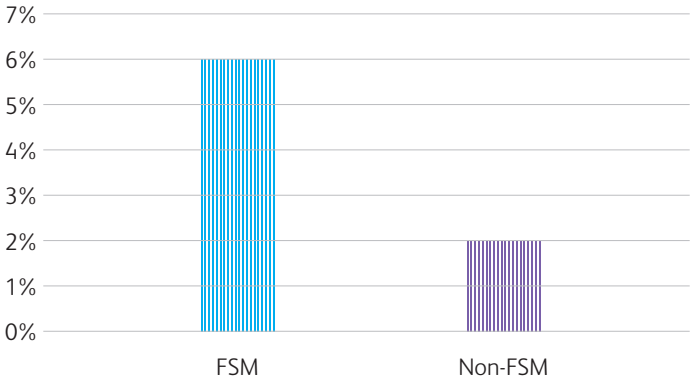
IMPACT GOAL FOUR

The national picture

Over the past two years, the overall numbers of young people who are NEET aged 16 to18 has decreased dramatically. This is, in part, due to the raising of the mandatory participation age from 16 to 17. From 2015, this will be raised again to 18 and all 16 to18 year olds will be expected to be in full-time education, an apprenticeship, or in employment or volunteering combined with part-time education or training[97]. However the change in participation age has not been actively enforced[x] and so there are still a worrying number of young people aged 16 to 18 who are NEET. In August 2014, 7.6 % of 16 to 18 year olds were not in education, employment or training – equivalent to over 148,000 young people across the country[98].

Figure 4.1

Percentage of pupils deemed NEET after KS4 (2011-13)



Although there has been an encouraging increase in those in sustained outcomes, it is important to be vigilant in assessing whether the courses and employment opportunities 16 to 18 year olds are engaged in are actually improving their future career prospects. According to the latest published destination data, just over a quarter of young people finishing A-Level or other Key Stage 5 qualifications in 2011/12 did not go on to sustained education destinations, employment or training[99]. There is an urgent need for high quality vocational routes into employment to be developed, after the most recent review into vocational qualifications found that many did not support students adequately into further education or employment[100]. It is heartening to see an increase in quality vocational options since the Wolf report but there is undeniably more to be done.

Figure 4.1[101] shows the latest destination data: 19 % of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) did not go on to sustained education or employment/training destinations post-16 in 2011/12, while 10 % of more affluent pupils were in this situation[102]. This 'access gap' has actually widened by 1 percentage point over the one year data has been captured.

When this pupil data is set against school level data, which compares those serving high and low income communities, it presents an interesting picture. 10 % of pupils attending schools with high income pupil intakes were NEET after Key Stage 4, compared to 17 % at schools with lower income pupil intakes: a smaller gap of 7 percentage points. Most interestingly, this access gap *between schools* has narrowed by 1.2 percentage points over the year data has been captured. The disparity between the two measurements suggests that schools with a high concentration of pupils from low income backgrounds are doing better at ensuring these students progress after Key Stage 4. It implies that – as with primary and secondary attainment – those schools in which poorer pupils are the minority are doing less well at helping these pupils be successful.

[x] With mandatory school age, there are sanctions for parents who do not send their children to school but there are no sanctions for young people, families or schools to enforce mandatory education between the ages of 16 and 18.

The above analysis shows an access gap, with poorer young people less likely to take up employment or education after their GCSEs but there are still further 'access gaps' for those who are successful in progressing to education, employment and training. Poorer students are almost twice as likely to 'drop out' within the first two terms of a course or job compared to their more affluent peers[103]. Of those continuing in education, there is also a significant gap: only 77% of low income pupils moved on to further study after their GCSEs in 2012 compared to 88% of more affluent pupils[104]. Even within this group there is still inequality: it is far more likely that low income students will be enrolled in a Further Education college to re-take GCSEs or enrol in vocational courses at Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE level) compared to their more affluent peers[105]. Following the 'attainment gaps' at primary and secondary, those who have fallen behind are still behind at age 16 and vulnerable to future unemployment. The Wolf Report estimated that of those who re-take their English and maths GCSEs after Key Stage 4, only 4% are successful in achieving the pass-mark qualification (C or equivalent)[106].

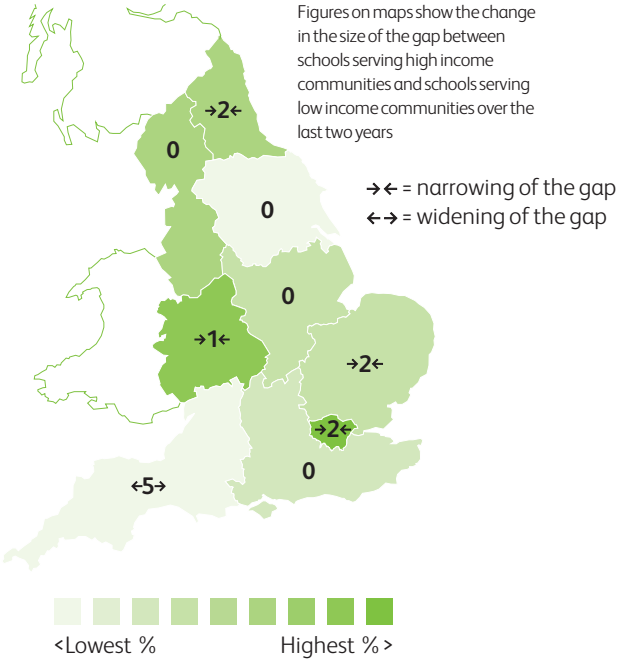
Over the past four years, funding for 16 to 18 year old provision has fallen by 8%[107]. It is inevitable that attempting to combine this with an expansion of provision for 16 to 18 year olds will bring challenges. Previously the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) provided financial support (and an incentive) to 16 to18 year olds from low income backgrounds who stayed in education. Although this has been replaced by a new Bursary Fund, the budget for this new fund is significantly lower – a £180mn fund compared to the £0.5 bn which was allocated for EMA – and some groups have suggested that it is not sufficient[108].

