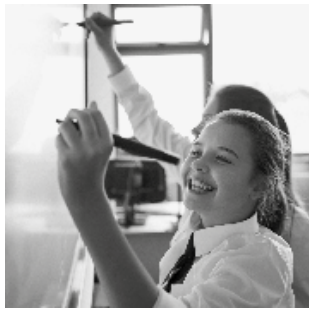
WARMING THE COLD SPOTS OF ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

A manifesto for system improvement

May 2020



CSJ The Centre for Social Justice

Warming the Cold Spots of Alternative Provision
A manifesto for system improvement
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About the Centre for Social Justice

Established in 2004, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think-tank that studies the root causes of Britain's social problems and addresses them by recommending practical, workable policy interventions. The CSJ's vision is to give people in the UK who are experiencing the worst multiple disadvantages and injustice every possible opportunity to reach their full potential.

The majority of the CSJ's work is organised around five 'pathways to poverty', first identified in our ground-breaking 2007 report *Breakthrough Britain*. These are: educational failure; family breakdown; economic dependency and worklessness; addiction to drugs and alcohol; and severe personal debt.

Since its inception, the CSJ has changed the landscape of our political discourse by putting social justice at the heart of British politics. This has led to a transformation in government thinking and policy. For instance, in March 2013, the CSJ report *It Happens Here* shone a light on the horrific reality of human trafficking and modern slavery in the UK. As a direct result of this report, the Government passed the Modern Slavery Act 2015, one of the first pieces of legislation in the world to address slavery and trafficking in the 21st century.

Our research is informed by experts including prominent academics, practitioners and policy-makers. We also draw upon our CSJ Alliance, a unique group of charities, social enterprises and other grass-roots organisations that have a proven track-record of reversing social breakdown across the UK.

The social challenges facing Britain remain serious. In 2020 and beyond, we will continue to advance the cause of social justice so that more people can continue to fulfil their potential.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who so generously gave their time to share their expertise with us. A special thank you to the schools who opened their doors to us and the staff and pupils who talked to us about their experience of the mainstream and alternative provision (AP) school system.

We have attempted to capture the insights of people working in AP about what would improve education for the children in their care and, combining this with our understanding of the research and data, we have made a number of policy recommendations.

While the opinions expressed in this report are entirely those of the Centre for Social Justice, they have been much improved and refined through conversations with many generous AP experts who shared their time. Any inaccuracies are entirely the fault of the authors, any moments of insight have come from experts on the ground.

What follows is a non-exhaustive, alphabetically ordered list of those we would like to thank (it should be noted that inclusion on this list does not indicate agreement with all the recommendations in this report): Barney Angliss, John Ashcroft, Neil Barrett, John Bradshaw, Shaun Brown, Ben Bryant, Anna Cain, Wendy Casson, Gina Cicerone, Richard Cronin, Sarah Dove, Graeme Duncan, Colin Diamond, Marie Gentles, Ben Gibbs, Robert Gasson, Kiran Gill, Lyn Harding, Anne Heavey, Steven Howell, Sarah Jones, Jayne Lowe, Tim Morfin, Matt Morris, Philip Nye, Seamus Oates, Gabriela de Oliveira, Sara Parsonage, Sai Patel, Debra Rutley, Astrid Schon, Jo Southby, Dennis Simms, Shaun Simmons, Stephen Tierney, Mark Vickers, Kate West.

Foreword

In its 2019 manifesto, as part of its drive to "create more great schools", the Conservative Party promised to "expand 'alternative provision' schools", which provide education for children excluded or removed from mainstream school.

In tandem, it signalled its intent to back headteachers to maintain discipline, creating a calm, orderly environment in which all pupils can learn and has funded a network of behaviour hubs to support this aim.

We believe this dual commitment lays the foundations for a strengthened alternative provision (AP) system, where high quality AP schools are working upstream with mainstream schools to enable more children to engage with the curriculum.

Excellent AP schools across the country are working tirelessly to do this, with a cohort of children that is significantly more disadvantaged by every measure than their mainstream peers. But there are systemic issues that hinder their work that the government needs to address, which this paper aims to highlight.

We believe that any child being educated in AP should obtain better outcomes than the same child would have achieved at their mainstream school. With better models of AP working effectively as part of the local education landscape, investment in the workforce, more accurate data and fair funding across the country, we will be a few steps closer to making this a reality for every child in AP.

Andy Cook
CEO, Centre for Social Justice

Executive summary

In this paper we have conducted an analysis to identify where in the country pupils educated in alternative provision (AP) have a poor-to-zero chance of receiving a quality education.

To this end, we ranked inspection ratings, GCSE results, post-16 destinations, attendance and qualified teacher rates by local education authority (LA) area.

Some of the findings appear truly concerning. In 13 LAs not a single child in AP has passed their English and maths GCSE in the past three years. In three, not a single teacher in AP is qualified. And there is no area in the country where the rate of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) after leaving AP equals even the very worst-performing area for children from mainstream.

Moreover, there is a huge disparity between north and south, with one in 50 pupils in the North East achieving a basic pass in maths and English, compared to one in 12 in Outer London.

Children in AP are some of our most vulnerable. The education available to them should be of equal if not better quality than for children in mainstream schools. An effective education system must support the most disadvantaged pupils to access the same broad curriculum and educational opportunities as their peers.

We are therefore calling on the government to replicate successful models where AP schools are supporting mainstream schools with behaviour, and mainstream schools are supporting AP schools to provide an aspirational curriculum for all children by publishing **templates of good local systems of AP** and establishing an **AP system improvement fund**.

To address capacity issues, we recommend existing **quality providers be funded to expand into satellite sites or set up free schools**. Each local area should have **sufficient specialist provision** to avoid unnecessary pressure being placed on AP, and **capital improvements** should be made available for AP schools currently operating in inadequate facilities. We are also recommending an **academisation window** for all pupil referral units to promote a healthy AP ecosystem in which innovation is encouraged.

It is important to have the right systems in place. But AP also needs highly trained people. It is time for the government to act on its pledge to **invest in an AP workforce programme**, both to encourage experienced, qualified teachers to work in AP and to train existing AP staff. An element of this programme should be to **promote greater exchange** and closer working between mainstream and AP schools, which could be achieved, for example, by making AP schools an integral part of the new teaching school hub network.

Alongside this, work should be done to **share the expertise** that is currently being developed through the **AP innovation fund**, and AP schools must be an integral part of both the **special educational needs and disability (SEND) review** and the **mental health trailblazers**.

Throughout this paper we have been very clear that the data collected on children in AP is insufficient. There are five LAs where we can be confident that children in AP are consistently failing to access quality education, and we have designated these as the (known) "AP cold spots": Tameside, Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea, Newcastle and Sheffield. However, for a staggering 69 out of 151 LAs, we have data on less than 50 per cent of children in AP. This means there may be many more cold spots that we are unable to identify.

It is imperative that the **data collection and tracking of pupils in AP must be improved** to avoid vulnerable learners falling through the cracks of our education system.

We have also made the case that the data collected at national level is not suitably tailored to the AP context and in some cases, it can distort the true picture. This is why we are committed to developing proposals for a set of **national benchmarks tailored to AP schools**. Given that they are often the provider of last resort, they must under no circumstances function as a high-stakes accountability system but must be designed with the aim of allowing educators to identify and share good practice.

None of the above will be possible, however, without adequate, fair funding. In 2017–18, four in five councils overspent their high needs budget – a situation the National Audit Office has called "unsustainable". We are recommending a review of the current AP funding system, culminating in a **national fair funding formula for AP and SEND** combined with a standardised funding delivery model to ensure equity between geographical areas and different types of school.

In tandem, work must be done to **develop a suite of service-level agreements** based on examples of good practice, to ensure that AP schools and their pupils across the country are treated equitably.

We believe that implementing the above recommendations will lead to a more effective AP system and ultimately, improve outcomes for children educated in AP.

Introduction

Recent years have seen a spotlight shone by researchers, the media and the government on the poor outcomes achieved by children educated in alternative provision (AP), many of whom have been excluded from school.

In its 2019 manifesto, the Conservative Party pledged to expand AP schools. This paper aims to investigate that proposal, summarise the research on the topic to date and, drawing on the available data, make recommendations for action.

In Chapter one, we present our analysis of the quality of education and outcomes data for children educated in AP, comprising: inspection ratings, GCSE results, post-16 destinations, attendance and qualified teacher rates, for each local education authority (LA).

In Chapter two we create a ranked table of AP quality to identify areas of the country where children excluded from school have a poor-to-zero chance of receiving a good quality education. To account for the missing data in some areas, we include a confidence rating for each LA.

In Chapter three we discuss our findings in the context of existing research and explain our recommendations for AP system improvement.

In the Appendix we explain the limitations of the data for each of the quality measures we have analysed.

To inform our work, we reviewed the existing literature on AP systems and quality; analysed published government data and data obtained through freedom of information requests; visited 12 AP schools across the country where we met with pupils, teachers and leadership teams; spoke to eight LAs about practice in their area; and spoke on the phone with people working in AP in seven of the lowest-performing areas.

Where information was still lacking, we gathered additional data through surveys, specifically a TeacherTapp survey answered by 5,891 teachers on motivations for working in AP, and an online AP facilities survey answered by 39 state-maintained AP schools (11 per cent of the total).

To refine our recommendations, we presented draft findings and received feedback from attendees at two education conferences and a network of AP MAT CEOs, as well as mainstream heads, special educational needs and disability (SEND) professionals, local authorities and academics working in this field.

In sum, this report seeks to assess the quality of AP across England and identify areas where pupils are unable to access the high-quality education they deserve. Drawing on this data and existing research, we will then make recommendations for system improvement.

What and who are we talking about?

What is AP?

Statutory guidance describes AP as "education arranged by LAs for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour".[1]

Who is in AP?

Government-commissioned research[2] identifies four "categories of need" for students in AP:

1. **Pupils in AP due to one-off incidents**, such as violence towards a teacher or bringing a banned substance into school, **or temporary circumstances** such as arriving in the local area mid-year. Reintegration to a mainstream school is the main focus.
2. **Pupils who need an alternative curriculum or learning environment.** These pupils may be placed in AP for part-time or short-term placements, rather than because they have been excluded.
3. **Vulnerable pupils**, who may have experienced abuse or neglect at home, and/or have mental health difficulties. It may be that a lack of understanding of their underlying needs has led to them being excluded from mainstream schools, or they may have been withdrawn for mental health reasons. This group may also include pupils who have had periods out of formal education and are being reintegrated into school-based education.
4. **Disengaged pupils** will often come to AP with very low rates of attendance. In many instances, there may be complicating factors relating to family background or experience of the care system. This group of pupils will also include those at risk of becoming or already involved with gangs, and those at risk of entering or involved with the criminal justice system.

Characteristics of pupils in AP

The demographic characteristics of pupils in AP differ significantly from those in mainstream in a variety of ways. Pupils on free school meals are over-represented, at 43 per cent in state-maintained AP compared to 15 per cent in mainstream.[3] There is a strong correlation between areas of high deprivation and areas where a high proportion of the school population is educated full-time in AP.[4]

1 Department for Education, 2013. *Alternative Provision: Statutory guidance for local authorities.* (p.3)
2 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis*. ISOS Partnership. (pp.27–28)
3 Department for Education, 2019. *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, 2019*
4 CSJ analysis of Index of Multiple Deprivation data and pupil numbers from Department for Education, 2019. *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, 2019*

Pupils in AP schools are almost six times as likely to have SEND than children in mainstream schools, with 81 per cent on the SEND register compared to 14 per cent in mainstream.[5] The primary need for four in five students with identified SEND is social, emotional and mental health (SEMH).[6]

Certain ethnic groups are also over-represented in state-maintained AP: 3.3 per cent of pupils are Black-Caribbean, 4.0 per cent are White and Black Caribbean, and 1.2 per cent are Gypsy Roma. This compares to 1.1 per cent, 1.5 per cent and 0.3 per cent of pupils in mainstream respectively.[7]

5 68 per cent receiving SEN support and 13 per cent with an with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), compared to 12 per cent and 2 per cent in mainstream.

6 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: Special Educational Needs (SEN)*

7 Department for Education, 2019. *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, 2019*

chapter one

Using national data to assess alternative provision

To begin our investigation into whether and how AP should be expanded, we have started with an analysis of the available data. Our aims are twofold: to build a picture of how children are faring nationally in AP compared to mainstream, and to identify differences between educational outcomes and quality of education in AP in different parts of the country. We attempted to review this alongside funding data but, as we shall explain later, the data was not available in a way that could accurately be compared across LAs.

While there is no one perfect measure of quality of education, there are some nationally available data that can serve as proxies. This report considers inspection ratings, basic qualifications, post-16 destinations, attendance rates and the proportion of qualified teachers in a LA.

In this chapter we review each of these individually, then in chapter two we compile them into a ranked table that weights all five metrics equally.

Where the majority of provision is not state maintained or most pupils are dual-rolled, it has not been possible to source accurate data on some metrics. For this reason, we have included a confidence rating for each LA in our table, to indicate the proportion of pupils we were able to capture in our analysis.

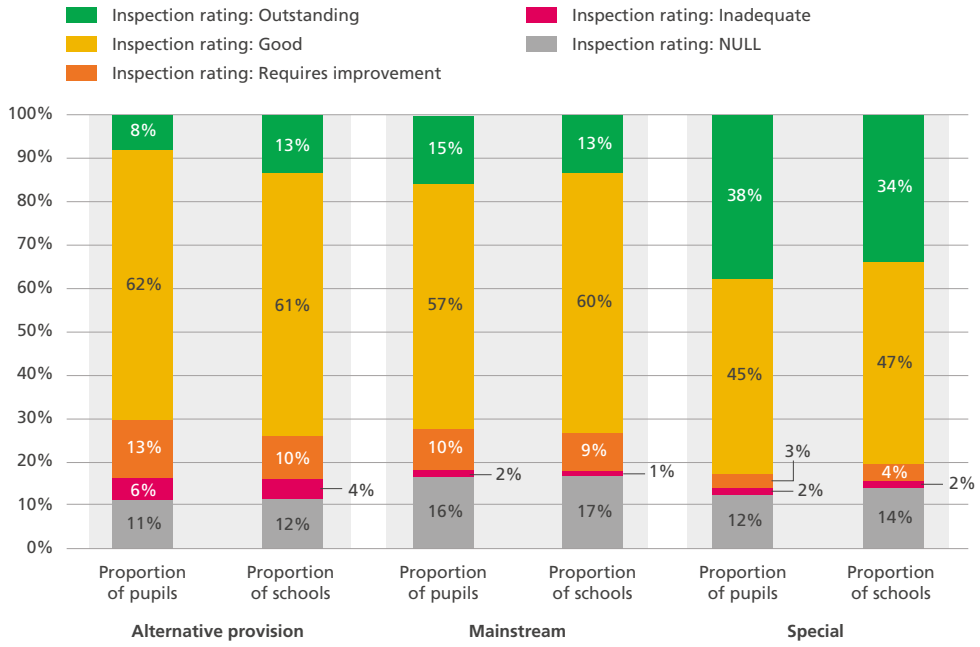
Finally, it should be noted that our metrics relate to different time periods, as different pieces of data are collected at different intervals and times of the year. Some are not publicly available and had to be obtained through freedom of information (FOI) requests. In all cases, we strived to use the most recent available data and have averaged this over the past three years where appropriate.

There are other elements that may be fundamental to assessing AP quality, that we have been unable to include. We have included an appendix explaining the limitations to our data analysis.

National picture

The proportion of pupils in poorly rated provision in AP is significantly worse than in other school types. Nearly one in five pupils in AP are educated in a school rated Requires Improvement (RI) or Inadequate, compared to one in eight pupils in mainstream and only one in 20 in special schools (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proportion of pupils and schools by school category and inspection rating



Source: CSJ analysis of Ofsted data.[8]

Analysing the trends in both pupil numbers and school numbers reveals an interesting trend: in AP 13 per cent of all schools are Outstanding, but only 8 per cent of our pupils in AP are educated in them.

The picture in mainstream and special is very different, where the Outstanding schools are taking proportionately more pupils. In mainstream 14 per cent of schools are Outstanding but 16 per cent of pupils attend them. In special schools, 30 per cent of schools are Outstanding but 33 per cent of pupils attend them.

Educational outcomes in AP are also significantly poorer. While over half of all pupils in AP at the end of key stage 4 are entered for maths and English GCSEs, only 4 per cent manage to achieve a basic pass (grade 9–4). For context, 64 per cent of pupils in state-funded secondaries achieve a pass in these two qualifications.

Moreover, when a pupil exits mainstream education, their chances of being taught by an unqualified teacher increase. In mainstream, only 8 per cent of teachers are unqualified but in AP schools this figure is 17 per cent.

8 Ofsted, 2019. *Management information – state-funded schools – latest inspections at 30 Sep 2019.* & CSJ search of Ofsted inspection ratings for independent AP – conducted on 02 Oct 2019

The average attendance rate for pupils in AP is 67 per cent compared to 96 per cent in mainstream.

Finally, just over half (54 per cent) of all pupils who completed key stage 4 in state-maintained AP over the last three years were recorded as sustaining a positive destination, compared to 94 per cent of their mainstream peers.[9]

AP quality metrics by LA

National analysis presents a sobering picture but hides the wide variation in all measures at LA level. Closer inspection shows that where a pupil lives fundamentally changes the nature of the AP offer they are made.

Inspectorate ratings

Background

All state-maintained and registered independent alternative providers are inspected by either Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate, both of which grade providers and schools under the four summary judgments of Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement (RI) or Inadequate. We have decided to group the judgments into two categories: Good and Outstanding; and RI and Inadequate.

Notwithstanding challenges to the reliability of inspection judgments by prominent academics,[10] we believe they are one important part of the quest to build a comparative picture of AP quality on a national scale.

Looking at inspection ratings of state-maintained AP tells only part of the story. The ISOS Partnership's market analysis of AP found that 14 per cent of AP is commissioned from independent providers; around half of this in registered independent schools.[11] We have included these schools in our present analysis.

When we talk about "identifiable AP", we are referring to all the state-maintained and registered independent AP we have been able to identify with a reasonable level of confidence. We are still not certain that we have captured every single registered alternative provider in England – and we know we have not captured the unregistered providers,[12,13] – but we have put together as comprehensive a list as possible, which is what we rely upon to conduct the analysis in this chapter.[14]

9 Department for Education, 2019. Statistics: destinations of key stage 4 and 16 to 18 (KS5) students

10 Allen, 2017. *Ofsted inspections are unreliable by design*

11 Department for Education, 2018. *Market analysis of alternative provision.* ISOS Partnership. (p.30)

12 Currently, a provider must register with the DfE if it provides full-time education (at least 18 hours per week) for: 5 or more pupils of compulsory school age, or; 1 or more pupils of compulsory school age with an EHCP or receiving SEN support, or; 1 or more pupils of compulsory school age who are looked-after by the local council. (See Department for Education. *Independent School Registration*).

13 The government launched a consultation on 14 February 2020 to "expand on and more clearly define what full-time institutions are" under the law. (See Schools Week, 2020. *DfE proposes legal definition of 'full-time' education*).

14 Identification based on work by FFT Education Datalab and The Difference. For more information on how we've identified AP, see the Data Limitations appendix.

Findings

Figure 2 illustrates two things:

1. **The relative proportion**[15] **of pupils in AP in each area.** The longer the line, the greater the proportion of children single registered in AP.[16]

   Nationally, around 22 per 10,000[17] pupils are educated in identifiable AP. In Blackpool, this figure is just over 100 per 10,000 pupils – this equates to 1 per cent of their entire pupil population, which is five times the national average. When we analysed this data alongside Indices of Multiple Deprivation we found a significant positive relationship between a LA being more deprived and the proportion of pupils they have in AP.[18]

2. **The inspection ratings of AP schools in each area**, by the proportion of children in each AP school. For example, a red bar of length "60" would indicate that 60 children per 10,000 children in the LA are being educated in AP that is rated Inadequate.

   There are 21 LAs where over half of pupils are being educated in Inadequate or RI provision.[19] In eight of these, **every single identified pupil is in Inadequate or RI provision**.[20]

   Comparing this to mainstream, there is not a single LA in the country where over half of pupils are educated in Inadequate or RI schools. And in the eight areas where all AP pupils are in poorly-rated provision, their mainstream counterparts have, on average, a one in 10 chance of being educated in schools rated Inadequate or RI.

