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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Poor white boys slip further down school league tables

- *Reports of neglected four-year-olds starting school wearing nappies and unable to speak*
- *228,500 pupils leave school every year without A*-C grades in English and maths*
- *Report says poorest children far behind in core subjects*

White working-class British boys are falling further behind other groups of children at GCSE, despite a string of initiatives designed to boost the performance of disadvantaged pupils.

A major new study of the roots of educational failure in England finds that over the period 2007-2012 the gap in performance between poor white boys and the average for all pupils actually widened.

The report from the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) – which also highlights how many children are shockingly unprepared to start school – says the attainment gap between poor white British pupils and their better off counterparts is "startling".

The latest figures show that white British boys receiving free school meals (FSM), the commonly-used measure of classroom disadvantage, are performing much worse than other deprived groups of pupils. White British children form the largest ethnic group in England on free school meals (FSM) – they are also the worst performing after the much smaller groups of Gypsy Roma children and children who are travellers of Irish heritage.

Only 26 per cent of white British boys on FSM gained five A*-C GCSE grades (including English and maths) last year, compared with 40 per cent of black boys on FSM and 63 per cent of all other pupils.

Christian Guy, Director of the CSJ, said: "These figures are sobering. White working-class boys are in danger of becoming an educational underclass. They are falling further behind other disadvantaged groups and the majority of pupils.

"We need to take a close look at the reasons behind this growing inequality and reassess the measures we are taking to close the performance gap for those at the very bottom."

The report also reveals how there are serious problems among some children starting school. The study heard of cases where pupils were going to their first day already striding behind their counterparts.

It heard about four-year-olds arriving at school still in nappies and others who do not respond to their own names and cannot speak.

The report, *Requires Improvement*, has been drawn up by a working group of educational experts chaired by Sir Robin Boshier of the Harris Federation of Academies and a former primary school head teacher.

Sir Robin said he has come across some children at four-years-old who are developmentally nearer to two when they start school and therefore require a lot of help if they are to catch up.

He added: "I see about 10 per cent in each class who are so unsociable that they hurt others, adults and other young children. But they're unsociable because they've no practice at being sociable."

At present children are not formally assessed until the end of the academic year they turn five.

Even at this late stage there are signs that many young children are considerably behind.

- Six per cent of boys do not know that print is read from left to right and top to bottom by the end of their first year
- One in 33 children do not recognise a few familiar words
- 12 per cent of children cannot write their own name and other words from memory

"This shockingly acute disadvantage stretches the capacity of schools and threatens to place those children at a disadvantage for the rest of their school careers," the report says.

Sir Robin added: "Educational failure is too common in our current system. It affects disadvantaged children and makes reform urgent. This is about social justice. We need to do more to make sure all children are given a good education."

The CSJ report, which does highlight examples of where poor performing schools have been turned round, also points out that whilst there has been a marked improvement in the proportions of pupils getting good grades in English and maths, over 40 per cent of children do not get A*-C grades in English and maths.

Around 60 per cent of pupils achieve the standard measure of success at GCSE (five A*-C grades including equivalent qualifications and English and mathematics). However, using the DfE's more rigorous benchmark of the English baccalaureate which requires A*-C grades in English, maths, a science, a foreign language and history or geography, the attainment rate plummets to 16 per cent for all pupils and only five per cent for those on FSM.

The report draws out further examples of educational failure:

- Over two million children attend schools that fall short of being either good or outstanding.
- Over 40 per cent of pupils (228,500) do not get A* to C grades in both English and maths
- Failure is not simply an issue of financial poverty – 78 per cent of pupils who did not get A* to C in English and maths were *not* eligible for free school meals
- In 2011, there were a shocking 2,177 secondary schools where 10 per cent of pupils did not achieve a single A* to C grade at GCSE, excluding equivalents, and 371 in which 30 per cent or more did not
- In nine local authorities, fewer than 50 per cent of pupils achieved five good GCSEs passes including English and maths last year. In Knowsley, only 41 cent of pupils did.
- 36 per cent of children are not achieving a 'good level of development' according to the Early Years Foundation Stage goals.

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Copies of the full report are available on the Centre for Social Justice website: <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/>) or, alternatively, by contacting one of the individuals above.

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think tank established in 2004 to put social justice at the heart of British politics. In June, the CSJ was awarded UK Social Policy Think Tank of the Year 2013 at Prospect magazine's Think Tank Awards.

In 2007 the CSJ published its landmark report, Breakthrough Britain. This publication, which set out 190 evidence-based policy recommendations to tackle poverty in

Britain, transformed the social policy and political landscape and was awarded Publication of the Year by Prospect Magazine in 2008.

Since Breakthrough Britain the CSJ has published over 40 reports which have shaped government policy and influenced opposition parties. These have included the seminal papers Dying to Belong and Dynamic Benefits, which has led the Coalition Government's welfare reforms.

Further to this, the CSJ manages an Alliance of over 300 of the most effective grass roots, poverty-fighting organisations. The CSJ is able to draw upon the expertise and experience of Alliance charities for research work and media inquiries. Journalists wishing to conduct grass-roots research into social problems can be put in touch with front-line charity directors and staff.