The regional picture

As shown in Figure 4.2[109], progression to education, employment and training varies significantly across the regions: whereas 88% of young people from disadvantaged schools remain in education or training in London, only 79% do so in the South West and Yorkshire and the Humber (as indicated by the intensity of colour on the map). As there is only data across two years, the progress in narrowing or closing the gap is shown in percentage points: reflecting absolute change in the gap.

Figure 4.2

Percentage of young people in sustained destinations post-16



Owing to the small number of datasets, where the gap has narrowed or widened, this has been expressed in percentage points.
Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

IMPACT GOAL FOUR

For schools serving high income communities, there is no regional difference: affluence offers a passport to future prosperity, no matter which part of the country someone grows up in. But a student attending a school which serves a low income community is less likely to have access to education, employment or training post-16 if they live outside of London – particularly if they go to school in Yorkshire and the Humber or in the South West: in the latter area, the gap between schools serving the most and least deprived has grown significantly over just one year[110].

One of the factors that can lead to a young person being NEET is living in a dispersed rural or coastal community. This can be a barrier to accessing employment experiences and also post-16 education as there may be fewer FE colleges or sixth forms to choose from[111]. 12% of 16 to 18 year olds do not live within five miles of a school whilst 40% are more than five miles from a further education college[112]. In areas where transport is limited or expensive this is disproportionally burdensome for poorer young people.

Closing the gap

The data shows clear national and regional gaps between poorer and more affluent young people in terms of post-16 access to education, employment and training. For some, becoming NEET is due to a lack of basic skills needed for further study or employment. For others, it may be linked to compound disadvantage such as family situation (poorer young people are more likely to be home carers[113]) or regional access to employment and education.

Even of those engaged in study aged 16, some are more likely to become NEET by age 18 or later in life, due to the course they have chosen – often without access to accurate information or the guidance of a knowledgeable adult – being ill suited either to the individual or to the wider job market. There are five key themes where work can be done to avert this outcome: Teaching & Learning, Careers Advice, Parental Engagement and Links with Employers.

Case study:
The Prince's Trust XL clubs

The Prince's Trust XL clubs target 13 to 19 year olds who are underachieving at school. The clubs' personal development programme works with young people to build their confidence, self-esteem and core skills.

The XL Club curriculum focuses on five areas: Personal, Team and Interpersonal Skills; Active Citizenship; Entrepreneurship and Enterprise; Preparation for Work; and Enrichment Projects. Participants can also enrol in the Prince's Trust Personal Development and Employment Qualification, which is offered at a range of levels.

Last year, 92% of young people who participated in the programme moved on to a positive outcome, either in education, training or employment.

As an XL programme participant explains:

"I felt myself become more focused and confident. I started to deal with things better and I realised that my life could be whatever I made it. My schoolwork improved and I passed eight GCSEs. Now I'm doing an apprenticeship in catering."

The Prince's Trust works with over 500 schools and centres, enabling over 9000 young people a year to successfully make the transition from school to further education and employment.

Teaching & learning

40 % of employers say a lack of basic skills is the main reason for entry-level vacancies remaining unfilled and more than half of employers say they are concerned about the literacy skills of young people[114]. Lack of basic skills is also a barrier to further study: without a B in English and maths, many sixth forms will not accept students onto A-level or Level 3 courses. As outlined in previous chapters, poorer pupils are more likely to start school with weaker basic skills compared to their more affluent peers. Gaps then grow, because poor language ability inhibits reading[115] and inability to read or do simple sums makes it harder to access the rest of the curriculum. Gaps in basic skills have a long term impact: adults with poor numeracy are twice as likely to be unemployed as those who are competent[116]. The solution lies in early intervention and consistent high quality teaching and learning in the key skills of literacy and numeracy throughout all stages of education.

Exclusion from school is a significant factor in becoming NEET: 50 % of pupils leaving pupil referral units and other alternative provision become NEET[117]. If pupils have a disjointed education career, missing chunks of their education whilst on fixed-term exclusion, or leaving mainstream schooling altogether through permanent exclusion, they are hampered in making academic progress and unable to benefit from mainstream school support when planning their career. Poorer pupils are disproportionately represented amongst this group – of all fixed term exclusions in 2013, 56 % were of poorer children, even though they only make up 18 % of the entire student population. Part of the solution is addressing basic skills – the lack of which can cause frustration, exacerbate low self-esteem and contribute to negative behaviours which can lead to exclusion. Targeted work to re-engage those at risk of exclusion is also vital, particularly programmes that work with families and across services including social services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Careers advice and education

For many young people, a barrier to employment or continued education is a lack of high quality, tailored, information and guidance to help them make the best choices to match their career ambitions[118]. Expert careers advice must expose young people to a range of career trajectories, with an up-to-date understanding of labour market trends, including local insights[119]. Yet, according to the Education Select Committee, 'the careers advice and guidance service to young people is deteriorating'[120].