   On the positive side, we found seven LAs where over half the identified AP population is being educated in Outstanding provision: Blackburn with Darwen, Bolton, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Hertfordshire, Kent, Northamptonshire and Wigan.

15 We have displayed the proportion of pupils in AP rather than the raw number, to allow for more meaningful comparisons between different areas, as some LAs have a much larger pupil population than others.

16 N.B. There are some LAs where the policy is to keep all children in AP registered at a mainstream school, even if the children are educated full-time and long-term at an AP school. In this case, they are dual registered, with the AP school as a subsidiary registration. As we cannot track the outcomes for these pupils, they do not appear on this chart and are illustrated separately in Figure 3.

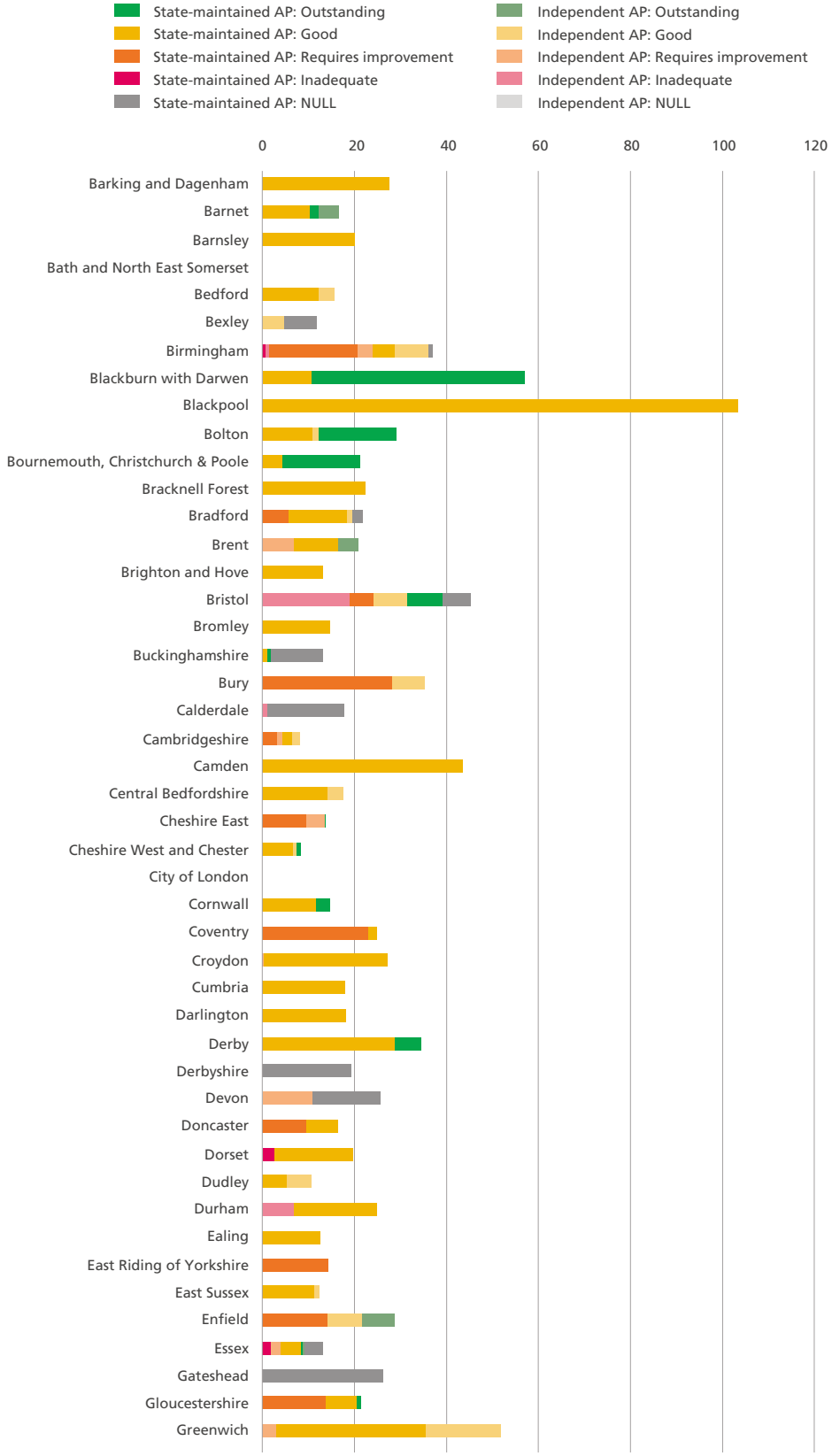
17 We have used "pupils per 10,000" as our base because in some areas, the rates are too low to describe as a percentage.

18 See www.integrated.org.uk/2020/05/15/the-correlation-between-deprivation-and-school-exclusion

19 Birmingham, Bristol, Bury, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire East, Coventry, Doncaster, East Riding, Gloucester, Havering, Nottinghamshire, Peterborough, Redbridge, Sheffield, South Tyneside, Tameside, Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Windsor and Maidenhead.

20 East Riding (68 pupils in state-maintained AP rated RI); Havering (24 pupils in state-maintained AP rated RI); Nottinghamshire (145 pupils in independent AP rated Inadequate); Peterborough (237 pupils in state-maintained AP rated Inadequate), Sheffield (233 pupils in state-maintained AP rated RI); South Tyneside (59 pupils in state-maintained AP rated RI); Warwickshire (30 pupils in independent AP rated Inadequate); Wiltshire (15 pupils in independent AP rated RI)

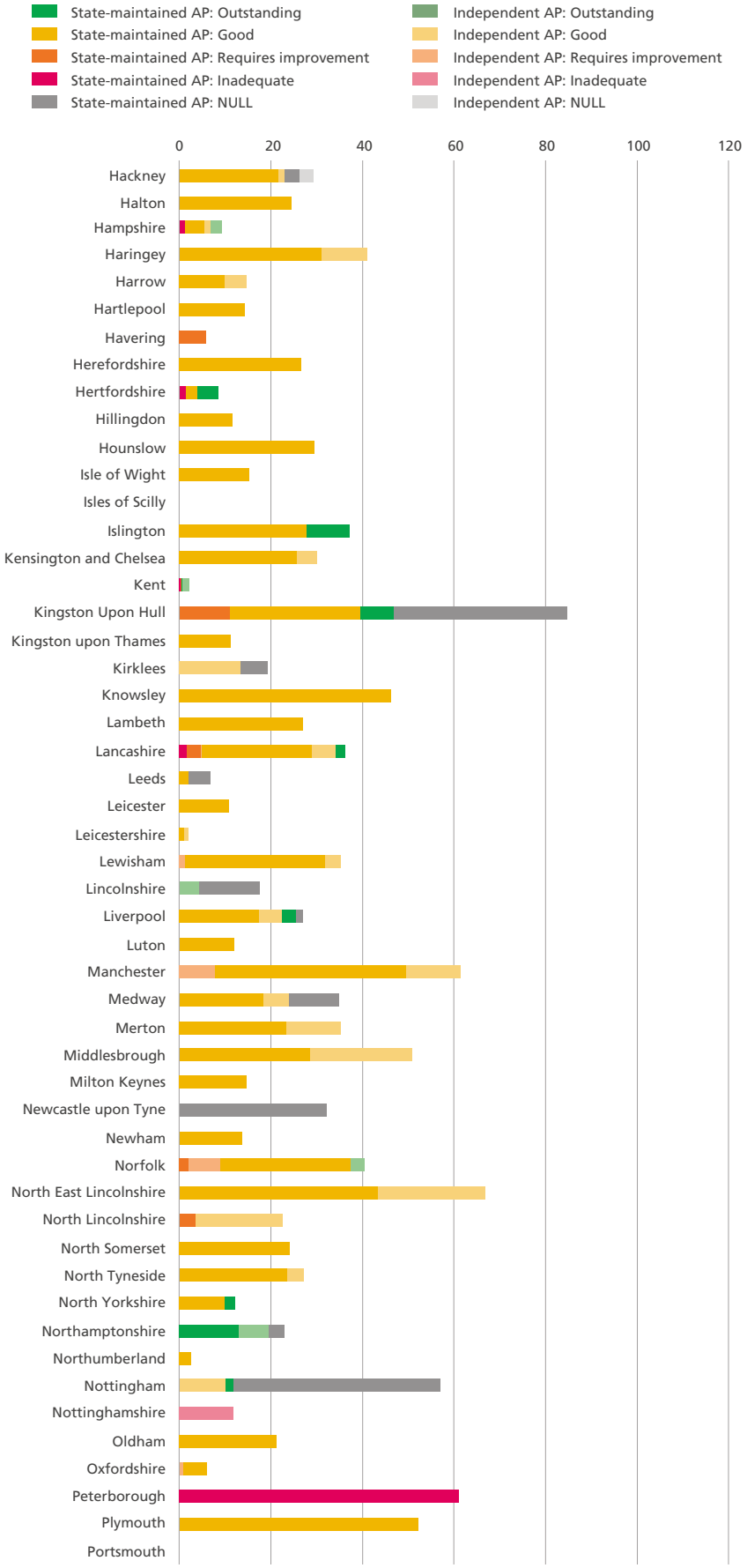
Figure 2: Proportion of pupils in identified AP by inspectorate rating (per 10,000)



Source: CSJ analysis of Ofsted data.[21]

21 Ofsted, 2019. *Management information – state-funded schools – latest inspections at 30 Sep 2019.* & CSJ search of Ofsted inspection ratings for independent AP – conducted on 02/10/19.

Figure 2 continued



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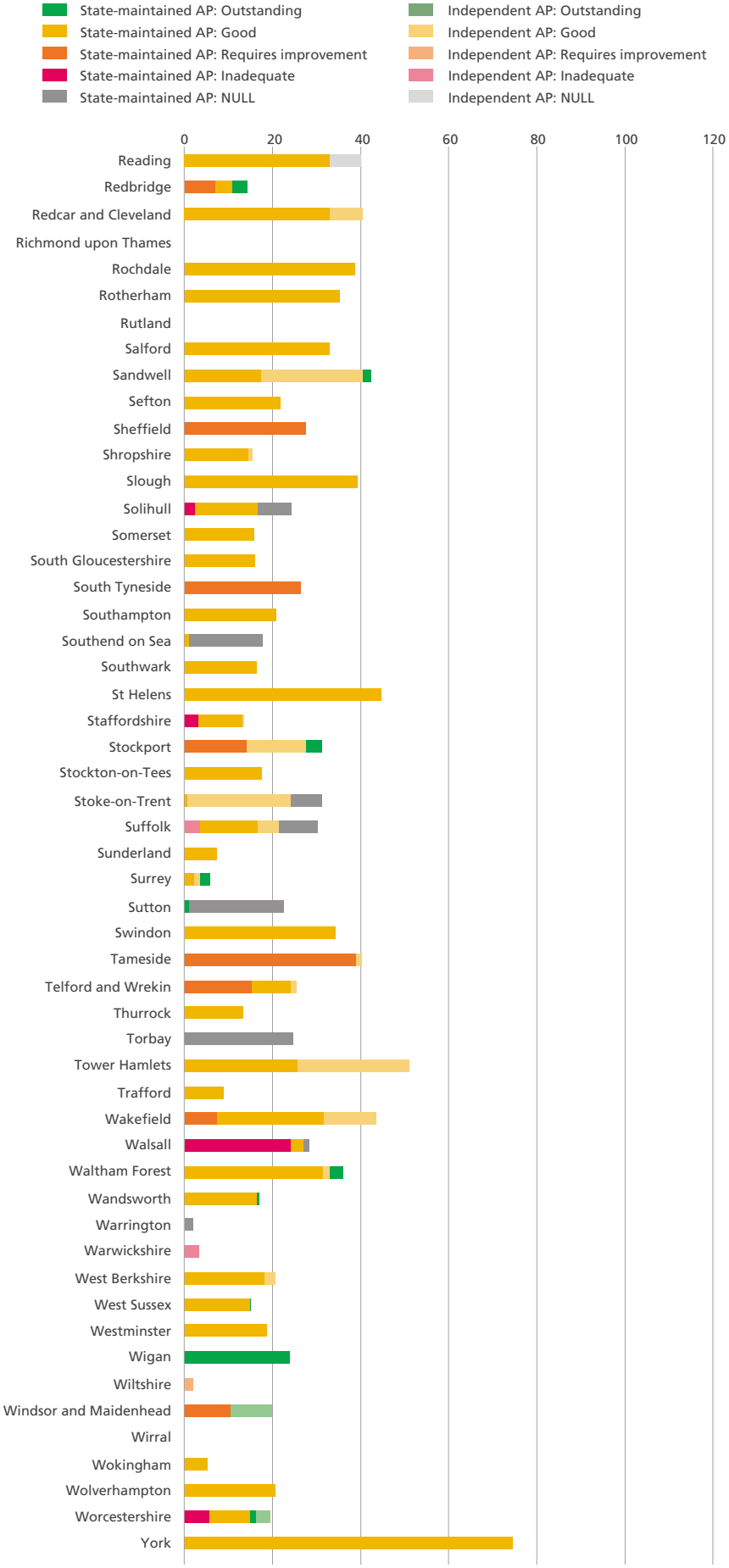
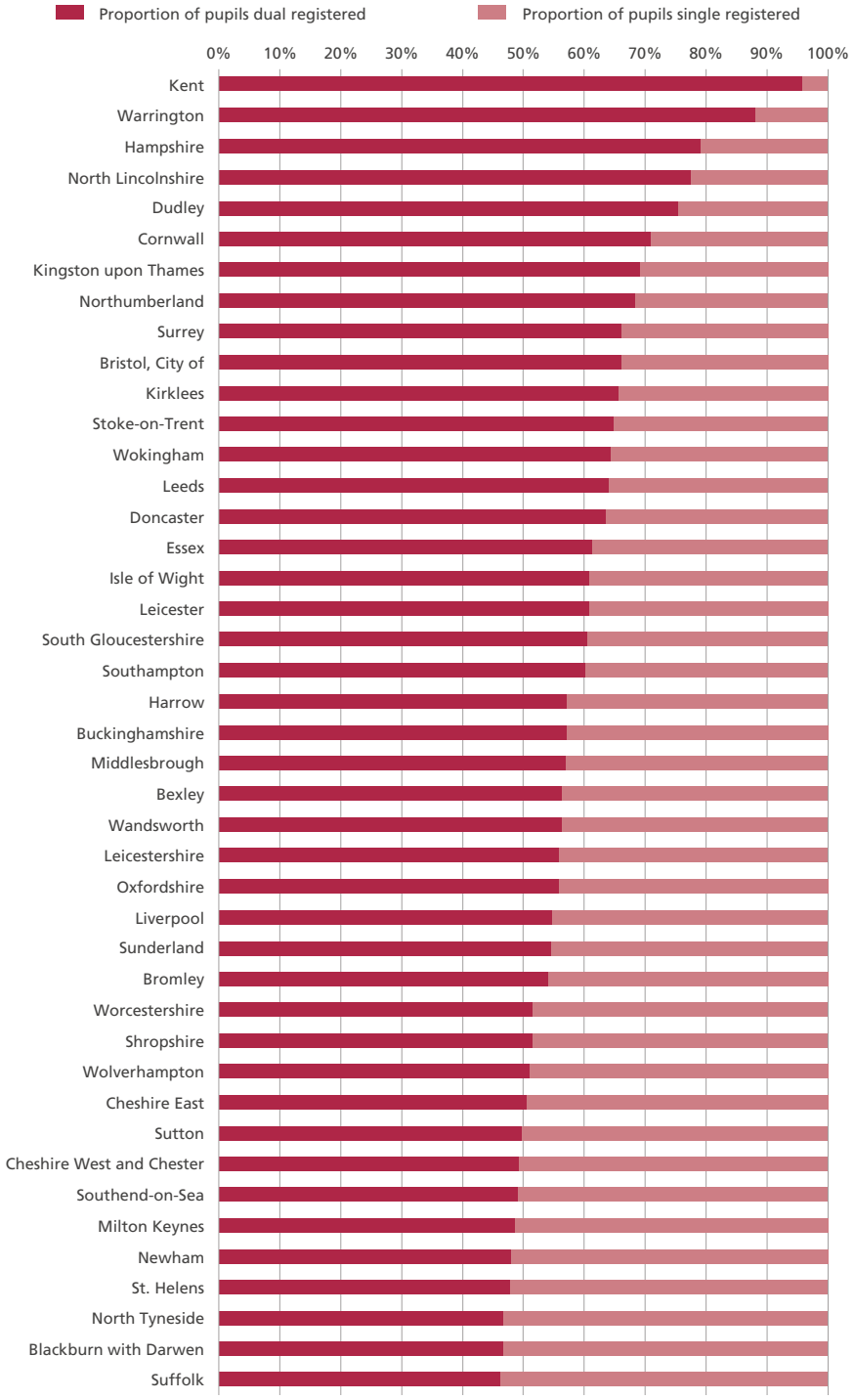


Not all pupils in AP are captured by the above chart. Publicly available statistics relate only to the 16,134 pupils who are single registered at state-maintained AP. There are a further 10,288 pupils who are dual registered at a state-maintained AP.[22]

Figure 3: Relative proportion of pupils dual registered vs. single registered in state-maintained AP



Source: CSJ analysis of figures obtained via an FOI.[23]

22 Department for Education, 2019. *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, 2019*
23 FOI to the Department for Education