Since the governmental advice service Connexions has closed down, the responsibility for careers advice has shifted into schools. However, most teachers have not had specialist careers training and lack detailed understanding of potential career pathways, local employment and post-16 education options.

A survey of what motivates young people in their studies found that career goals were one of the most important motivators. However, the majority of respondents said they wanted better careers advice and that they didn't see a link between their current learning and their career aspirations[121]. Elements of careers education can and should be embedded within subject teaching and Personal Social Health Education (PSHE)[122] through the early years of secondary school (Key Stage 3), before young people choose their GCSEs. If advice and careers understanding is not delivered early enough, young people can make choices about their GCSE qualifications which restrict their options post-16. Embedding cross-curricular careers education across Key Stage 3 ensures pupils see the link between future aspirations and current learning, which can increase motivation and have a knock-on effect on attainment.

The Gatsby Foundation sets out eight benchmarks for a gold standard career programme which includes cross-curricular support from all teachers, personal guidance from careers advisors, as well as employer links and meaningful work experience. They estimate that this provision would cost a medium sized secondary school outside of London less than 1 % of its budget to implement[123].

IMPACT GOAL FOUR

Case study:
UBS and the Bridge Academy Hackney

The Bridge Academy opened in 2007, with UBS as its sponsor. The purpose of UBS's sponsorship of this academy was to support the development of an Outstanding school in an area with one of the highest rates of child poverty in the UK. UBS aims to close this attainment gap and to widen the impact of the UBS / Bridge partnership to benefit the wider community in Hackney, and beyond.

In 2013, almost 1,000 volunteers from UBS contributed 8,000 hours to support the Bridge Academy: part of this support means that every Bridge sixth former is offered a UBS mentor and hundreds of volunteers support employability workshops and work placements each year. In 2014, UBS hosted over 100 work experience students – after which 89 % were clearer about their future, and 92 % understood the importance of doing well at school. Mentors also supported pupils to think about whether university was the right option for them, and if so, helped them with writing their university applications – 72 % of the 2013 year group will be the first in their families to go to university.

UBS is a founding member of BITC Business Class, which encourages businesses across the UK to partner with schools, and shares best practice across the network.

Parental engagement

In an increasingly complicated system of post-16 provision young people are all too often left to navigate their own path. This means relying on personal and social networks: a circumstance which disadvantages those from less affluent backgrounds[124], whose 'social capital' (personal connections with people in different professions) can mean they are exposed to a narrower range of career choices and sources of information[125].

Recent research from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) found that young people were greatly influenced by their parents' career paths when choosing their own direction[126]. It is a myth that parents in a lower socio-economic bracket have low aspirations for their children, but evidence shows that these initially high aspirations diminish over time as parents feel they and their children are increasingly powerless to realise earlier ambitions[127]. In the same report by the Department for BIS, parents of 'low support'[y] students were found to be much less aware of the importance of GCSE choices in dictating their children's future careers than parents of 'high support' students. These parents were far more likely to let the school lead the discussion on their children's strengths and subject choices[128]: emphasising the importance of schools' career advice in shaping the futures of low income pupils.

Quality vocational opportunities

Much of recent educational reform has focused on academic routes into employment as part of 'the global race', with less focus on vocational routes into the current UK job market. Despite a much smaller proportion of young people in the UK completing a post-secondary vocational qualification rather than going to university (around a quarter), a recent survey commissioned by the Edge Foundation and City & Guilds Group found that 27 % of young people with an academic degree reported being unemployed six months after leaving education, compared with only 21 % of those with vocational training[129]. Vocational routes have a vital role to play in our education system and our economy. Following the work of the Wolf report, welcome reforms have begun to take place, with an increase in the number and quality of apprenticeship opportunities. Traineeships are also being introduced to support progression to apprenticeships[130]. It is encouraging to see a new technical baccalaureate being introduced to cater for students who want to combine academic study with a vocational element: designed to create greater parity of esteem between the two routes[131].

The success of these pathways will depend on a sufficient supply of high quality work placements, action by businesses to employ young people with these new and unfamiliar qualifications, and the delivery of informed advice to pupils who are unsure of their options. It is vital that careers advice 'keeps up' so that young people can get the information they need to benefit from these new options. Vocational education is still significantly in need of reform and investment; the recent Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission report powerfully summarises the current vocational offer for young people as "too often low priority, low-status and low-quality"[132]. To help more young people into work, it is vital that this is rectified.

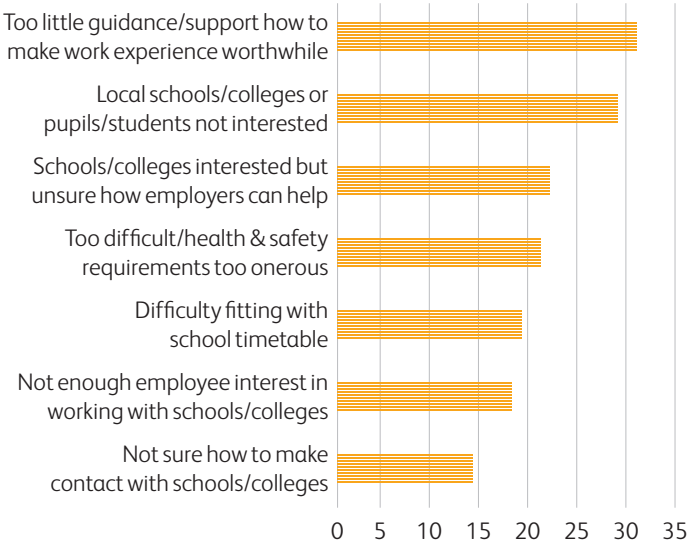
Work experience and employer outreach

Employer contact at school reduces the likelihood of young people becoming NEET – those who had four or more employer contacts were five times less likely to be NEET as those with no involvement, according to analysis of a YouGov survey[133]. As discussed above, less affluent young people are less likely to have personal and social links with employers which will help them gain work experience; the Education and Employers Taskforce found that a third of law firms only offered work experience through informal means and that those in independent schools were more likely than State school pupils to say their work experience was formative in choosing their career[134].