Figure 3 continued

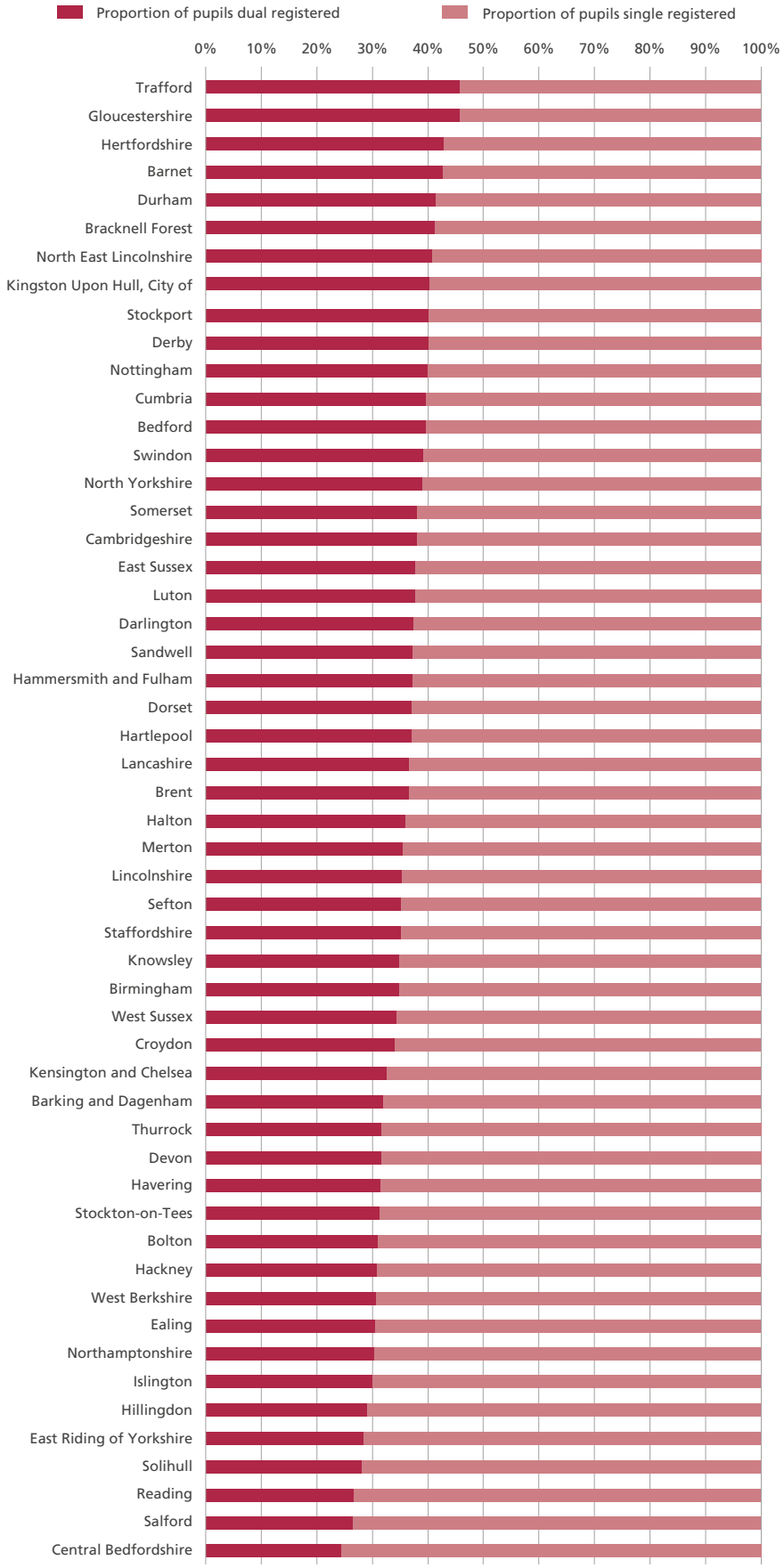
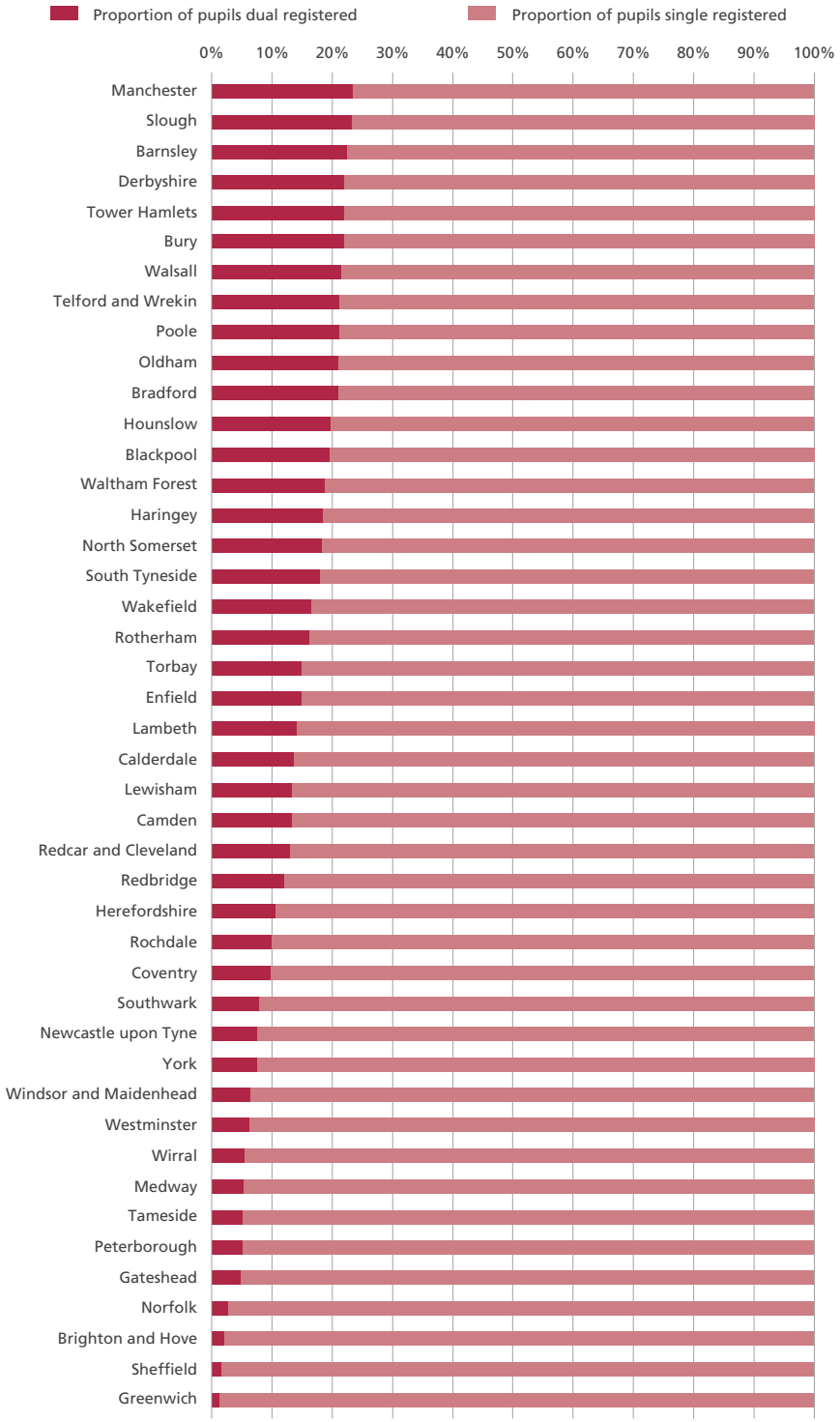


Figure 3 continued



This is particularly problematic for any analysis that relies on published pupil numbers, such as our analysis in this chapter. Ofsted records the pupil numbers in each school they inspect, but this number only relates to the pupils who are single registered. Therefore, according to official statistics one school might be listed as having five pupils but instead be educating 70 pupils, of which 65 are subsidiary dual registered with them.

Dual registration

As Figure 3 shows, in some LAs, more pupils are dual registered with state-maintained AP than are single registered. This helps to indicate where in the country the majority of pupils in state-maintained AP are not captured in official statistics. We have used this to inform our "confidence measure" in the final LA table.

GCSE results

Background

In July 2018, the House of Commons Education Committee published research on pupils who were educated in AP. Their report argued that GCSE statistics fail to convey the complex histories of pupils, who often face a multitude of challenges that must be addressed before they are able to engage with an academic curriculum. That being said, the committee also stressed that pupils should be given a fair chance to access GCSEs, regardless of whether they receive their education in a mainstream school or in an AP.[24]

AP schools face significant challenges in achieving the Department for Education (DfE) requirement of "good academic attainment on par with mainstream schools"[25] across their cohort. Some pupils who arrive in AP have had chronically low attendance in mainstream and missed significant parts of their education.[26] Many have had physical illness or SEMH difficulties that have interfered with their ability to learn.

For all these reasons, we would propose that the mark of good AP is that any child should obtain better outcomes than the *same child* would have achieved at their mainstream school.

This is, of course, much harder to measure. In terms of academic attainment, the national data reports on the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades 9–4 in English and maths, which is what we have used for our analysis. In our future work on benchmarking in AP, we will be looking to include other level 1 and 2 qualifications, and will consider reporting on academic progress from point of entry to AP.

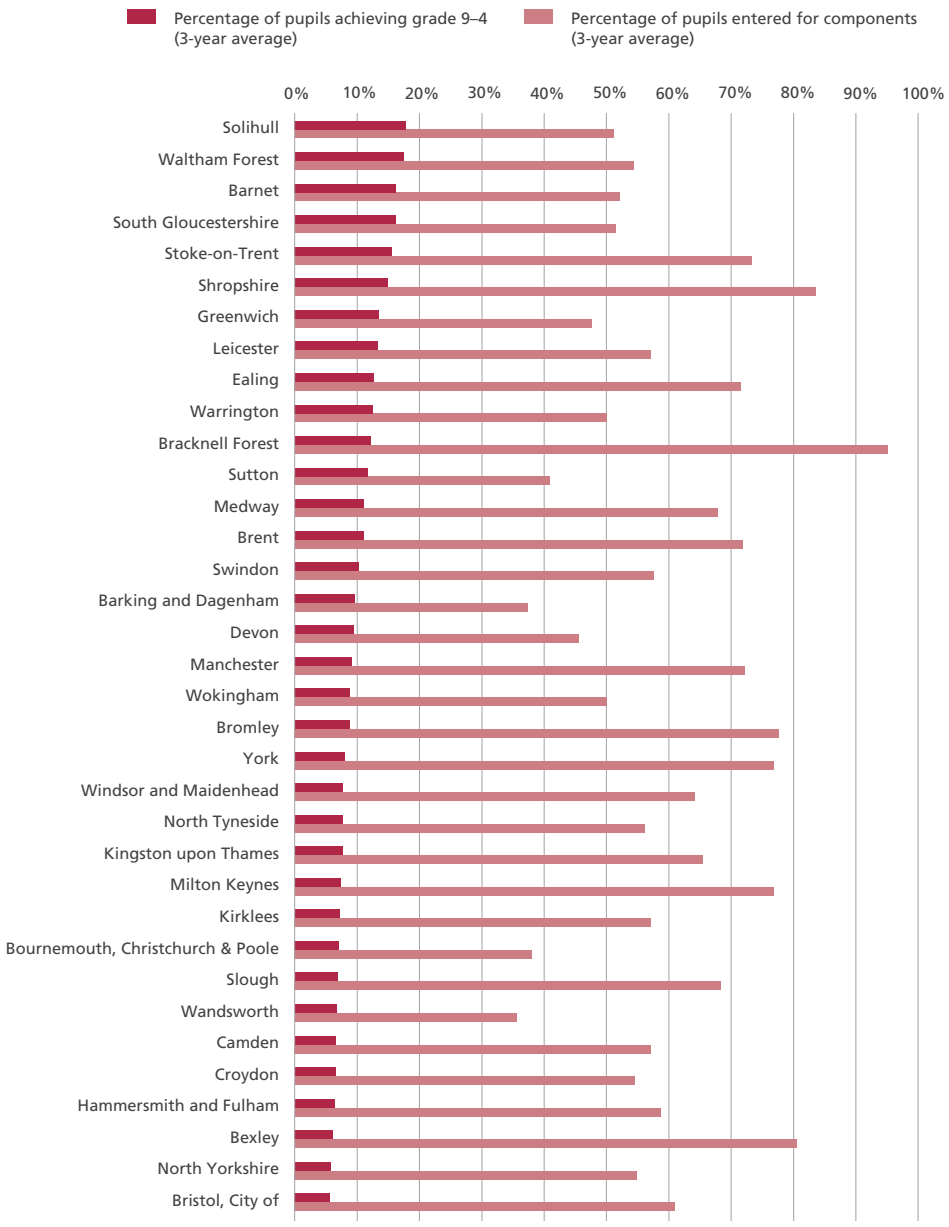
Notwithstanding the above, it is clear even from a rudimentary comparison of results between different parts of the country that the current level of GCSE maths and English passes in AP schools could be significantly improved.

24 House of Commons Education Committee, 2018. *Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions.* (p.36)
25 Department for Education, 2013. *Alternative Provision: Statutory guidance for local authorities.* (p.10)
26 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis.* ISOS Partnership (p.27)

Findings

The average[27] academic results for pupils who sit their maths and English GCSEs in AP are significantly worse than the results of their contemporaries in mainstream. Over the last three years, only 4 per cent of pupils educated in state-maintained AP have achieved a grade 9–4 in maths and English.[28] This compares with 64 per cent of pupils across all state-funded schools (special and AP included).

Figure 4: Percentage of pupils achieving grades 9–4 in maths and English GCSE (state-maintained AP)



Source: CSJ analysis of figures obtained via an FOI.[29]

27 The percentage of pupils achieving a grade 9–4 in maths and English in state-maintained AP can vary wildly from year to year simply because the AP population is volatile at the LA level. For this reason, we have instead used a three-year average of results in our analysis.

28 CSJ analysis of an FOI from the Department for Education

29 FOI to the Department for Education

Figure 4 continued

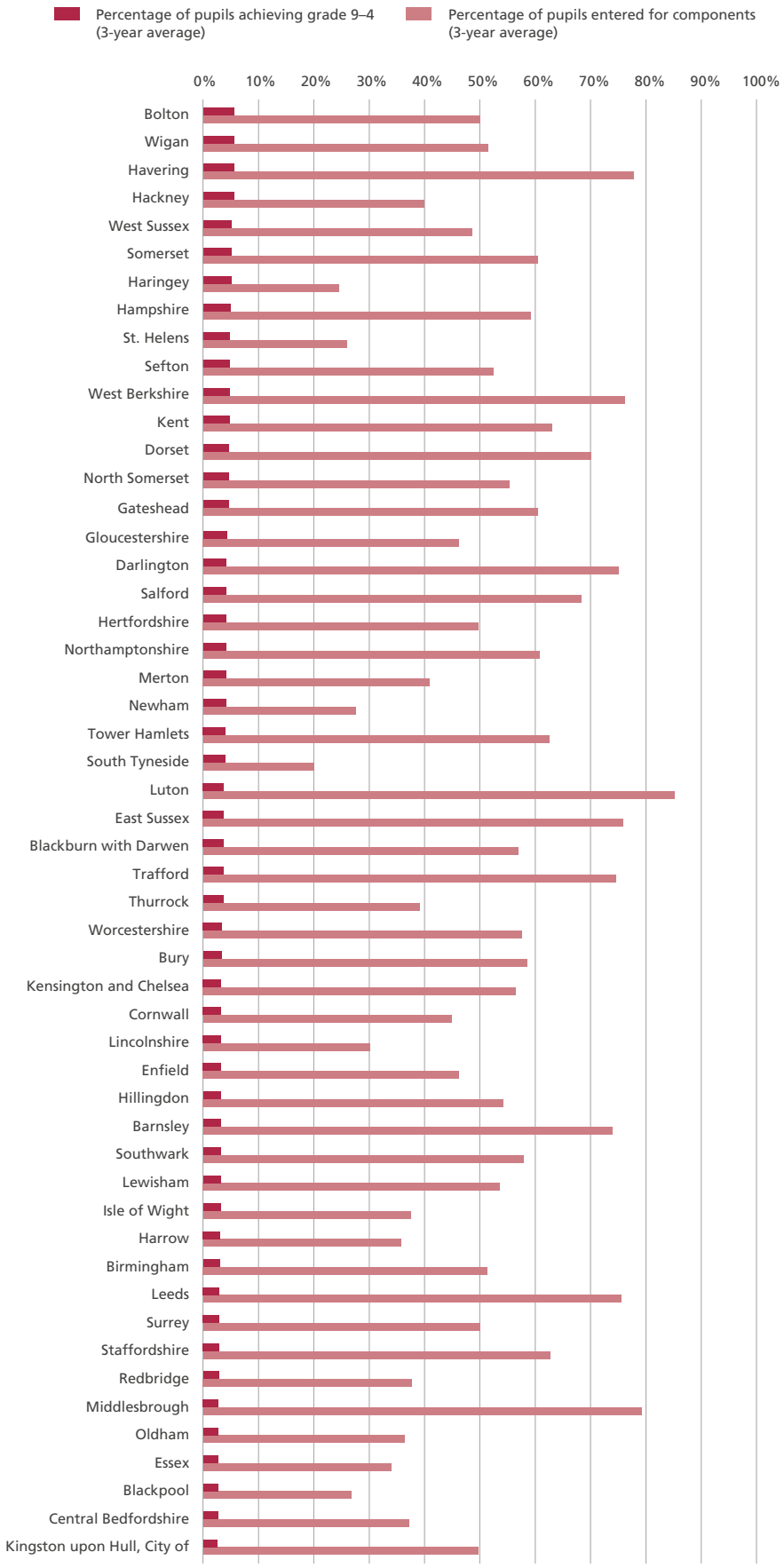
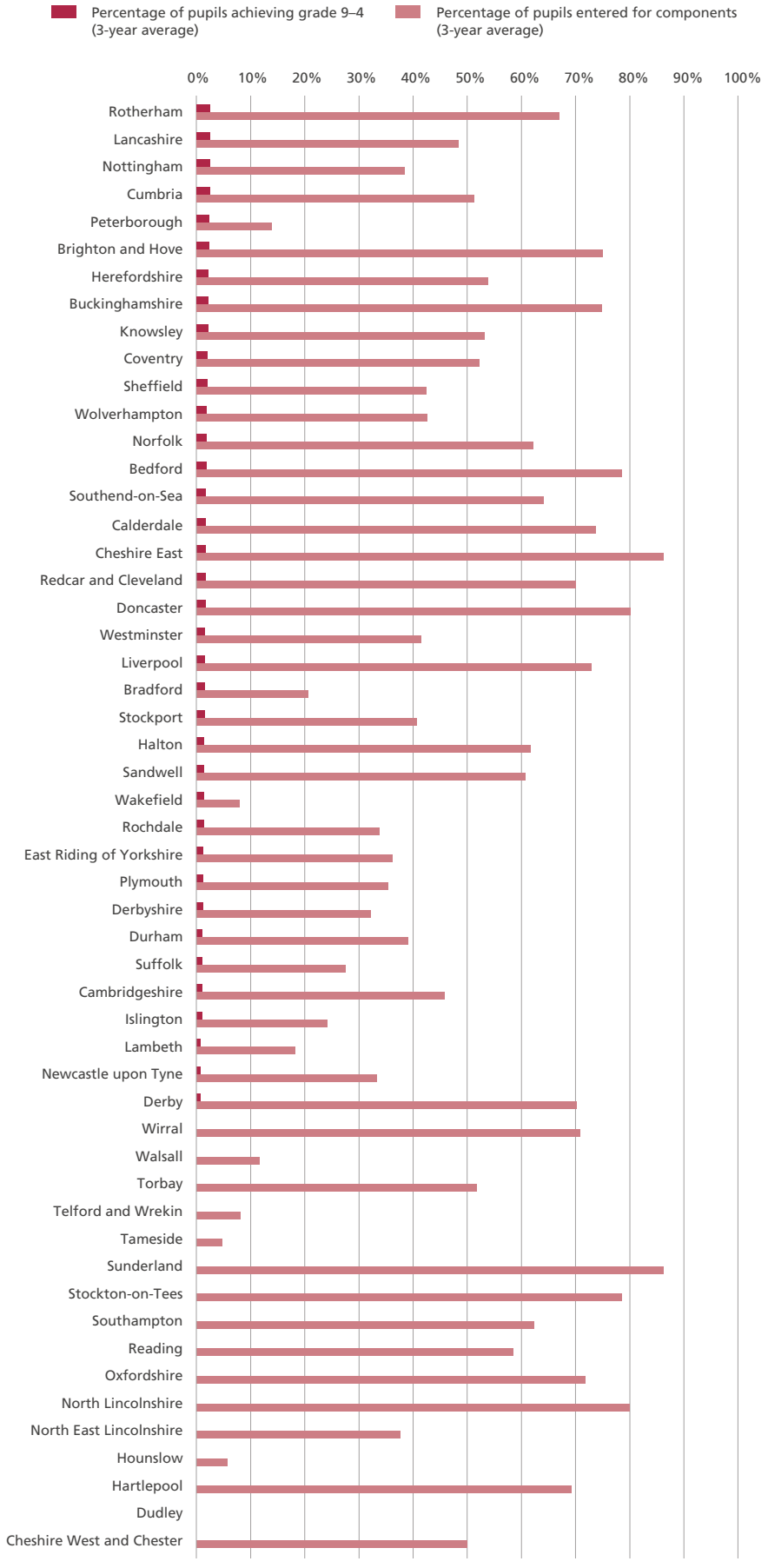


Figure 4 continued



Over half of all pupils in state-maintained AP have been entered for maths and English GCSEs over the last three years.

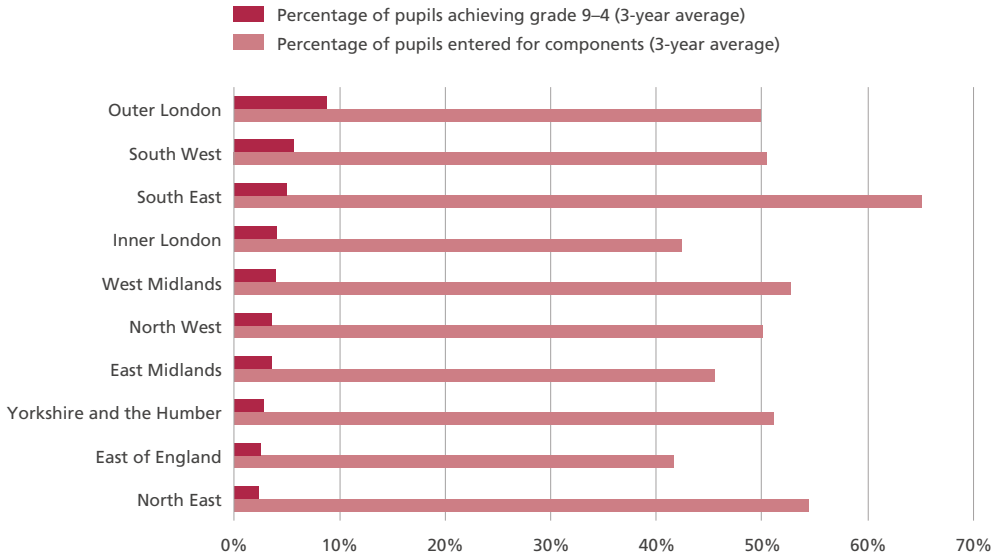
Figure 4 displays the percentage of pupils entered for maths and English and the total percentage of those who achieved a basic pass, grade 9–4, in these subjects. We have ordered the results to display the LAs with the greatest level of academic success first.

Exploring the results of pupils in state-maintained AP reveals wide variation in academic outcomes across the country. In 13 LAs,[30] there has not been a single case where a pupil has achieved a grade 9–4 in maths and English over the last three years.

The areas exhibiting the highest levels of academic success include Solihull, Waltham Forest, Barnet, South Gloucestershire and Stoke-on-Trent, where over 15 per cent of pupils passed maths and English. However, this still means that 17 out of 20 pupils in the best-performing areas do not achieve this.

The academic outcomes for pupils in AP appear to follow a north-south divide. In Outer London, on average one in 12 pupils in AP achieves a grade 9–4 in maths and English. At the other extreme, this is only one in 50 in the North East.

Figure 5: Regions: Percentage of pupils achieving grades 9–4 in maths and English GCSE (state-maintained AP)



Source: CSJ analysis of figures obtained via an FOI.[31]

We were conscious that at least part of these discrepancies could relate to the differences in population characteristics or the quality of mainstream education across the regions of England. Previous school experience will have a bearing on pupils' GCSE results. We therefore repeated this analysis, creating a contextualised rate.[32]

30 Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees, Sunderland, Tameside, Wirral, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, Hounslow, Oxfordshire, Reading, Southampton

31 FOI to the Department for Education

32 This refined measure is a ratio of the percentage of pass rate in state-maintained AP in one LA, relative to that LA's results in the state-funded sector as a whole.

Figure 6: Contextualised percentage of pupils achieving 9–4 in maths and English GCSE (state-maintained AP)

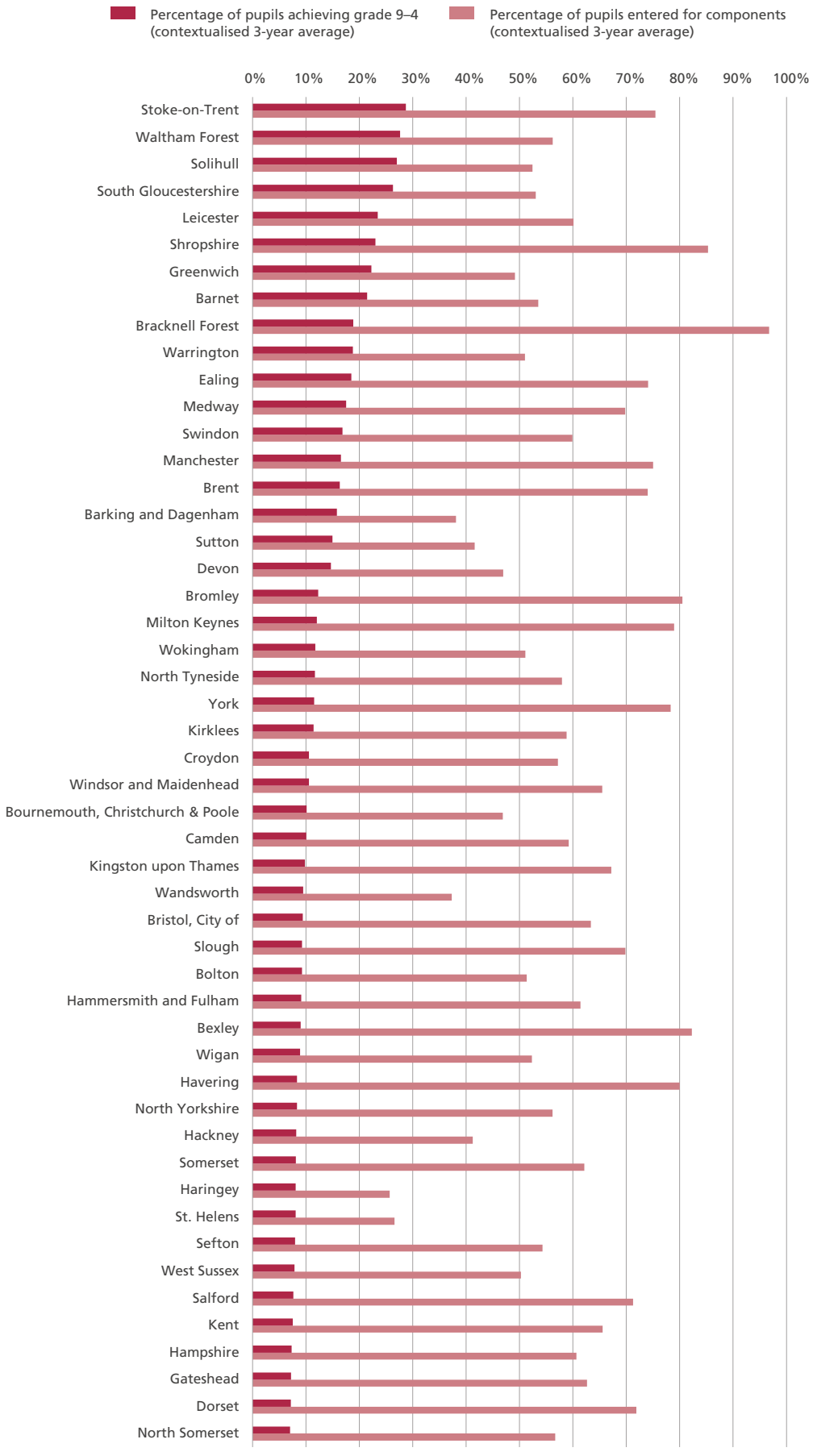


Figure 6 continued

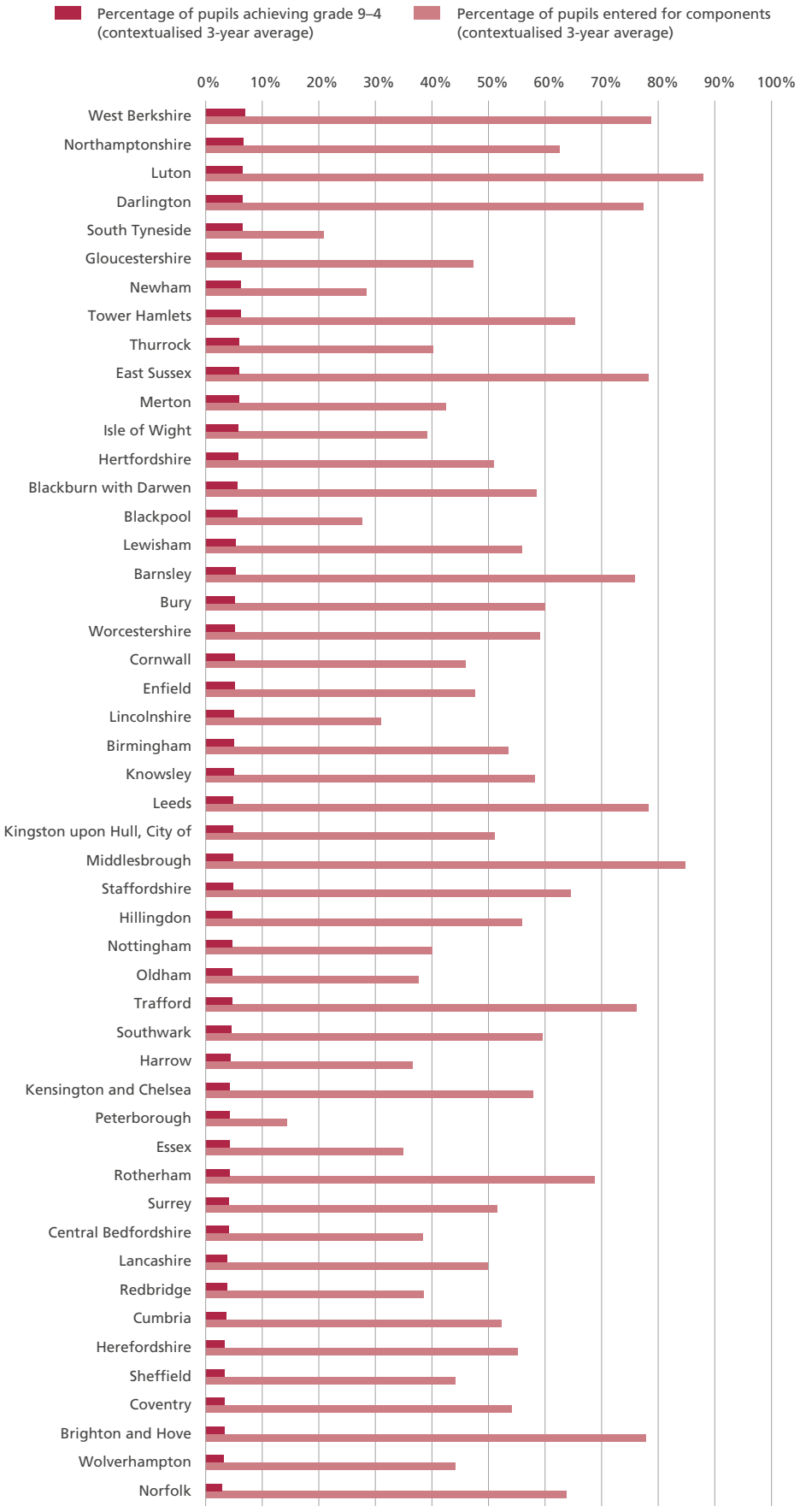
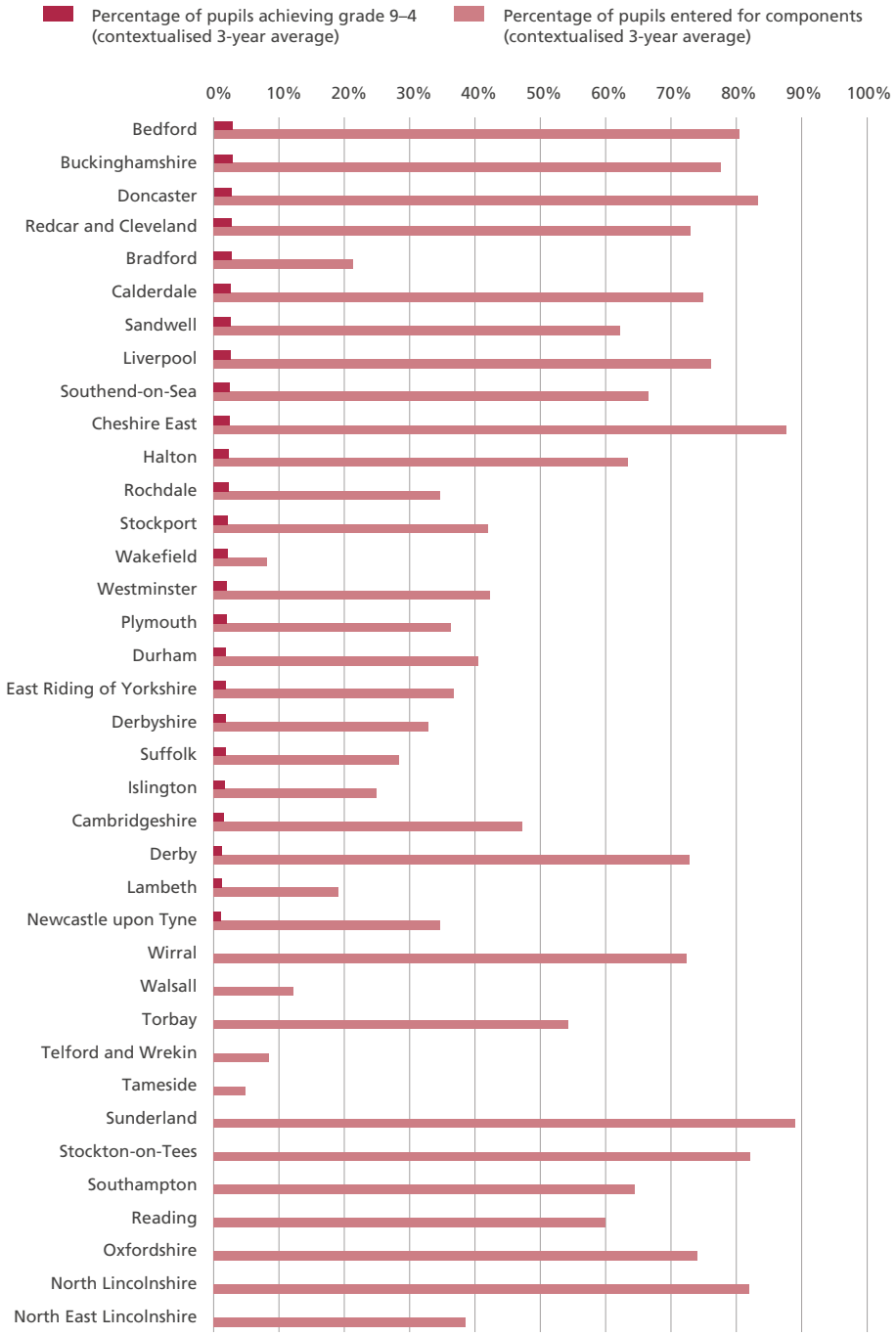


Figure 6 continued

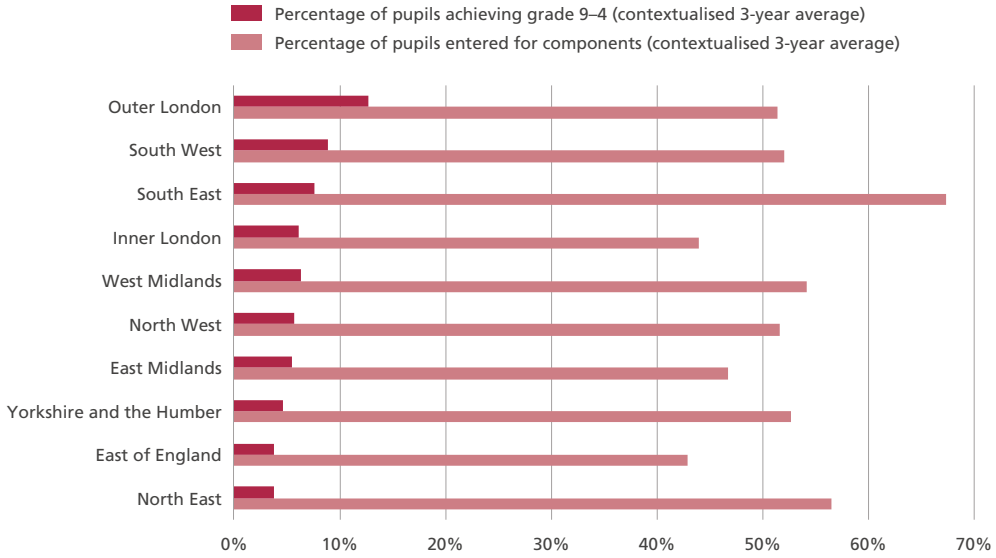


Source: CSJ analysis of figures obtained via an FOI[33] and DfE statistics.[34]

Contextualising the results of state-maintained AP relative to all state-funded schools in the area does not have a clear impact on the overall ranking at either LA or regional level. While some LAs swap positions, the overall results are largely unchanged.

33 FOI to the Department for Education
34 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: GCSEs (Key Stage 4)*

Figure 7: Regions: Contextualised percentage of pupils achieving grades 9–4 in maths and English GCSE (state-maintained AP)



Source: CSJ analysis of figures obtained via an FOI[35] and DfE statistics.[36]

Destinations

Background

Government data defines sustained positive post-16 destinations as pupils in continuous education or employment between October and March of the year following the end of key stage 4, and pupils who spent at least six consecutive months in an apprenticeship at any point in the year.

Ofsted has previously highlighted challenges with this transition point, reporting that the pathway between AP and continuing study at school, college, an apprenticeship or employment was unclear in 15 per cent of the schools visited.[37]

Findings

In every part of the country, pupils in AP are less likely to sustain a positive destination than their peers in mainstream.

Just over half (54 per cent) of all pupils who completed key stage 4 in state-maintained AP over the last three years were recorded as sustaining a positive destination, compared to 94 per cent of their mainstream peers.[38]

35 FOI to the Department for Education
36 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: GCSEs (Key Stage 4)*
37 Ofsted, 2016. *Alternative provision. The findings from Ofsted's three-year survey of schools' use of off-site alternative provision*
38 Department for Education, 2019. Statistics: destinations of key stage 4 and 16 to 18 (KS5) students

Figure 8: Percentage of pupils sustaining a positive post-16 destination (state-maintained AP)