Figure 4.3

Barriers to employers building links with schools/colleges

CBI Pearsons 2014



[y] The report classified 'low support' students as young people who attend schools where less than 60 % of pupils go on to higher education and the school received an Ofsted grade of Inadequate or Requires Improvement in the last two years. These students have parents/guardians in the C2DE demographic who have not had a higher education. It classified 'high support' students as young people who attend schools where over 80 % of pupils go on to higher education and the school received an Ofsted grade of Outstanding or Good in the last two years. They have parents/guardians in the ABC1 demographic who have had a higher education.

IMPACT GOAL FOUR

Encouragingly, 55 % of employers have increased their links with schools and colleges over the past year and 80 % of employers currently have a link with a school or college[135]. The most common school or college link (for over 75 % of employers) was a work experience placement and two-thirds of links provided careers advice or talks. Both of these experiences are potentially valuable, however if these relationships are sporadic or ad hoc, this may be insufficient to make a real difference to young people's employability.

Research carried out as part of Business in the Community's 'Business Class' programme-evaluation suggests that school business partnerships need to be long term, strategic and based on the needs of the schools[136]. Evidence from the programme also shows that collaborative activities involving volunteers from a range of employers have a greater impact on young people. Whilst many businesses exemplify good practice, barriers to engagement need to be reduced to help more businesses make effective partnerships with schools. IPPR points to 'Knowledge Centres' in the Netherlands as an example of how intermediary organisations can recruit employers to offer work placements and apprenticeships and ensure provision is high quality[137]. Increased support from intermediaries may make developing links and offering placements less onerous for employers and, by increasing the quality of links, make them more attractive to schools. Employers should pool resources to develop planned, high quality and co-ordinated links which give full national coverage and develop in young people the skills that employers need.

RECOMMENDATIONS 4

Recommendations for policy

1. Develop current school accountability measures for the progression of their school leavers by publishing data for eight terms after pupils leave Key Stage 4. This 'Destination 8' data should form part of the headline school accountability measures, broken down by FSM-eligibility. This recommendation is staged: in the first instance, schools should be given further support to ensure that they are tracking pupils effectively between 16 and 18 so the impact of change in compulsory participation age can be measured. The government should then aim to develop data-capture methods for post-18 destinations by the end of the next parliament.

2. Commission and fund training for careers-specialist middle leaders to embed careers education within the curriculum at Key Stage 3. These middle leaders will also develop relationships with employers, provide one-to-one advice for pupils in Key Stages 4 and 5, and coordinate work experience.

Recommendations for practice

1. Businesses should pool resources to coordinate links between employers and schools and should ensure sustained relationships, tailored to the needs of the young people in individual schools. A coordinating body should ensure regional coverage, focusing on those geographically isolated areas.

2. Schools should ensure all pupils have access to one-to-one professional careers advice from Key Stages 3 to 5 and should involve parents in discussions about career trajectories. **Schools should ensure all pupils have work experience and contact with employers through school** in Key Stages 3 or 4.

3. All employers should be involved in providing work experience to young people aged 11to 16 **through a school**, to lessen the impact of unequal personal social connections.

IMPACT GOAL FIVE:

NARROW THE GAP IN UNIVERSITY GRADUATION, INCLUDING FROM THE 25 % MOST SELECTIVE UNIVERSITIES

The headlines

The Fair Education Alliance is committed to closing the graduation gap between young people from low income and high income backgrounds. Our goal is for at least 5,000 more pupils from low income backgrounds to graduate each year, with 1,600 of these young people graduating from the most selective universities[z].

Higher education (HE) enables access to increased earnings and lessens the likelihood of unemployment[138], but it also has been linked to wider personal benefits including to health, resilience and community development[139]. In addition, access to elite HE opens the doorway to some of the most powerful professions, which shape our society. In 2014, 75 % of senior judges, 59 % of the Cabinet in government, 57 % of Permanent Secretaries in the civil service and 47 % of newspaper columnists all went to one of two universities: Oxford and Cambridge[140]. Yet in 2011 of those entitled to free school meals, leaving sixth form and progressing to university only 0.2 % went to Oxbridge[141].

The goal is to narrow the gap in graduation rates for young people from low income backgrounds low income backgrounds. This graduation 'success gap' will be measured using a new dataset which has only just been released by the government. It will enable pupils from schools with poorer intakes to be tracked right the way through university. The focus will be on graduation rates rather than entry rates, as there is a significant gap in the rate of withdrawal after the first year of university for disadvantaged students[142]. This goal will take longer to achieve; by using graduation rates, the goal reflects pupils leaving school three years before 2022, in 2018/19. As goals one to three are met, the Alliance hopes there will be a much more significant narrowing of the 'graduation gap' from 2022.

In advance of the graduation data being released, this chapter analyses the entry 'access gap' to university between low income and more affluent young people.

19,000

Approximately 19,000 fewer poorer pupils attend higher education than their more affluent peers

[z] The term 'selective universities' refers to those in the *Sutton Trust 30* which is comprised of the top 25 % of universities with the highest required UCAS scores.

[aa] Between 2006 and 2011.

5

Key statistics from our analysis show that:

Currently available pupil-level data shows **the university entry gap is 19 percentage points – which represents approximately 19,000 poorer young people not going to university each year**. Numbers of both poorer and more affluent students have increased at the same rate, meaning the gap between the groups has stayed the same over the four years it has been measured[aa].

- In absolute terms, more low income students are taking up places in HE and more are successfully applying to the most selective universities.
- Nevertheless, the gaps between poorer and more affluent young people accessing all HE, and accessing the most selective universities, are both widening. Poorer young people are four times less likely to enter a high tariff university than their more affluent peers.
- While some regions do very well at helping poorer pupils access university, others dramatically underperform compared to the rest of the country.

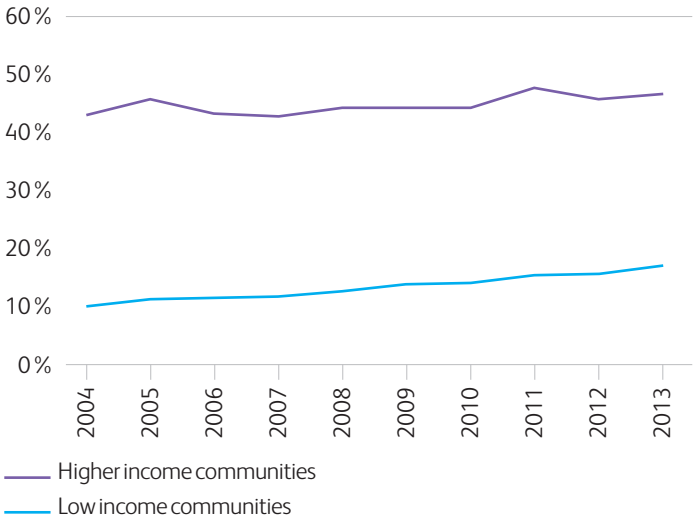
The national picture

For ours to be a just democratic society it is imperative that the professions which shape our society are inclusive and representative of a range of backgrounds. But at the moment these powerful professions in the UK are dominated by a wealthy minority. Although the percentage of the British public educated in independent schools is just 7 %, their graduates make up 71 % of senior judges, 55 % of civil service Permanent Secretaries and 43 % of newspaper columnists[143].

Figure 5.1

18 year old entry rates over time

All HE Institutions



At age 18, poorer pupils are four times less likely to attend the most selective universities

37% vs 16%

In London 37 % of FSM eligible pupils to higher education compared with an average of 16 % across other regions in the country

IMPACT GOAL FIVE

Figure 5.2

18 year old entry rates in 2013

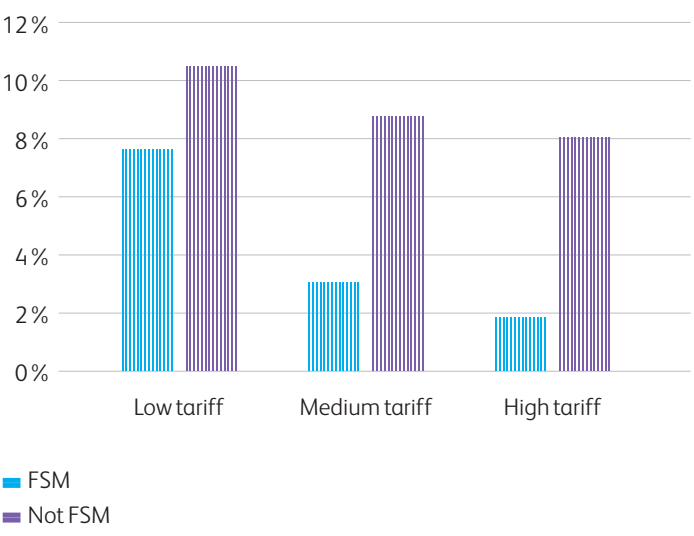
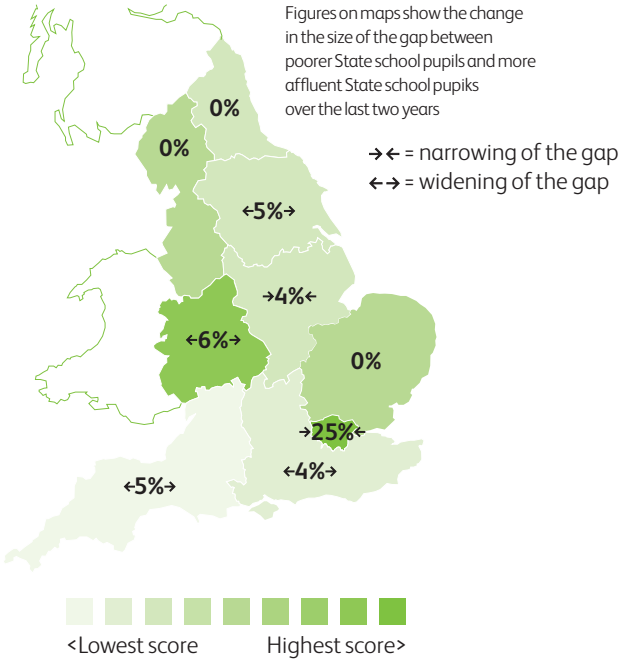


Figure 5.3

Percentage of poorer State school pupils going to higher education age 19



Where gaps have narrowed or widened, this has been expressed as a percentage of the original gap within the region.
Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

The latest government destination data shows that the number of young people eligible for free school meals (FSM) entering university has been increasing – from 13 % in 2006 to 20 % in 2011[144], although it has dipped to 19 % by most recent measurements. This overall increase is good news, however it has not affected the 'access gap'. Both FSM eligible and more affluent pupils have increased in number, meaning the gap between the groups has remained roughly the same, as shown in Figure 5.1[145].