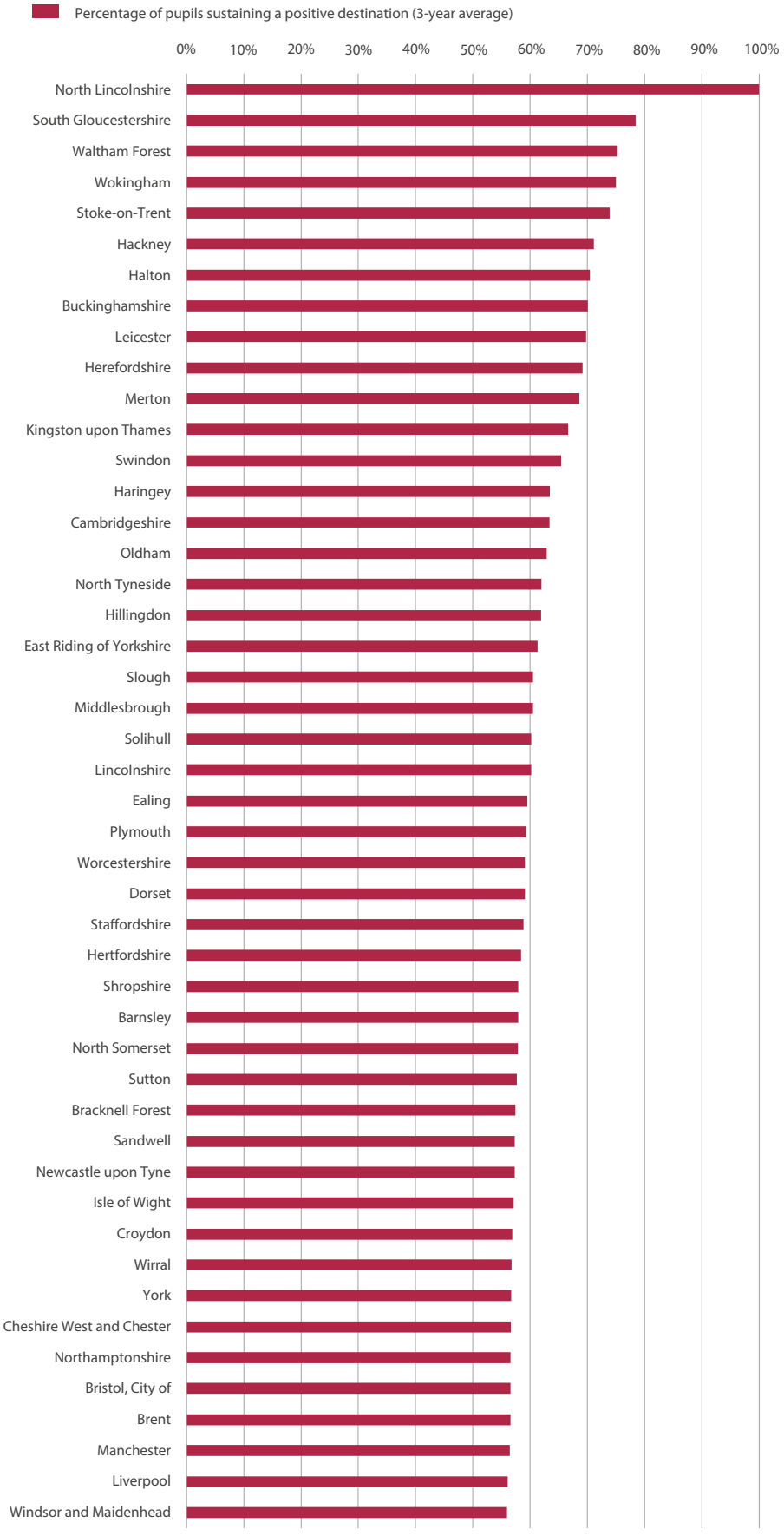


Figure 8 continued

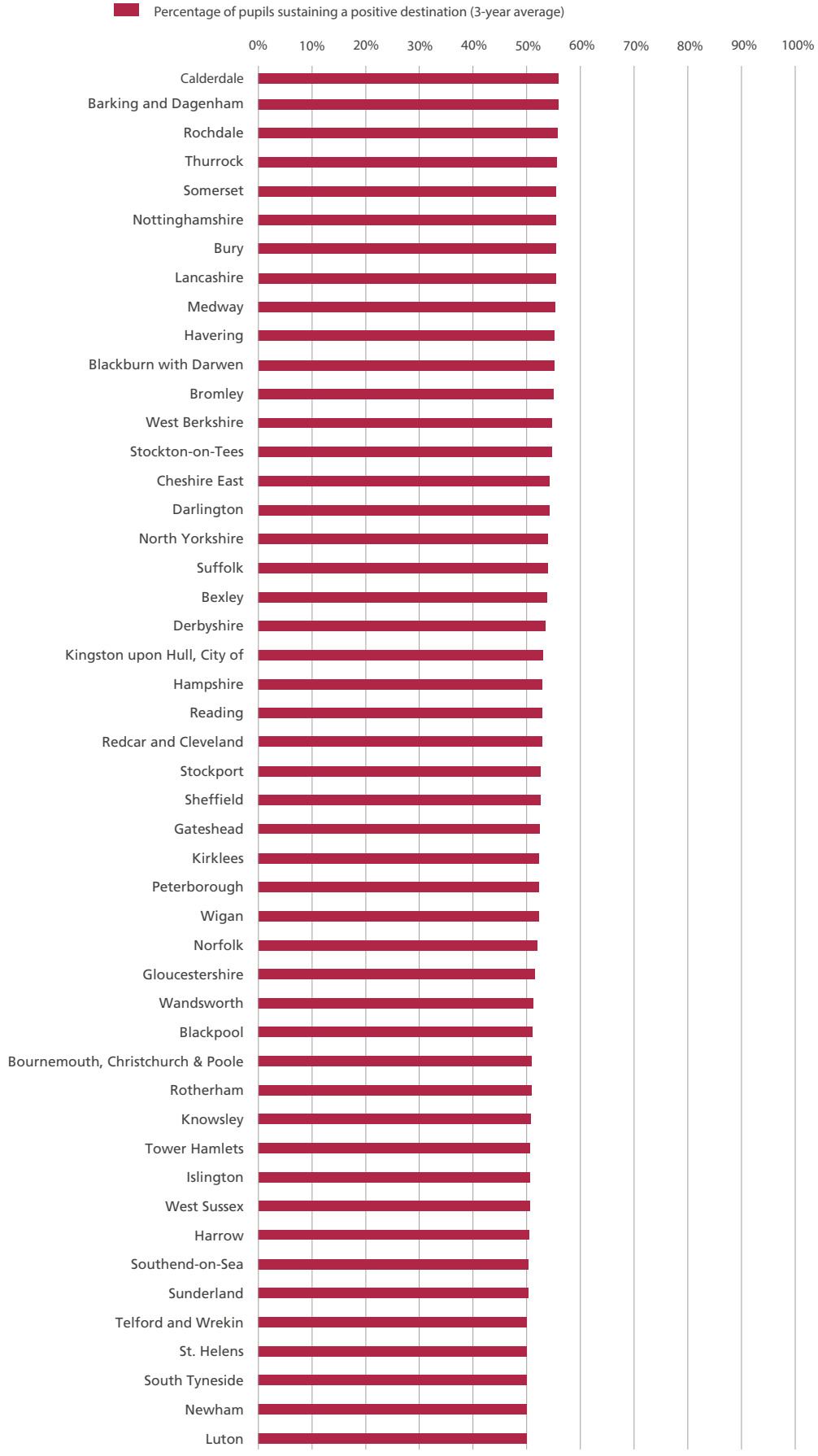
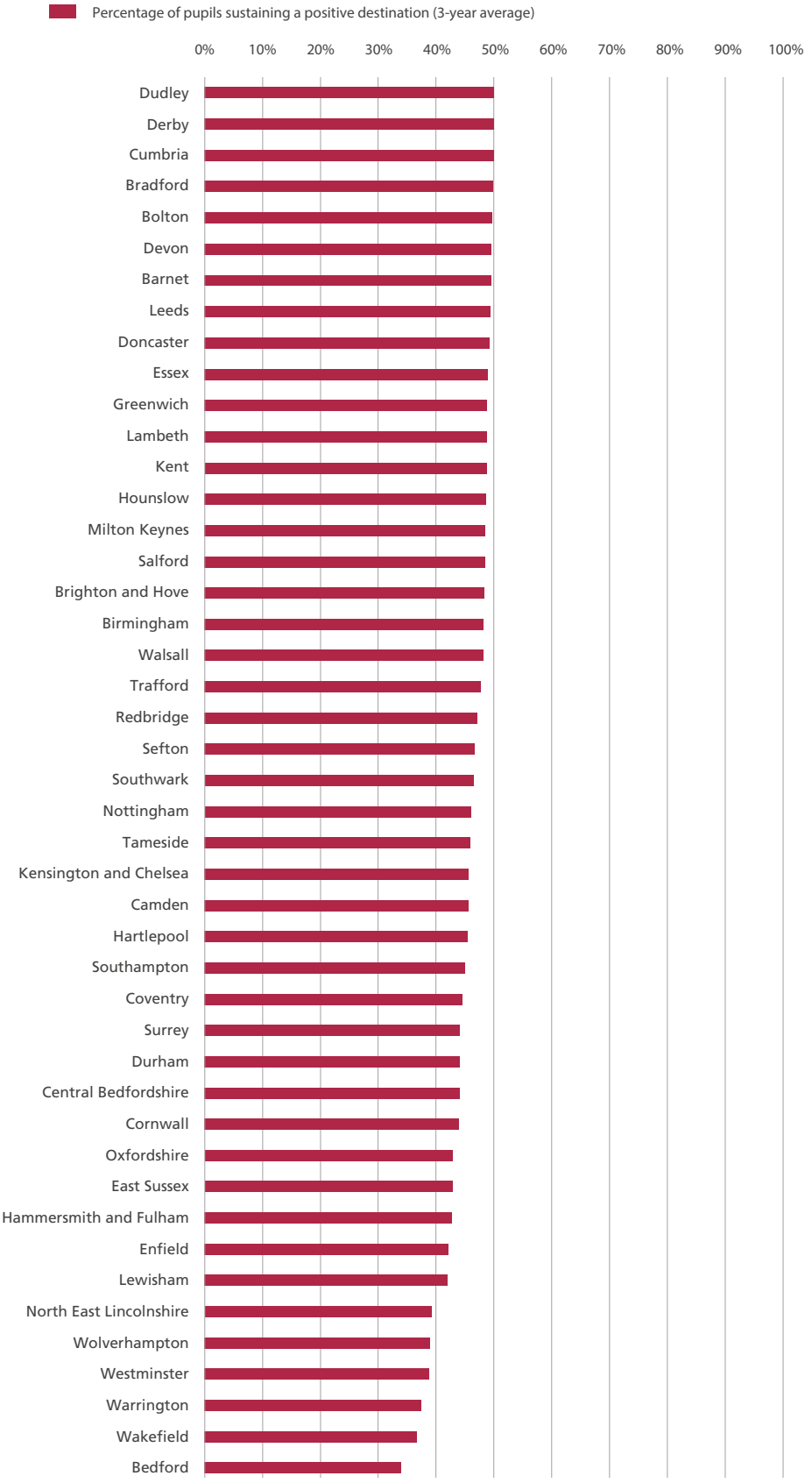


Figure 8 continued



Source: CSJ analysis of DfE figures.[39]

39 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: destinations of key stage 4 and 16 to 18 (KS5) students*

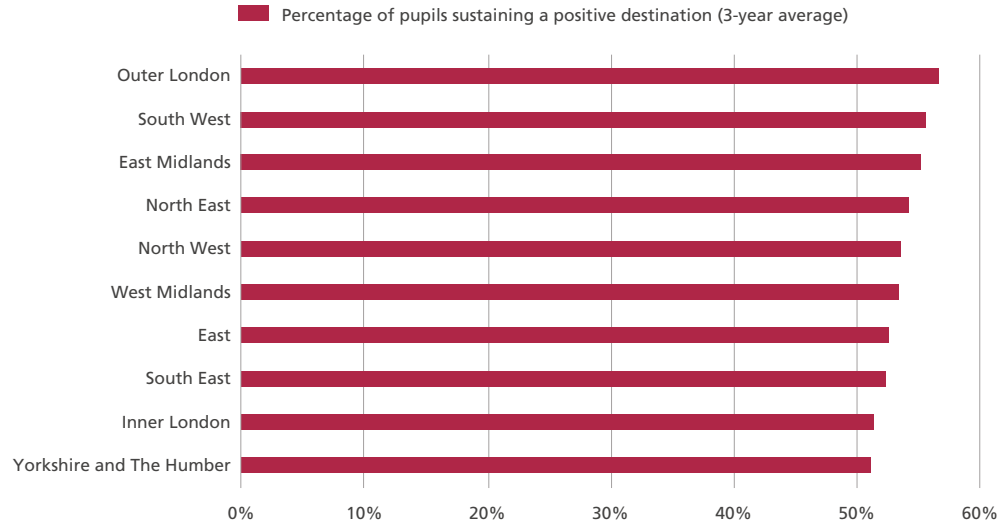
The rate varies wildly across the country but is consistently lower for pupils from AP than for their mainstream peers. In the worst performing LA, Bedford, only 34 per cent of pupils sustain a positive destination.

It should be noted that our analysis accounts only for the destinations of pupils single registered in state-maintained AP due to limitations on the available data.[40]

In 50 LAs, 50 per cent or fewer pupils sustain a positive destination.

There is no LA where this result holds true in mainstream. The *worst* LA for mainstream is Knowsley, where 86 per cent of pupils sustain a positive destination. Yet this beats the top-ranking LA for AP, South Gloucestershire, where only 78 per cent of pupils sustain a positive destination.[41]

Figure 9: Regions: Percentage of pupils sustaining a positive post-16 destination (state-maintained AP)



Source: CSJ analysis of DfE figures.[42]

Our regional analysis of pupil destinations tells a very different story to our regional analysis of GCSE results. While pupils in Outer London still have the best outcomes compared to other regions, there is not such a distinct north-south divide.

Over the last three years, 57 per cent of pupils who ended key stage 4 in state-maintained AP in Outer London sustain a positive destination, whereas, only a few miles away in Inner London, this figure is only 51 per cent.

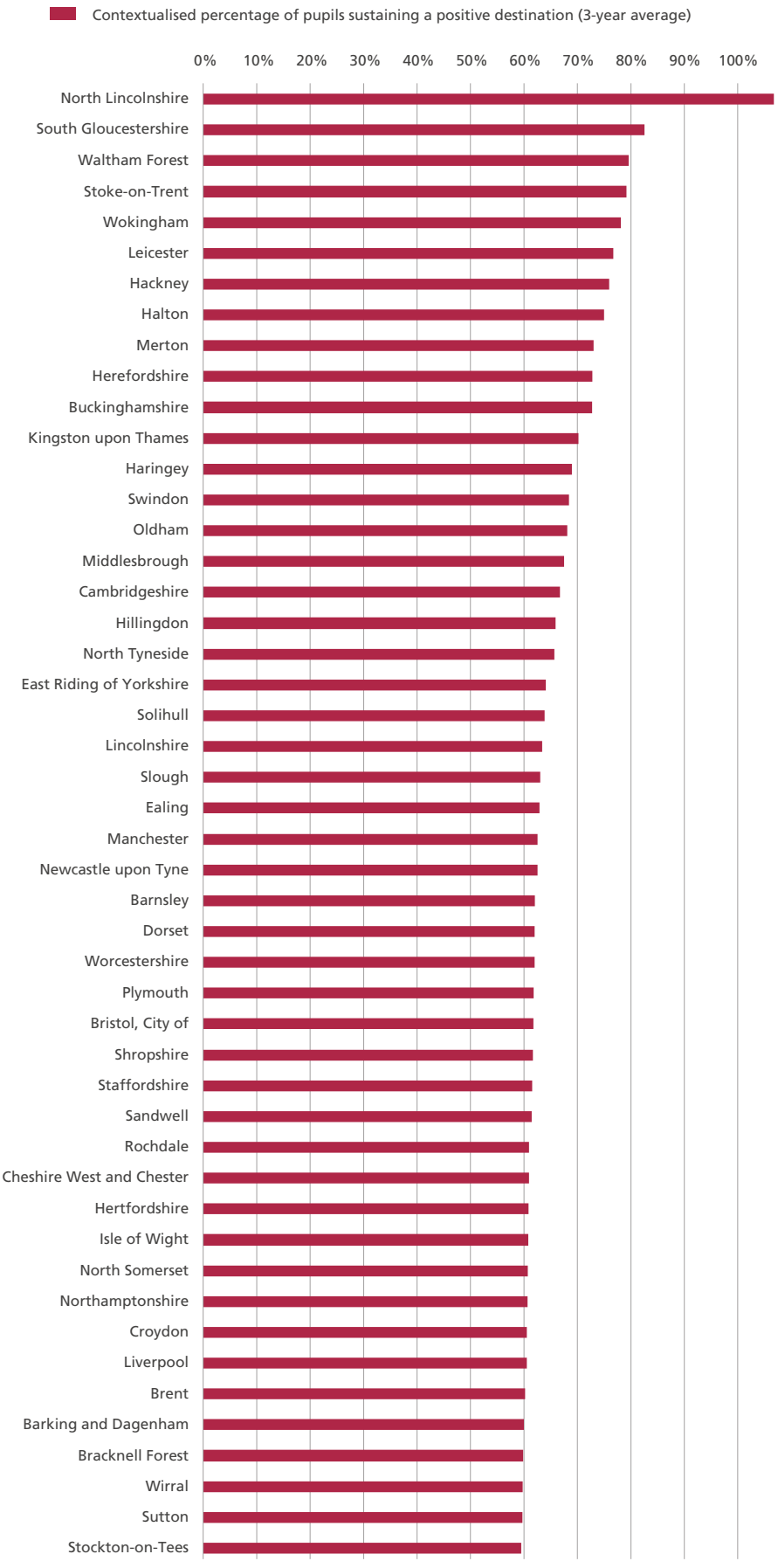
As with GCSEs, we were conscious that the chances of sustaining a positive destination may be related to where in the country a pupil lives. We have similarly contextualised the proportions of pupils sustaining a positive destination in state-maintained AP relative to mainstream schools. Figure 10 presents our results.

40 See the Data Limitations appendix for more detail

41 North Lincolnshire reports that 100 per cent pupils sustain a positive destination, but a maximum of one pupil is recorded at the end of key stage 4 so we have considered the sample size too small to be reliable.

42 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: destinations of key stage 4 and 16 to 18 (KS5) students*

Figure 10: Contextualised percentage of pupils sustaining a positive post-16 destination (state-maintained AP)



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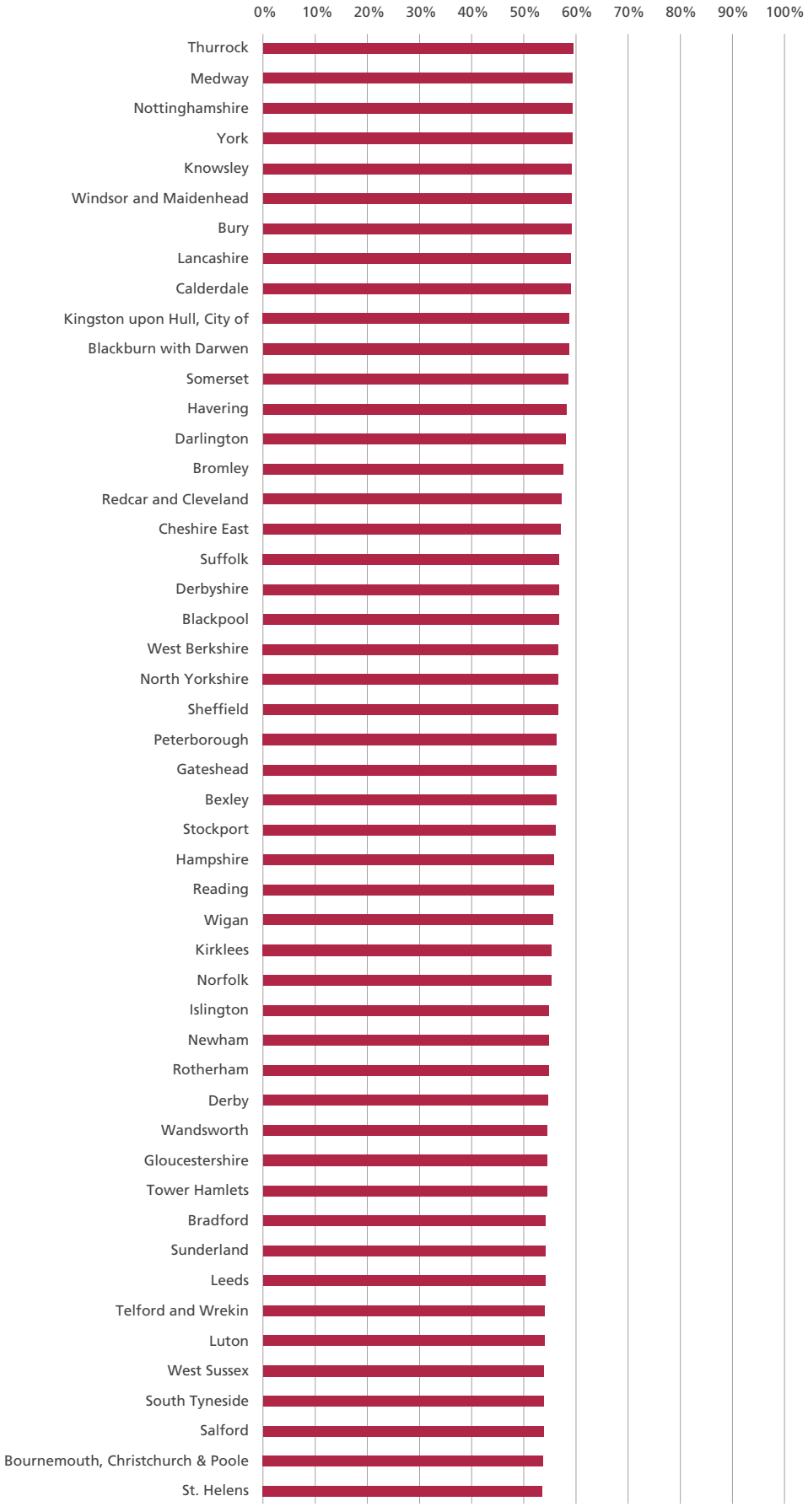