Not only is there a large and unfair gap in the overall entry rates between poorer and more affluent students, there is an even larger gap when looking at the more selective universities. Figure 5.2[146] shows the entry rates according to the tariff requirements (the qualification entry requirements, as measured by UCAS Tariff points) and it depicts an astounding widening of the gap at universities with higher entry requirements: pupils are four times less likely to attend a high tariff university if they are poorer[bb].

In our country's most elite institutions, the 'access gap' is overwhelming in its size. The Milburn report suggests that the odds of a child at a State secondary school, eligible for free school meals, being admitted to Oxbridge are almost 2,000 to 1. By contrast, the odds of a privately educated child being admitted are 20 to 1[147].

[bb] Defined in this data as those previously eligible for free school meals.

The regional picture

University access is not a consistent problem nationally, as Figure 5.3[148] shows. Whilst there are some clear national themes, progression rates[cc] and their causes vary across the country. One noticeable theme is the stubbornness of the gap over time: in almost every region it has remained fairly similar since 2006. A significant trend can only be seen in London, where the gap is determinedly closing.

London performs significantly better than all other regions in absolute terms too: 37% of its poorer pupils (those previously eligible for FSM) progress to Higher Education. The next highest performer is the West Midlands, where only 19% of poorer students progress to HE. Entry rates for the poorest pupils are lowest in the South West and the South East. There is a clear correlation between success in sending pupils on to university and high numbers of HE institutions within a region: whilst London has over 40 HEIs, there are only 14 across the whole of the South West.

Within regions there are also complex patterns of progression, with a range of historical, cultural and other factors influencing progression rates. For example, whilst a number of London boroughs appeared in the top 10 for progression to university overall, the same areas do not factor in the top 10 for access to Russell Group or Oxbridge[149]. The Higher Education Funding Council has collated important information on the difference in participation between local areas. It reveals that some young people were up to three times more likely to go to university and eight times more likely to go to a highly selective university than others, based on their postcode[dd]. More work needs to be done in order to better understand the reasons behind this.

Closing the gap

It has been shown throughout this report how low prior attainment has a domino effect on pupils' outcomes and evidence has exposed, particularly in this chapter, how a 'class ceiling' which has held poorer students back throughout their educational careers culminates in the biggest 'gap' between poorer and more affluent pupils when they reach the hurdle of university. However, this report has also highlighted how interventions can and do help change the lives of disadvantaged pupils at each stage of their educational journey and this chapter identifies three key themes where solutions can be found to narrow this gap in higher education: Teaching & Learning, Information Advice & Support and University Outreach.

Teaching & learning

The single biggest factor linked to higher education access is prior attainment. Russell Group universities highlight[150] that many poorer pupils still do not get the grades which meet entry requirements: of all free school meal (FSM) eligible pupils in 2009, only 232 achieved three As at A-level or equivalent . When taking into account those who leave school post-16, this would be less than 0.3% of FSM eligible pupils aged 15[152].

[cc] 'Progression rates' refer to the proportion of pupils who progress to higher education.

[dd] In a comparison of those in regions with POLAR classification 5 (wards in the quartile with the highest university participation) and classification 1 (the quintile with lowest participation) using data from 2013.

IMPACT GOAL FIVE

A concerted effort to tackle the attainment gaps at ages 5, 11 and 16 will have a knock-on effect on the HE 'access gap'. Improvements in teaching and learning at Key Stage 5 will also have a significant impact by pushing pupils to reach the top levels of attainment. As with Fair Education Impact Goals One and Two, investment in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers is crucial in raising standards, particularly in stretching the top-achieving students throughout secondary school ('Gifted and Talented') and particularly in subject knowledge at Key Stage 5. Also crucial for the admissions process of the most selective universities are opportunities for students to practice thinking critically and debating, discussing and engaging with ideas beyond the curriculum (and the classroom). Clubs and activities that enrich academic study are key. Private sixth forms are more likely to offer this wider exposure to rigorous academic discussion with debating clubs, subject societies (e.g. philosophy club), visiting speakers and lecturers and practice for competitions such as model United Nations.

Poorer young people are less likely to benefit from broader extra-curricular activities including debating, drama, sport, music, social clubs and Scouts/Guiding[153]. These opportunities help create confidence, nurture resilience and broaden horizons – all advantages which are invaluable for getting through the challenging application and interview process of a highly selective university. More affluent young people are likely to have family-organised, informal education which exposes them to cultural capital (including general knowledge, literary and artistic references) through holidays, outings and informal discussion as well as social capital through their families' social networks. Schools serving low income communities therefore have a crucial role in exposing their students to these activities. Opportunities like these not only help young people to access university but also to maximise their experience whilst there. Currently, pupils from low income communities are less likely to make the most of wider student experience once at university which is a key component of graduate success[154].

Case study:
Debate Mate

Debate Mate offers its core programme exclusively to non-selective State schools in areas of high child poverty. An external trainer (normally a Russell Group graduate) comes into school regularly over 16 weeks to mentor and train pupils in the art of debating. The course is designed to initially improve speaking, listening and critical thinking skills, after which pupils begin to have formal debates and enter local competitions. The programme culminates in a regional competition at a prestigious university: The Debate Mate Cup.

The Re-Engagement Programme offers the same course, targeted at students with academic and behavioural problems. They are led by specialist mentors within school time. In a survey of students who had completed the programme, 100% said their ability to work in a team increased and 70% said they became more engaged in the classroom.

Currently Debate Mate works in over 220 primary and secondary schools across London, the West Midlands, Manchester, Nottingham, Bristol and Liverpool.

Information, advice & support

Whilst grades are a significant barrier to HE access, it is also important that these grades are in the right subjects. The Russell Group advises students to consider taking 'facilitating subjects[ee]' at A-level, which they have shown keep a broader range of university course options open[155]. Low income students are less able to use social capital (such as social contacts who have attended a Russell Group university) to understand this important aspect of the university application process.

For instance, Barnsley in Yorkshire consistently appears in the bottom 20 of local authorities for progression to highly selective higher education institutions[156]. Less than 10% of students in Barnsley were entered for three or more 'facilitating' A-levels, immediately closing the door to a both a range of courses and many top universities[157]. There is a similar picture in Knowsley in the North West where less than 1% of students were entered for three or more 'facilitating' A-levels[158]. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Knowsley has the lowest progression rates in the country[159].

Linked to the take up of facilitating subjects at A-level, students from more disadvantaged backgrounds also tend to know about, and apply for, a relatively narrow range of courses. Interestingly, these courses are also the most competitive to get in to and include medicine, economics, law, and business. Part of this volume in applications to competitive courses is due to cultural pressure to study degrees that have perceived high levels of employability, and are clearly linked to known professions. As with careers advice, discussed in the previous chapter, the more complex aspects of university application is an area in which schools need support in guiding their students effectively.

There is a substantial group of low income young people who have the potential to go to a selective university but for whatever reason do not. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission estimates that there are approximately 3,662 pupils from poorer backgrounds who are 'missing' from the Russell Group[160]. Extensive research has not been completed into the barriers for this group, but for many pupils who *can* apply but choose not to they may be prevented by a lack of aspiration, misunderstandings over the application process and acceptance rates or the possible benefits of attending a Russell Group university.

Misunderstanding of the financial cost of university is a potential barrier to young people choosing this option. In reality, there are no up-front university costs, loan repayment after university is contingent on earnings and there are numerous bursaries to support students from poorer backgrounds. Recent trends suggest that the message has been communicated successfully and rises in fees have not deterred poorer students . However, a number of reports have highlighted the risk that pupils earlier in the educational pipeline may be deterred from HE by the rise in fees, the effect of which could be seen in years to come[ff].

[ee] The list of facilitating subjects is: maths, Further maths, English, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Geography, Languages.

[ff] To date, communication efforts about fees have been overwhelmingly targeted at sixth form pupils.

IMPACT GOAL FIVE

University outreach

Outreach activity has been shown to be the most effective way for universities to address the 'access gap'[162]. A study by the Boston Consulting Group found this type of access programme also provided very good value for money as a way of improving social mobility[163]. However, at present under 30% of university spending on access goes to outreach[164]. This proportion needs to be rebalanced, with more going on outreach and less on bursaries and fee waivers[165].

Where universities do spend money on outreach, this does not always *reach* the right students. As the regional picture showed, a student in a remote community is less likely to have a university nearby and less likely to attend university. Similarly, a student in this type of community is less likely to have universities conduct outreach visits to their remote town or village. This often means that multiple universities target the same, more easily-to-reach areas so that in effect some students benefit twice or three times from this funding, while others don't at all. The work of some third sector organisations contributes to this duplication, with many outreach initiatives run by charities operating in the same areas, while other regions receive little or no support. There is an urgent need for better coordination and targeting of this activity to ensure that the right opportunities are provided for those who will benefit most.

At the same time, a significant amount of 'access' funding is allocated to bursaries and fee waivers, even though research suggests these are not effective at narrowing the gap[166]. When too little of precious funding is allocated to the right activities, targeting the right students, this can compound the domino effect of disadvantage in some pupil's lives. Sadly, access to university education – more than any other stage in a young person's education – is still dictated overwhelmingly by wealth.

RECOMMENDATIONS 5

Recommendations for policy

1. Set stronger targets for universities (particularly the most selective) **to increase the uptake of FSM eligible students** to better focus access work and fair admissions procedures.

2. Facilitate better coordination and targeting of outreach activities to reach those who most need it – emerging partnerships are working to fill this important space.

3. Provide stronger statutory guidance to schools with more clarity on how to dispel myths and provide specific advice for selective and elite university applications.

Recommendations for practice

1. Universities to allocate more of their access budgets to outreach – the Alliance welcomes the call from the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission for universities to be allocating at least a quarter of their access funding to outreach including strategic engagement with schools by 2020.

2. Schools should allocate greater parts of their budget to high quality CPD around differentiation to stretch 'the top', course-specific subject knowledge for A-level teachers and whole-school effective Gifted and Talented programmes. This Continuous Professional Development should be measured by its impact on pupil attainment, using support such as that provided by the Teacher Development Trust.

3. Third sector organisations providing enrichment opportunities to schools should expand and target schools serving low income communities – such as The Brilliant Club, Debate Mate and the BBC's School Report.

CONCLUSION

Education in England remains unfair. But for many parents who see their children struggling, teachers who come face to face with the challenges that inequality creates in the classroom, and the young people that see others excelling when they find themselves held back, the reality of educational inequality is nothing new.