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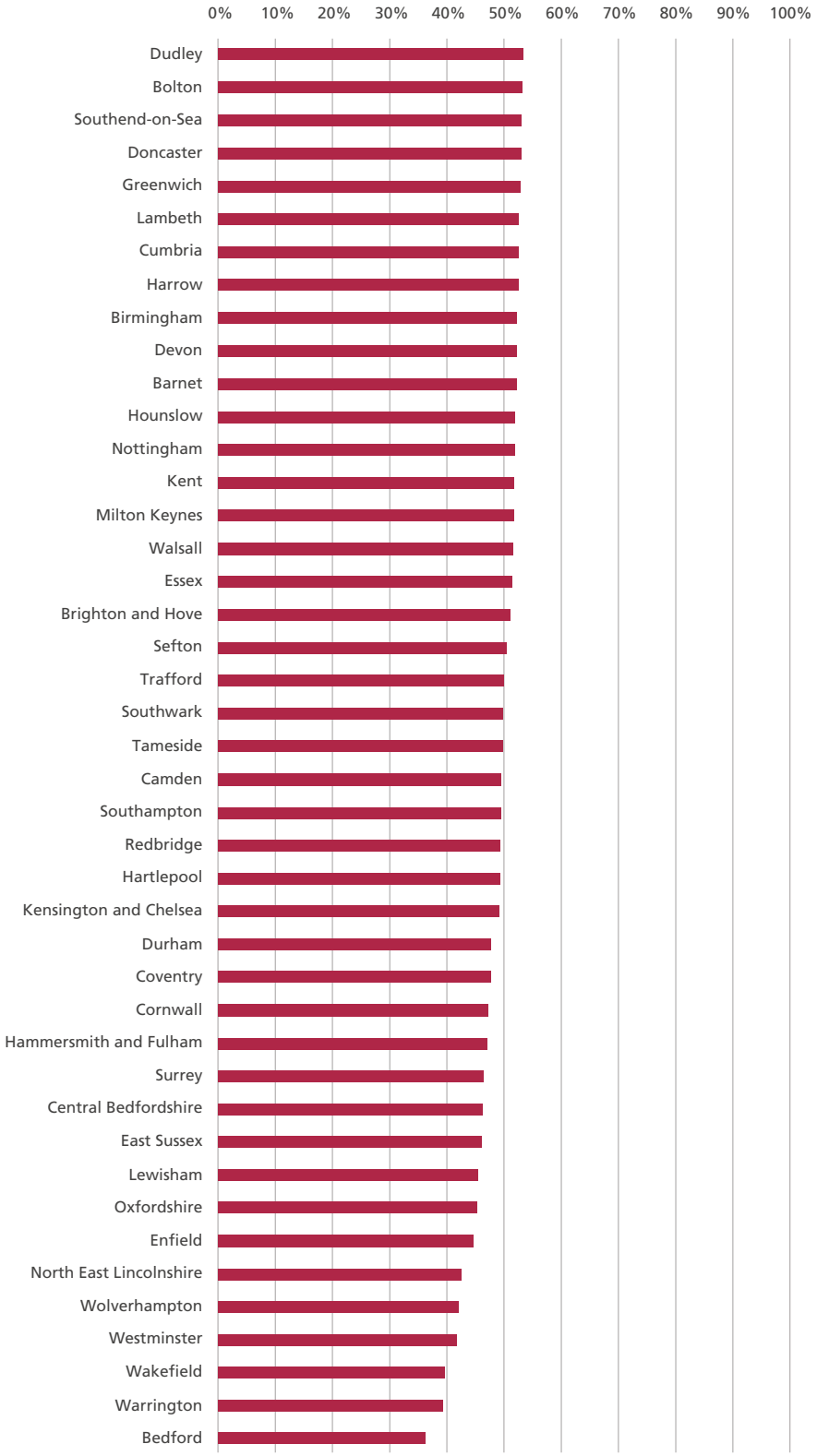
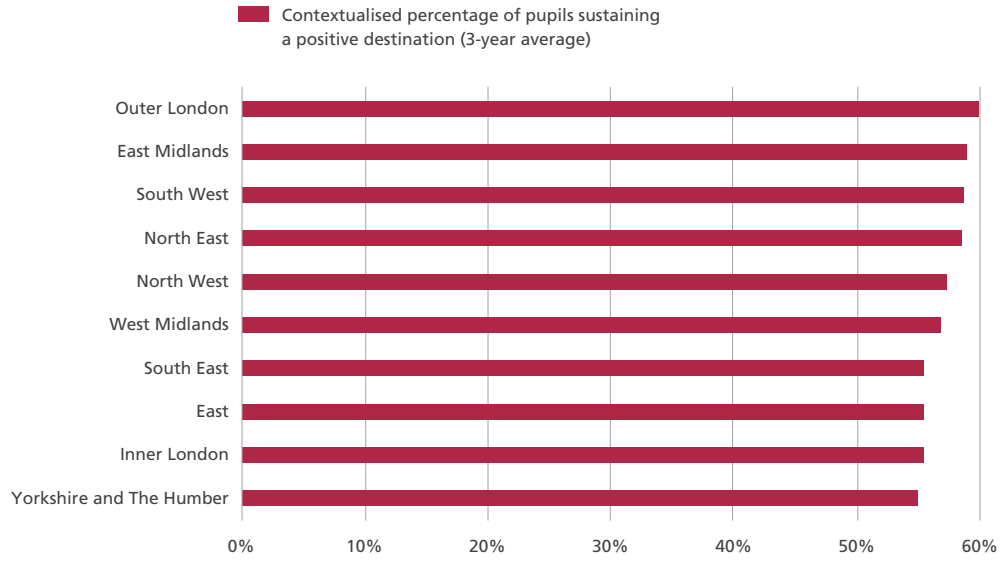


Source: CSJ analysis of DfE figures.[43]

43 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: destinations of key stage 4 and 16 to 18 (KS5) students.* For North Lincolnshire, the contextualised percentage of pupils sustaining a positive destination exceeds 100 per cent. This is because 100 per cent of pupils in AP at the end of KS4 sustained a positive destination, which is higher than the proportion of pupils who sustained a positive destination from mainstream. As noted above, this result should be treated with caution as the sample size for this result is too small to be reliable.

Again, contextualising the results does not substantially change the rankings. According to the contextualised results, East Midlands has better results relative to the South West for pupil destinations and the South East performs better than the East of England.

Figure 11: Regions: Contextualised percentage of pupils sustaining a positive post-16 destination (state-maintained AP)



Source: CSJ analysis of DfE figures.[44]

Attendance

Background

Attendance is key to safeguarding pupils and helping them to achieve the qualifications they need to progress to the next stage of education.[45] We know that pupils in AP are much more likely not to attend school. Indeed, low attendance is one of the factors cited by mainstream schools as identifying pupils at risk of exclusion.[46]

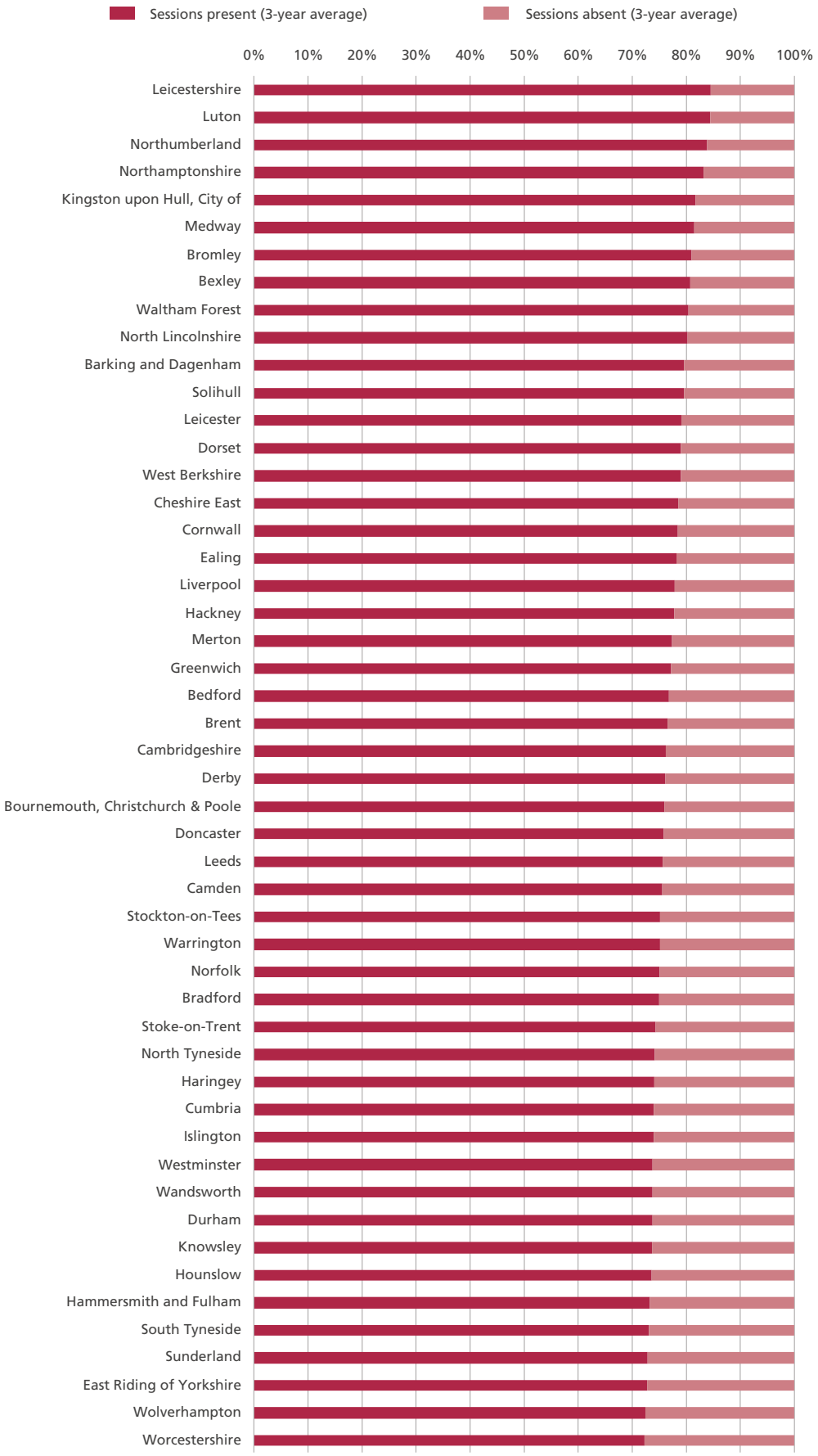
Once again, the only data available pertains exclusively to pupils in state-maintained AP. Moreover, the attendance figures relate only to pupils aged between 5 and 15 as this data is not collected for pupils in year 11.[47]

Findings

On average, nationally pupils are absent from state-maintained AP 33 per cent of the time, compared to 4 per cent in mainstream schools.[48]

44 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: destinations of key stage 4 and 16 to 18 (KS5) students*
45 Department for Education, 2016. *The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4: 2013/14 academic year*
46 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.53)
47 Department for Education, 2019. *Schools census 2018 to 2019*
48 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: pupil absence*

Figure 12: Percentage of sessions present vs. absent (state-maintained AP)



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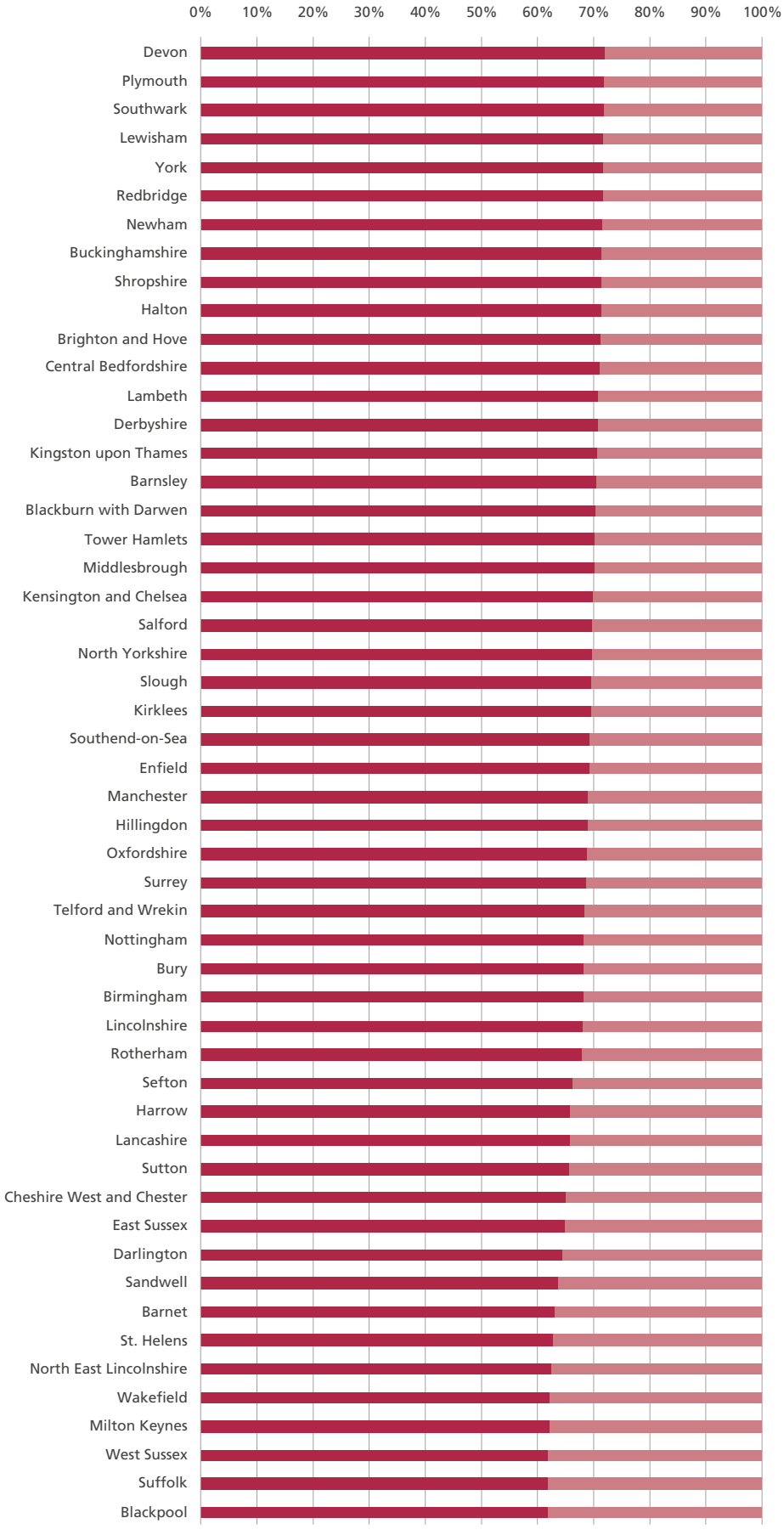

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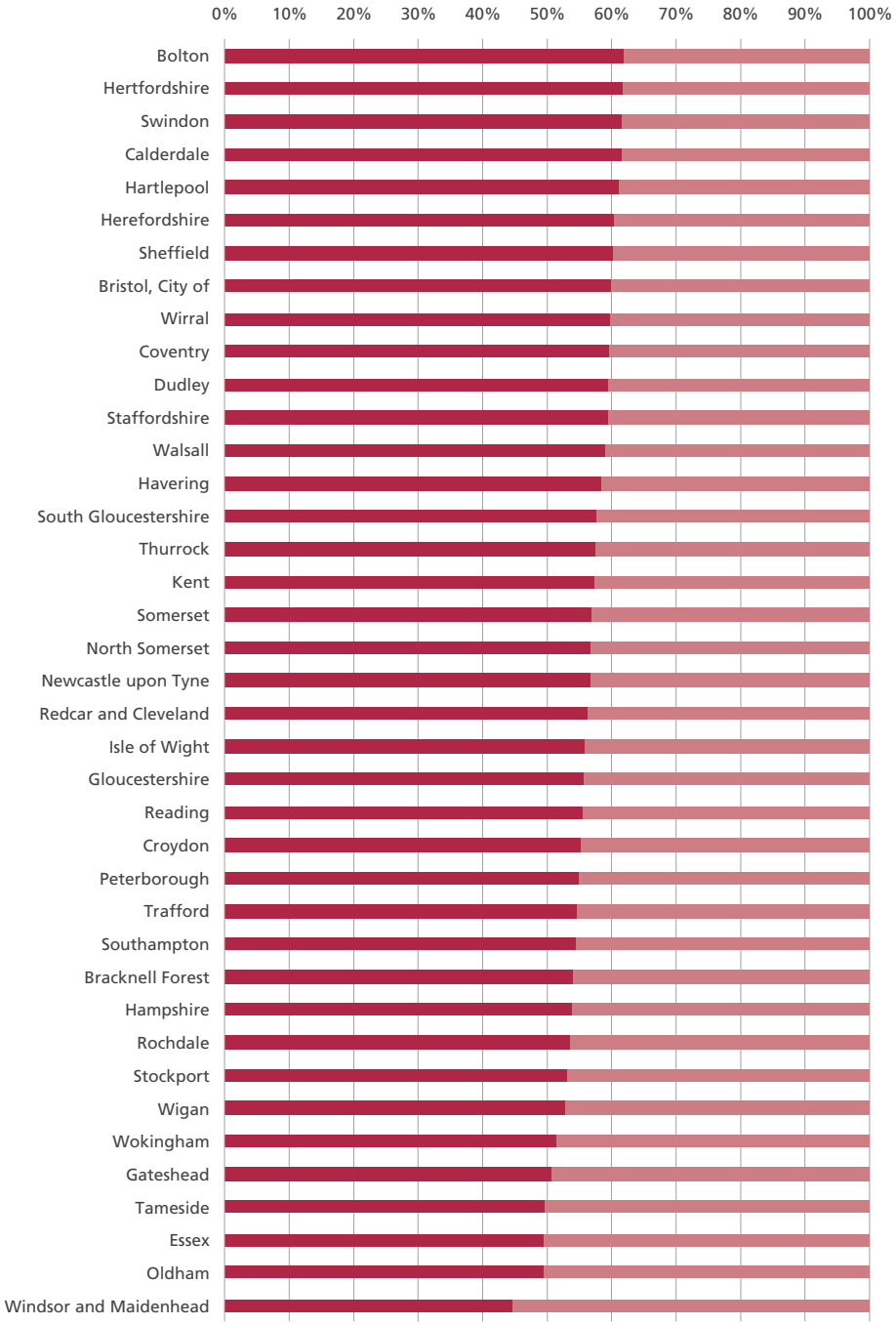


Source: CSJ analysis of DfE figures.[49]

In four LAs pupils are absent more often than they are present.[50] In a further 28 LAs, pupils are absent at least 40 per cent of the time; this equates roughly to pupils missing two days out of every five-day school week.

49 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: pupil absence*
50 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: pupil absence*

In the best performing LA, the attendance rate for pupils in state-maintained AP is 84 per cent.

Unlike the previous analyses, we have not contextualised the proportions of sessions present and absent to account for variations in mainstream attendance rates in each LA.

While some areas do suffer from poor transport links, we do not believe a similar argument can easily be made for contextualising attendance. If students in AP are going to succeed, it is vital that they attend the provision. If poor accessibility of AP is a problem in a particular LA, this needs to be highlighted and addressed by providing more satellite sites or AP schools and improving the transport links for students.

Qualified teachers

Background

In 2017, the Institute for Public Policy Research shone a light on the rise of unqualified teachers in AP.[51] Their report outlined how reforms that allowed pupil referral units (PRUs) to train their own teachers had led to a huge increase in the proportion of unqualified staff. It argued that the increasing number of unqualified teachers posed a huge workforce challenge for the AP sector.

This measure must be seen in context of the curriculum that AP schools are aiming to deliver. There may be occasions on which an industry specialist is a better choice than a qualified teacher for a certain qualification – although we do not believe this argument holds for core subjects.

The figures we have used are derived from responses to the School Workforce Census,[52] which is commissioned by the DfE and relates only to state-maintained schools, not independent AP schools or other providers.[53] In some cases there are no workforce statistics for an LA because either they did not have a state-maintained AP or all of their AP schools failed to submit data.[54]

One further element of workforce we would have liked to report on but were unable, is the number of AP schools with a qualified SENCO. This data is not published at national level.

Findings

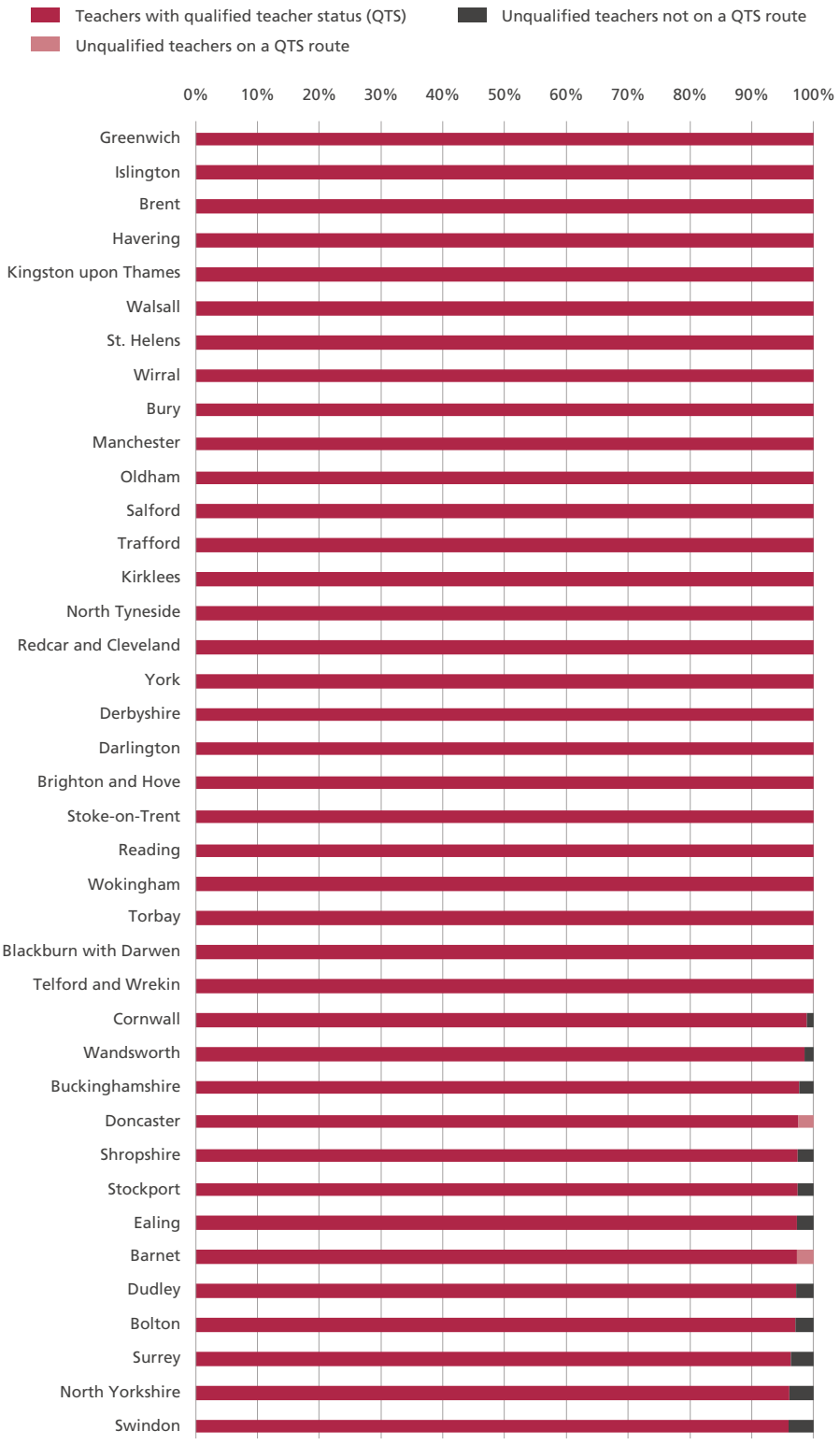
There are a total of 5,170 teachers in state-maintained AP, according to the latest workforce census.[55] Of these, 17 per cent are unqualified (this equates to just under 900 teachers). Of those who are unqualified, only 13 per cent are on a route to qualified teacher status (QTS).

51 IPPR, 2017. *Making the Difference*, Gill et al. (p.31)
52 The figures derived in this chapter should be treated with some caution. In the statistics released by the Department for Education it was noted that "There is some mis-reporting of the number of teachers with qualified teacher status for a small number of schools due to issues with the data collection."
53 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: school workforce*
54 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: school workforce*
55 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: school workforce*

The proportion of unqualified teachers in AP schools is particularly high. In mainstream schools, only 8 per cent of all teachers are unqualified. In special schools, the proportion of unqualified teachers is 13 per cent.[56]

Figure 13 shows the proportion of full-time equivalent qualified teachers working in AP, at LA level. The results are ranked by the highest proportion of qualified teachers.

Figure 13: Proportion of teachers by qualification status (state-maintained AP)



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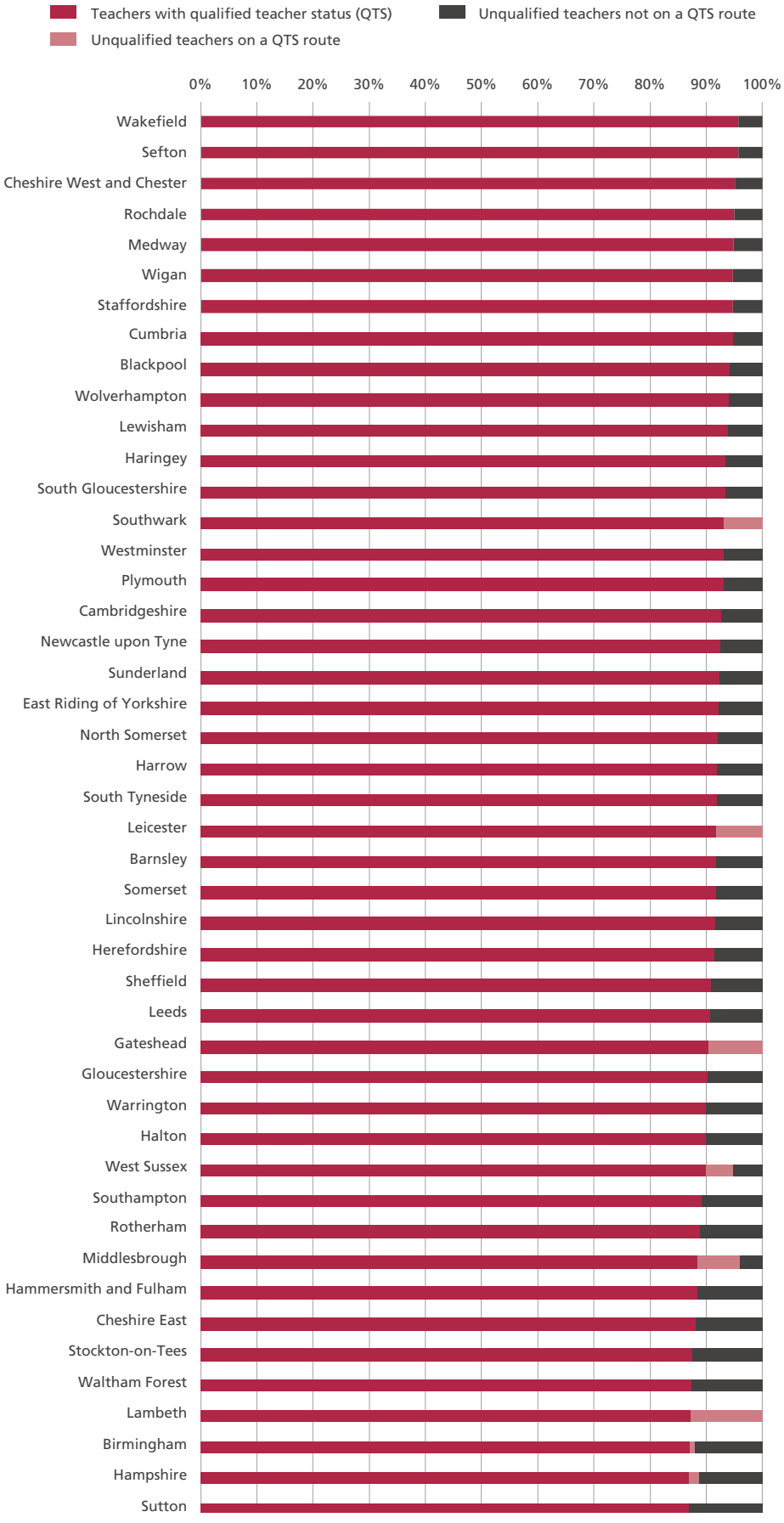

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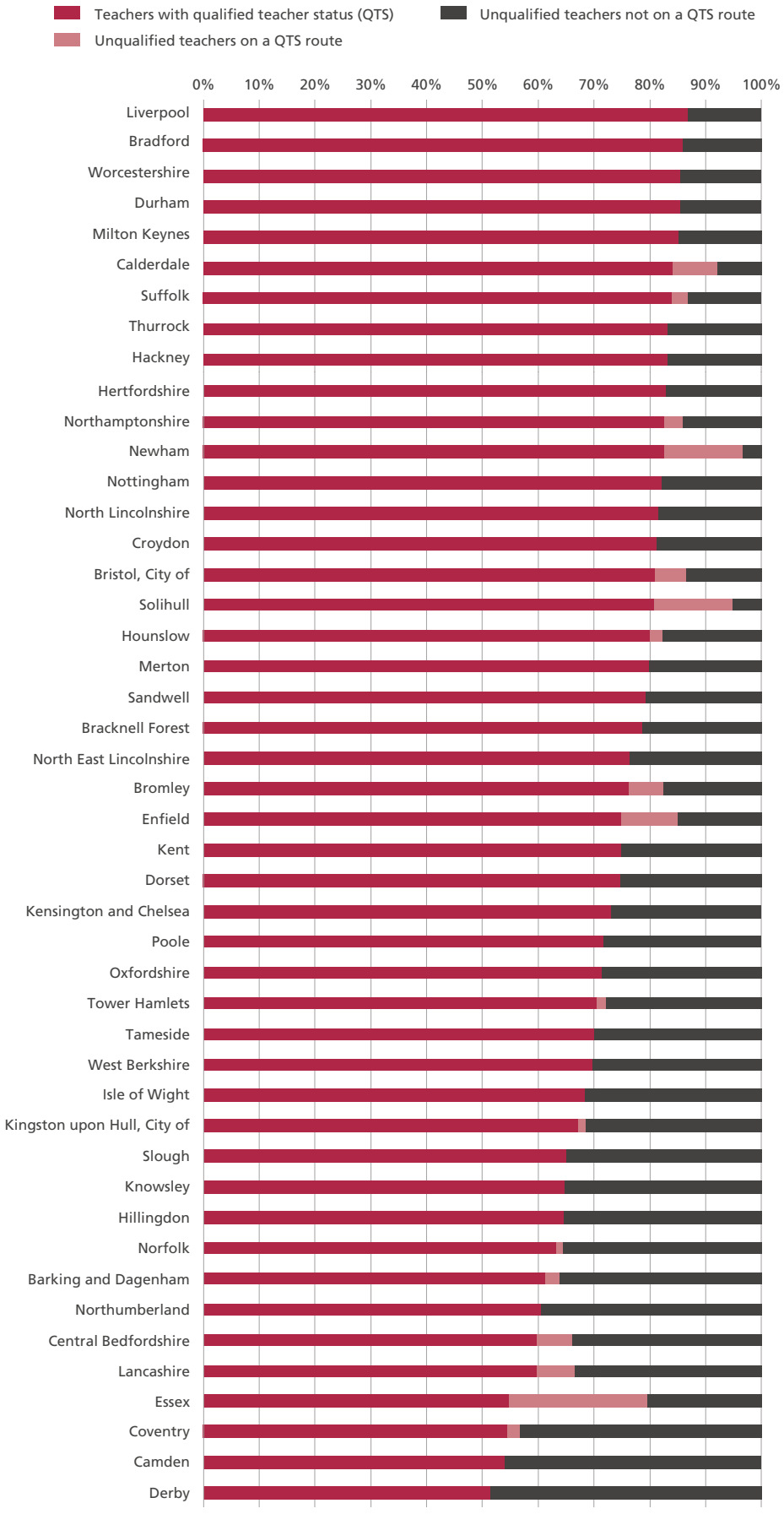
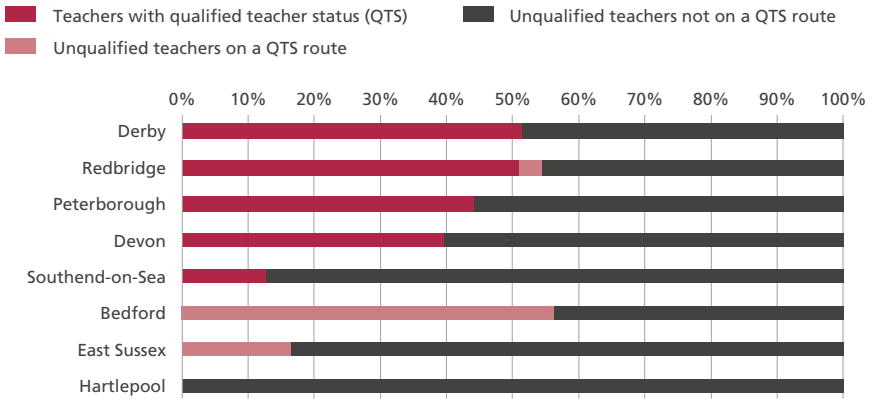


Figure 13 continued



Source: CSJ analysis of DfE school workforce data.[57]

In six LAs unqualified teachers outnumber qualified teachers. In three LAs, Bedford, East Sussex and Hartlepool, DfE workforce data records no teachers as qualified. In Bedford and East Sussex, some teachers are on a QTS route: 56 per cent and 17 per cent respectively. In Hartlepool, however, according to the latest workforce survey, no teachers in state-maintained AP are qualified and none is on a QTS route.

The use of unqualified teachers is by no means universal. In 26 LAs, all teachers in state-maintained AP are qualified.

57 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: school workforce*

chapter two

Table of quality metrics by local authority

No set of measures can provide the full story about the quality of AP. Even when combining outcomes data with the more holistic picture of quality afforded by inspection ratings, any ranked table will necessarily be a crude measure of overall quality. And in the case of AP, given the paucity of data in some areas of the country and our concerns about data accuracy, extreme caution should be taken in interpreting the findings.

Nevertheless, we believe the data is useful as a springboard for further investigation.

Using all the measures explored throughout this paper (inspectorate ratings, GCSE results, destinations, attendance rates and the proportion of qualified teachers) we have created a table of AP quality metrics for LAs across England. We have given each metric equal weight and scaled the variables relative to their maximum and minimum value. We have then ranked the table from the LAs who perform the poorest according to a composite of these metrics, to those who appear to perform the best.

We have included a confidence rating, which calculates the proportion of pupils in AP that we have been able to capture in our analysis, for each LA.

The reason for ranking the table, rather than displaying in alphabetical order, is to highlight those areas in the country where pupils in AP appear to have a poor chance of receiving a quality education.

Findings

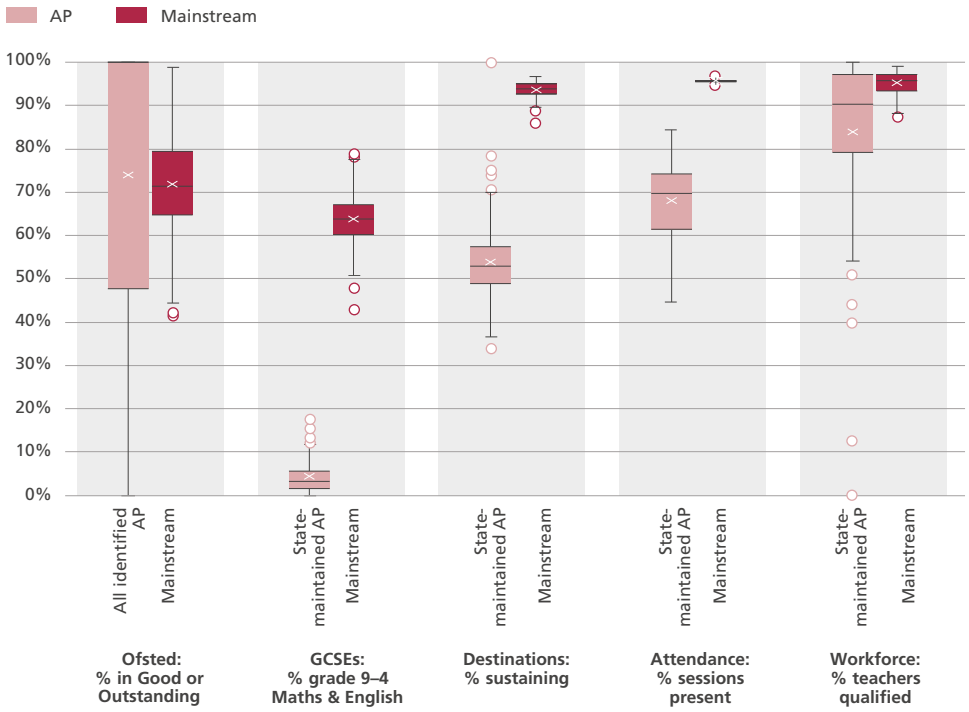
Figure 14 shows the distribution of the key metrics we have used in this report and, for comparison, the corresponding metrics for mainstream schools.

For most measures, the boxplot for the AP metric (shaded lighter) is lower on the chart, corresponding to lower outcomes for pupils in AP relative to mainstream schools.

Often, the metrics for AP versus mainstream exhibit greater variability. This can be seen on the boxplot in the cases where the interquartile range (the shaded box) is longer relative to the corresponding interquartile range for the metric in mainstream. This highlights that there is a wider range of outcomes in AP, compared to mainstream. Whereas in mainstream,

the boxplots tend to be short and high up on the graph, showing a concentration of high-achieving LAs, the AP boxplots are often more spread out and come with more outliers (both positive and negative – illustrated by the dots).[58]

Figure 14: Distribution: Key metrics



58 A boxplot is used to illustrate the distribution of a dataset. To read the boxplot, it is helpful to understand that the shaded box represents the interquartile range. The interquartile range gives us a view of which values most observations for a datapoint take, stripping out the outliers. This box effectively tells us the values most of our data is spread between. The line inside the box represents the median value of the dataset and the cross indicates the mean. The whiskers indicate variability outside the upper and lower quartiles, and any point outside those lines or whiskers is considered an outlier.

Table 1

Local Education Authority	Ofsted	GCSEs		Destinations		Attendance	Workforce	Confidence rating
Ranked from overall worst performing to best performing, according to the available data	% of pupils in Good or Outstanding (of all identified)	State-maintained AP: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	Mainstream: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	Mainstream: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of sessions present (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of teachers qualified (2018)	Confidence rating (proportion of pupils captured)
Tameside	3%	0%	63%	46%	92%	50%	70%	74%
Peterborough	0%	2%	55%	52%	93%	55%	44%	82%
Southend-on-Sea	7%	2%	70%	50%	95%	69%	13%	72%
Coventry	7%	2%	60%	45%	93%	60%	54%	64%
Essex	39%	3%	64%	49%	95%	49%	55%	51%
Gateshead	0%	5%	64%	52%	93%	51%	90%	52%
Hartlepool	100%	0%	58%	45%	92%	61%	0%	39%
Newcastle upon Tyne	0%	1%	60%	57%	92%	57%	93%	70%
Walsall	10%	0%	56%	48%	93%	59%	100%	67%
Calderdale	0%	2%	66%	56%	95%	62%	84%	54%
Sheffield	0%	2%	60%	53%	93%	60%	91%	70%
Devon	0%	9%	65%	50%	95%	72%	40%	54%
East Sussex	100%	4%	62%	43%	93%	65%	0%	44%
Bedford	100%	2%	61%	34%	94%	77%	0%	30%
Havering	0%	6%	67%	55%	95%	58%	100%	30%
Redbridge	49%	3%	73%	47%	96%	72%	51%	47%
Windsor and Maidenhead	47%	8%	73%	56%	95%	45%	N/A	48%
Nottingham	21%	2%	52%	46%	89%	68%	82%	69%
Derbyshire	0%	1%	64%	53%	94%	71%	100%	65%
Gloucestershire	36%	4%	68%	52%	95%	56%	90%	54%
East Riding of Yorkshire	0%	1%	68%	61%	96%	73%	92%	37%
Nottinghamshire	0%	N/A	66%	56%	94%	N/A	N/A	8%
Stockport	55%	1%	67%	53%	94%	53%	97%	54%
South Tyneside	0%	4%	61%	50%	93%	73%	92%	70%
Cheshire East	1%	2%	69%	54%	95%	79%	88%	35%
Enfield	50%	3%	62%	42%	94%	69%	75%	41%
Birmingham	32%	3%	60%	48%	92%	68%	87%	60%
Bristol, City of	33%	6%	60%	57%	92%	60%	81%	48%
Suffolk	59%	1%	62%	54%	95%	62%	84%	61%

Local Education Authority	Ofsted	GCSEs		Destinations		Attendance	Workforce	Confidence rating
Ranked from overall worst performing to best performing, according to the available data	% of pupils in Good or Outstanding (of all identified)	State-maintained AP: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	Mainstream: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	Mainstream: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of sessions present (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of teachers qualified (2018)	Confidence rating (proportion of pupils captured)
Telford and Wrekin	40%	0%	60%	50%	93%	68%	100%	67%
Torbay	0%	0%	65%	N/A	95%	N/A	100%	41%
Oxfordshire	84%	0%	67%	43%	95%	69%	71%	43%
Bury	20%	3%	62%	56%	94%	68%	100%	65%
North East Lincolnshire	100%	0%	59%	39%	92%	63%	76%	62%
Sutton	5%	12%	78%	58%	97%	66%	87%	57%
Kent	76%	5%	63%	49%	94%	57%	75%	19%
Lincolnshire	25%	3%	63%	60%	95%	68%	92%	57%
Southampton	100%	0%	57%	45%	91%	54%	89%	58%
Wakefield	83%	1%	63%	37%	93%	62%	96%	82%
Warrington	0%	13%	67%	38%	95%	75%	90%	18%
Reading	83%	0%	63%	53%	95%	56%	100%	67%
Leeds	30%	3%	61%	49%	91%	76%	91%	48%
Buckinghamshire	15%	2%	74%	70%	96%	71%	98%	34%
Lancashire	86%	3%	65%	55%	94%	66%	60%	56%
Wirral	N/A	0%	66%	57%	95%	60%	100%	42%
Hampshire	85%	5%	67%	53%	95%	54%	87%	27%
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	42%	3%	53%	53%	90%	82%	67%	83%
Doncaster	42%	2%	59%	49%	93%	76%	98%	43%
Isle of Wight	100%	3%	54%	57%	94%	56%	68%	63%
Durham	72%	1%	61%	44%	92%	74%	85%	72%
Norfolk	78%	2%	62%	52%	94%	75%	63%	56%
Central Bedfordshire	100%	3%	65%	44%	95%	71%	60%	73%
Dudley	100%	0%	58%	50%	94%	60%	97%	9%
Rochdale	100%	1%	58%	56%	92%	54%	95%	77%
Bradford	63%	1%	55%	50%	92%	75%	86%	72%
Derby	100%	1%	57%	50%	92%	76%	52%	51%
Trafford	100%	4%	78%	48%	96%	55%	100%	43%
Staffordshire	76%	3%	61%	59%	96%	59%	95%	48%
Hertfordshire	82%	4%	72%	58%	96%	62%	83%	57%