This report from the Fair Education Alliance is the first time that a young person's whole education journey has been critically examined – from the early years through to employment and university – demonstrating that too often in our country, success remains the preserve of the wealthy, and poorer children can be left behind.

The moral argument for equality is gathering momentum nationally, and the economic argument provides further evidence that the need to address this inequality is both irrefutable and damaging for all of us. Indeed, by not getting things right the first time, the country pays twice: first when we fund a child's education, and again if we have to address the fallout of failure. In addition to these costs, the country is missing out on significant benefits: studies have suggested that raising the educational outcomes for poorer children could increase GDP by £6bn a year by 2030 and by £56bn a year by 2050[167].

The FEA Report Card 2014 takes a critical look at the evidence against each of the five Fair Education Impact Goals to see how the country is performing and examines why gaps in achievement currently exist. It finds that the gap between young people from low and high income communities begins long before a child even starts primary school. And once a child has started to fall behind others, it is unlikely that they will catch up. More often than not, this gap widens – with poorer young people less likely to leave primary school with basic skills aged 11, less likely to achieve good GCSEs at secondary school at age 16 and also less likely to access further education or training opportunities after their GCSEs, and from age 18, even less likely to go to university. Often underpinning this inequality is a lack of non-cognitive skills including self-esteem, wellbeing and resilience.

This report paints a worrying picture of England's educational landscape. But there is hope: in recent years, the gap has been narrowing – in some areas rapidly, with London leading the way. However, the data shows that across the country much more needs to be done if our Goals are to be met. Worryingly, once new accountability measures are implemented, a larger gap between the most and least deprived will be revealed. New measures of primary and secondary success have raised the bar and demand that more pupils leave each school stage with crucial skills. Yet these reforms also mean that progress is less likely to be recognised at the lower levels of attainment: creating a challenge for teachers to scaffold students towards expected outcomes. Schools in the most difficult of circumstances may struggle to effectively monitor pupil progress and adapt teaching and learning to those who need it most: leading to a growth in the gap in real terms.

Addressing such complex societal problems will require the concerted efforts of a range of stakeholders if this injustice is to be effectively challenged and changed. This report makes an important contribution to the debate about what can be done, not only by government and by Alliance members but by all members of society, to meet the needs of England's most deprived pupils.

This includes:

1. Start young and engage parents

Parents must have the right support to carry out their vital role: building strong relationships between families and nurseries and schools is essential and an area in which experienced charities can provide invaluable support. Early years childcare and education settings must have the capacity to attract more skilled staff. One way of doing this would be to link the early years pupil premium to staff quality, and concentrate this funding initially on settings with high numbers of children from the most deprived families.

2. Ensure that those who are falling behind are supported to catch up

Schools should be given more support to 'catch up' disadvantaged pupils who fall behind. The current amount of pupil premium allocated per disadvantaged pupil should be halved, and the remaining funds redistributed to those pupils who are disadvantaged and have low prior attainment. This would give double-weighting to those low income pupils most in need of intervention without raising overall pupil premium spend. The change of funding model would increase school support for 'catching up' pupils.

3. Prioritise leadership and training in schools

Primary and secondary schools serving low income communities demand high quality teachers and leaders – and yet more than a third of primary and secondary headships need to be re-advertised. It is crucial that the best head teachers are placed in schools which face challenges but less than a fifth of schools serving low income communities have Outstanding leadership and management. In secondary schools, investment in specialised middle leader training in literacy and numeracy will support whole-school development and dissemination of best practice in these crucial areas. Collaboration between schools – especially in the funding of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) – is vital, particularly for primary schools.

4. Deliver effective careers advice and forge links with business

Careers education must be embedded into the curriculum from the beginning of secondary school; all pupils should benefit from work experience opportunities; and at crucial junctures in their secondary careers, young people should receive professional one-to-one careers advice. Long-term relationships should be built between schools and employers. To understand the employability of school-leavers, government should ensure more data is available regarding the post-16 progression of pupils: secondary schools should be held accountable for 'Destination 8' – tracking the destinations of pupils, eight terms after Key Stage 4.

5. Understand the importance of non-cognitive skills

The emotional wellbeing and resilience of children is an area requiring more national consideration. Research is required to better understand non-cognitive skills and effective intervention. In the meantime, national pupil surveys would enable schools to gain an understanding of their students' sense of belonging, resilience and sense of self-direction. Pupils must have access to mental health and self-esteem support, whilst schools must encourage progress and foster growth mind-sets.

6. Create clear pathways to university

Stronger targets must be given to universities to increase the intake of poorer pupils. These institutions should also allocate more of their budgets to outreach and receive support in order to better coordinate and target outreach activities. Schools should allocate more of their budgets to CPD which will allow them to stretch their highest achievers and provide better guidance regarding GCSE and A-level choices, as well as applications to universities. Third sector organisations providing enrichment opportunities should expand and target more schools in low income communities.

The Fair Education Alliance will work with government to implement the necessary policy changes outlined in this report, whilst its network of members will pledge to deliver on the practical changes that will make a difference against the five Impact Goals.

Every year the FEA Report Card will track the progress of the Nation towards these Fair Education Impact Goals. Each new report will detail the latest findings and build on our knowledge of best practice to improve a young person's life chances across their whole education journey: building towards 2022, when we hope the country can meet these goals.

As a Nation, we must act now. This manifestly unfair situation has gone on too long: poverty can no longer be allowed to predict a young person's success in school and in life. Together the Fair Education Alliance is committed to ending this gross inequality.

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