Local Education Authority	Ofsted	GCSEs		Destinations		Attendance	Workforce	Confidence rating
Ranked from overall worst performing to best performing, according to the available data	% of pupils in Good or Outstanding (of all identified)	State-maintained AP: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	Mainstream: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	Mainstream: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of sessions present (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of teachers qualified (2018)	Confidence rating (proportion of pupils captured)
Cambridgeshire	46%	1%	67%	63%	95%	76%	93%	39%
Redcar and Cleveland	100%	2%	61%	53%	92%	56%	100%	54%
Thurrock	100%	4%	61%	56%	94%	57%	83%	61%
Kensington and Chelsea	100%	3%	75%	46%	93%	70%	73%	70%
Sandwell	100%	1%	51%	57%	93%	64%	79%	54%
Oldham	100%	3%	58%	63%	92%	49%	100%	58%
Wigan	100%	6%	63%	52%	94%	53%	95%	67%
Bexley	40%	6%	68%	54%	96%	81%	N/A	43%
Hounslow	100%	0%	68%	49%	94%	74%	80%	45%
Croydon	99%	7%	62%	57%	94%	55%	81%	52%
Worcestershire	71%	3%	65%	59%	95%	72%	85%	49%
Lambeth	100%	1%	61%	49%	93%	71%	87%	36%
Westminster	100%	2%	73%	39%	93%	74%	93%	72%
Cheshire West and Chester	100%	0%	64%	57%	93%	65%	95%	39%
North Somerset	100%	5%	66%	58%	95%	57%	92%	52%
Tower Hamlets	100%	4%	64%	51%	93%	70%	71%	82%
Somerset	100%	5%	63%	56%	95%	57%	92%	41%
Wolverhampton	100%	2%	58%	39%	93%	72%	94%	34%
Harrow	100%	3%	69%	51%	96%	66%	92%	41%
Hillingdon	100%	3%	66%	62%	94%	69%	65%	40%
Surrey	100%	3%	72%	44%	95%	69%	96%	13%
West Sussex	100%	5%	65%	51%	94%	62%	90%	41%
Camden	100%	7%	66%	46%	92%	76%	54%	68%
Blackpool	100%	3%	48%	51%	90%	62%	94%	79%
Knowsley	100%	2%	43%	51%	86%	74%	65%	60%
Rotherham	100%	3%	60%	51%	93%	68%	89%	57%
Sunderland	100%	0%	58%	50%	93%	73%	92%	59%
Lewisham	97%	3%	59%	42%	93%	72%	94%	67%
Milton Keynes	100%	7%	61%	49%	94%	62%	85%	62%

Local Education Authority	Ofsted	GCSEs		Destinations		Attendance	Workforce	Confidence rating
Ranked from overall worst performing to best performing, according to the available data	% of pupils in Good or Outstanding (of all identified)	State-maintained AP: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	Mainstream: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	Mainstream: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of sessions present (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of teachers qualified (2018)	Confidence rating (proportion of pupils captured)
Herefordshire	100%	2%	64%	69%	95%	60%	91%	76%
Bolton	100%	6%	61%	50%	94%	62%	97%	65%
Southwark	100%	3%	69%	46%	93%	72%	93%	44%
Stockton-on-Tees	100%	0%	65%	55%	92%	75%	88%	52%
Sefton	100%	5%	61%	47%	93%	66%	96%	53%
St. Helens	100%	5%	60%	50%	93%	63%	100%	74%
Slough	100%	7%	73%	61%	96%	70%	65%	74%
Newham	100%	4%	65%	50%	91%	72%	83%	40%
Kirklees	69%	7%	63%	52%	95%	70%	100%	31%
Brighton and Hove	100%	2%	67%	48%	95%	71%	100%	68%
Bracknell Forest	100%	12%	65%	57%	96%	54%	79%	46%
Darlington	100%	4%	63%	54%	93%	65%	100%	38%
Cumbria	100%	2%	65%	50%	95%	74%	95%	41%
Plymouth	100%	1%	59%	59%	96%	72%	93%	83%
Islington	100%	1%	64%	51%	92%	74%	100%	53%
Hammersmith and Fulham	100%	6%	70%	43%	91%	73%	88%	77%
Liverpool	95%	2%	57%	56%	93%	78%	87%	34%
Dorset	86%	5%	65%	59%	95%	79%	75%	46%
West Berkshire	100%	5%	68%	55%	97%	79%	70%	63%
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	100%	7%	70%	51%	95%	76%	72%	41%
Barnsley	100%	3%	60%	58%	93%	71%	92%	61%
Middlesbrough	100%	3%	57%	61%	90%	70%	88%	49%
Salford	100%	4%	54%	49%	90%	70%	100%	61%
Blackburn with Darwen	100%	4%	65%	55%	94%	70%	100%	73%
North Yorkshire	100%	6%	69%	54%	95%	70%	96%	47%
Cornwall	100%	3%	62%	44%	93%	78%	99%	47%
Wokingham	100%	9%	75%	75%	96%	52%	100%	30%
Halton	100%	1%	58%	70%	94%	71%	90%	59%
Northamptonshire	86%	4%	61%	57%	93%	83%	83%	62%

Local Education Authority	Ofsted	GCSEs		Destinations		Attendance	Workforce	Confidence rating
Ranked from overall worst performing to best performing, according to the available data	% of pupils in Good or Outstanding (of all identified)	State-maintained AP: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	Mainstream: % achieving grade 9–4 maths & English (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	Mainstream: % sustaining a positive destination (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of sessions present (3-year average)	State-maintained AP: % of teachers qualified (2018)	Confidence rating (proportion of pupils captured)
Hackney	79%	6%	68%	71%	94%	78%	83%	46%
Wandsworth	100%	7%	71%	51%	94%	74%	99%	51%
Luton	100%	4%	56%	50%	93%	84%		23%
Merton	100%	4%	69%	69%	94%	77%	80%	45%
Barking and Dagenham	100%	10%	61%	56%	93%	80%	61%	87%
Brent	67%	11%	67%	57%	94%	77%	100%	23%
Northumberland	100%	N/A	62%	N/A	93%	84%	61%	5%
Bromley	100%	9%	71%	55%	96%	81%	76%	53%
Barnet	100%	16%	76%	50%	95%	63%	97%	52%
York	100%	8%	69%	57%	96%	72%	100%	96%
Haringey	100%	5%	63%	63%	92%	74%	94%	96%
Swindon	100%	10%	61%	65%	96%	62%	96%	73%
Manchester	87%	9%	55%	56%	90%	69%	100%	74%
Kingston upon Thames	100%	8%	79%	67%	95%	71%	100%	29%
Medway	69%	11%	63%	55%	93%	82%	95%	56%
North Lincolnshire	84%	0%	64%	100%	94%	80%	81%	18%
North Tyneside	100%	8%	66%	62%	94%	74%	100%	85%
Solihull	59%	18%	66%	60%	94%	80%	81%	42%
Leicestershire	100%	N/A	66%	N/A	95%	84%	N/A	3%
Greenwich	94%	13%	61%	49%	92%	77%	100%	66%
Shropshire	100%	15%	64%	58%	94%	71%	98%	60%
South Gloucestershire	100%	16%	61%	78%	95%	58%	93%	47%
Ealing	100%	13%	68%	60%	95%	78%	97%	28%
Stoke-on-Trent	77%	16%	54%	74%	93%	74%	100%	22%
Leicester	100%	13%	57%	70%	91%	79%	92%	55%
Waltham Forest	100%	18%	63%	75%	95%	80%	87%	49%

Please note, we have excluded LAs from our analysis where we were unable to identify any state-maintained AP and independent AP. This includes: Bath and North East Somerset, City of London, Isles of Scilly, Portsmouth, Richmond upon Thames, Rutland, Warwickshire and Wiltshire.

chapter three

Recommendations for system improvement

We believe that every child educated in AP should achieve better outcomes than the same child would have achieved in a mainstream school.

The following proposals are designed specifically to facilitate that goal.

Quality AP accessible to all schools

1.1 Publish templates of good local systems of AP and **establish an AP system improvement fund** to replicate successful models where AP schools are supporting mainstream schools with behaviour, and mainstream schools are supporting AP schools to provide an aspirational curriculum.

1.2 Fund existing quality APs to expand into satellite sites and open **an academisation window for PRUs** to guarantee a sufficient range, quantity and distribution of good AP schools.

1.3 Review where in the country SEMH provision is needed to address AP capacity issues posed by a lack of specialist provision.

1.4 Provide **capital improvements** for those operating in unacceptably poor facilities.

Develop and share expertise

2.1 Invest in an **AP workforce programme** and **prioritise AP schools in the new teaching school hubs**.

2.2 Scale up successful interventions from the **AP innovation fund** and fund a new round of evaluated programmes on themes such as curriculum and in-school AP bases.

2.3 Make AP schools an integral part of the current **SEND review**.

2.4 Make AP schools an integral part of the **mental health trailblazers**.

Data quality on a par with mainstream schools

3.1 Improve data collection and tracking for pupils in AP.

3.2 Gather more data on **unregistered providers**.

3.3 Develop national **benchmarks tailored to AP schools**.

National fair funding for AP and SEND

4.1 Develop a **national fair funding formula for AP and SEND** with equitable treatment for all school types.

4.2 Develop a suite of **templates for AP service-level agreements** based on existing good practice.

Discussion of recommendations

It would be overly simplistic to point to the cold spot areas we have identified and claim we have a definitive view of where improvements are needed. As we have repeatedly said, the data is too unreliable to be able to do this with certainty.

Three things are, however, incontestable:

1. **Overall outcomes for children in AP need to improve;**
2. **The relative low scores in some areas merit further investigation; and**
3. **Better data collection is essential.**

Drawing on our data analysis, existing research and our own fieldwork and surveys, we are proposing a vision for system improvement that builds on models of provision that already exist.

Themes one and two **(Quality AP accessible to all schools, Develop and share expertise)** are focused on general system improvement and in some cases, we recommend piloting interventions in cold spot areas (Tameside, Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea, Newcastle and Sheffield).[59]

59 When we refer to "low-performing" LAs, we are referring to those in the bottom 10 per cent for overall scores, for which we have data on over half of children. We have done a deeper dive into these areas by reading historic reports and talking to people working in the local AP systems, to see what the support needs might be for system improvement.

When we mention talking to "people working in the low-performing areas", we have kept our language deliberately vague to protect the anonymity of those who kindly took the time to speak to us.

Areas that combine a low ranking on the table with a high confidence rating, we have labelled "AP cold spots". This applies to Tameside, Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea, Newcastle and Sheffield, which all score in the bottom 10 per cent for all metrics combined and have a confidence rating over 70 per cent.

It should be noted that several of the cold spot areas we have identified already have improvement action plans in place. When we recommend that "cold spot areas" should take priority for some recommendations, we would expect the government to use their most recent data combined with intelligence on the ground to select areas that need urgent intervention.

Themes three and four **(Data quality on a par with mainstream schools, National fair funding for AP and SEND)** are aimed at improving data accuracy and ironing out unnecessary inconsistencies between different parts of the country.

Quality AP accessible to all schools

Children in AP are some of our most vulnerable. The education available to them should be of equal if not better quality than for children in mainstream schools. But this is not currently the case.

In 13 LAs not a single child in AP passed their English and maths GCSE in the past three years and in three, not a single qualified teacher is recorded. Six months after leaving AP, half of children were NEET.[60]

This is not good enough. Children in AP often have complex home circumstances which have led to them not being able to cope with a mainstream school environment.[61] These pupils need access to a high-quality education combined with expert social-emotional support.

We are proposing a vision for AP system improvement that integrates more quality AP schools into the school landscape. This does not mean advocating for an increase in the number of children excluded from school but rather a healthy ecosystem of education provision in each local area, where schools of different types are supporting one another and sharing expertise.

Recommendation 1

1.1 **Publish templates of good local systems of AP** and **establish an AP system improvement fund** to replicate successful models where AP schools are supporting mainstream schools with behaviour, and mainstream schools are supporting AP schools to provide an aspirational curriculum.

1.2 **Fund existing quality APs to expand into satellite sites** and open **an academisation window for PRUs** to guarantee a sufficient range, quantity and distribution of good AP schools.

1.3 **Review where in the country SEMH provision is needed** to address AP capacity issues posed by a lack of specialist provision.

1.4 Provide **capital improvements** for those operating in unacceptably poor facilities.

60 Calculated over a three-year period

61 After controlling for other factors, the Timpson review found that pupils with a Children in Need Plan are four times more likely and those with a Child Protection plan are 3.5 times more likely to be permanently excluded than their peers. (Timpson, 2019. Timpson review of school exclusion.)

1.1 Publish templates of good local systems of AP and establish an AP system improvement fund to replicate successful models where AP schools are supporting mainstream schools with behaviour, and mainstream schools are supporting AP schools to provide an aspirational curriculum.

In recent years the government has commissioned several pieces of research identifying characteristics of an effective local AP system.[62] One key finding that appears consistently, is the importance of clearly outlined roles and responsibilities combined with excellent working relationships between the various stakeholders.[63] These include mainstream, special and AP schools, FE and sixth-form colleges, parents, pupils, LAs, SEND specialists, early help and social care, and local health services.

AP schools have also highlighted the need for more joint working with mainstream schools, with AP providers offering schools "more specialist support with behaviour management and pastoral care" and mainstream schools enabling AP schools to offer a "wider range of subjects".[64]

Several of the local authorities we spoke to are engaged in reviews of their exclusions and AP and were actively seeking models of good practice, but there is no clear place to which to direct them. While research has consistently found that there is no one model that would best fit all LAs, it has identified elements of good practice.[65]

To support AP system improvement, the government publish a range of detailed templates for good local systems at primary and secondary level, which specifically lay out the governance and commissioning arrangements, quality assurance, funding agreements and roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. These should be based on existing research evidence and case studies of effective local systems, with enough variety of examples that any local authority could find one to suit their particular geography and circumstances. They should be presented in accessible format, similar to the Education Endowment Foundation behaviour guidance, for example.[66]

We recommend that the government establish a dedicated AP system improvement fund, which could be piloted initially in the known AP cold spots and other areas of identified need. The intention should be to replicate models of effective local AP systems, where – in close collaboration with the government's behaviour hubs – expert AP schools are supporting mainstream schools to address the root causes of disruptive behaviour, and mainstream schools are supporting AP schools to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all children.

62 In summary, this includes: Sufficient quantity and range of quality AP, with equitable access throughout the local area and a well-developed quality assurance framework; Strategic planning to foster inclusion and manage demand, clearly outlined roles and responsibilities, and a collective understanding of the financial realities at play, and; Collectively agreed systems and performance measures, with AP providers collaborating in responding to local needs, and flexible use of funding with benchmarking to ensure value for money. Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis.* ISOS Partnership.

63 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis*. ISOS Partnership. (p.23–24)

64 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.156)

65 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis*. ISOS Partnership. (p.6.)

66 Education Endowment Foundation, 2019. *Improving behaviour in schools*

For any AP school or LA wishing to transition from a reactive model (focused primarily on receiving and educating excluded children) to a proactive model (structured around early intervention and outreach work with mainstream schools), financial support should be made available, along with a team of expert advisors and AP specialist school resource management advisors, to develop a needs-based local model.

1.2 Fund existing quality APs to expand into satellite sites and open an academisation window for PRUs to guarantee a sufficient range, quantity and distribution of good AP schools.

Compared to special or mainstream schools, a much higher proportion of pupils in AP are educated in schools rated RI or Inadequate and a much lower proportion are educated in schools rated Outstanding.[67] This is perhaps not surprising, given the lack of choice of AP schools in many areas.[68]

A government-commissioned literature review of AP research found that referral to AP should be on the basis of "a comprehensive assessment of the pupil's needs and aspirations, with input from the pupil and his/her parents or carers, to ensure that the selected provision is a good match".[69]

We believe that parental involvement is equally important in finding the right AP school or placement for a child, as it is in mainstream schooling. Achieving this requires not only that parents and carers are routinely involved in decisions, but that sufficient variety and quantity of AP schools exists, with equitable access throughout the local area.

However, even with a greater degree of parental involvement, the quality of AP offered to a pupil can be greatly restricted by the range, quantity and distribution of AP in each area. When local authorities are limited, with too few APs to meet demand, both travel distance and suitability of provision become inherent limitations.

In many places there is a lack of appropriate provision within a reasonable travel distance and/or accessible via public transport. Some LAs, especially in rural areas, pay for taxis for children to attend AP schools but the costs can be exorbitant. We analysed LAs' financial data and found that the total cost for AP travel in Cornwall in 2018 was over £2.5 million.[70] Other areas with high levels of spending were Surrey, at over £1 million and Hampshire, at almost £800,000.[71]

Our conversations with people working in the low-performing areas revealed pupils having to travel on up to three buses and for up to two hours to reach their AP school. A recent review of AP in one of our cold spots, Sheffield,[72] highlighted this as a problem and cited by way of example a primary school pupil required to make a round trip of 24 miles twice a week.

67 See Figure 1 on page 12
68 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision*. IFF Research Ltd. (p.74)
69 Department for Education, 2017. *Alternative Provision: Effective Practice and Post 16 Transition*. Sue Tate Consulting Ltd. (p.6)
70 This averages out at approximately £6,733 per pupil in AP
71 Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2019. *Section 251: 2018 to 2019*
72 Learn Sheffield, 2019. *Alternative Provision in Sheffield: A Research Study.* (Internal report shared by the local authority.)

This not only negatively impacts on attendance – which is already a challenge in AP – but we were told by AP heads that this also creates safeguarding risks whereby children are vulnerable to gang grooming while waiting at bus stops.

Travel distance is not the only problem – suitability of provision is another. Local authorities place children in AP for a variety of reasons that may not be compatible with co-location.[73] Some AP schools physically separate children into different categories, such as "internalising" and "externalising" behaviours, often with a partition in the school building. We visited one AP academy trust where pupils are assessed and triaged before being allocated to one of three separate sites according to need.

There is also a link between capacity and children being educated full-time in unregistered provision. For example, the recent review of AP in Sheffield noted that the "excess of pupils" on roll at the Sheffield Inclusion Centre (219 pupils for 170 available places) made it "highly reliant" on independent providers. "In addition to significant costs," they remarked, "this adds complexity to mapping the curriculum, monitoring progress and securing attendance".[74] In Coventry, inspectors found that some students were being placed with external providers not due to the quality or suitability of courses but "because of capacity issues at the centres". As a result, they reported, "some pupils do not engage in these courses sufficiently well and do not sustain their placements".[75]

To address these problems, existing quality providers should be funded to expand into satellite sites or set up free schools in areas where capacity or variety is lacking, or geographical constraints make travel problematic. To control costs and encourage partnership working of the kind we have described above, satellite sites could be located on the site of an existing mainstream school.

Any new provision should be planned in consultation with the LA, to prevent new providers from duplicating existing provision and undermining the local strategic plan for AP.[76]

In tandem, an academisation funding window should be opened to enable PRUs to convert, giving them the flexibility to make decisions on expansion or absorbing struggling AP schools in the region. When combined with the fair funding model we are proposing, and greater emphasis on parental voice, this could help inject some element of competition into the AP system in areas where this is lacking.

1.3 Review where in the country SEMH provision is needed to address AP capacity issues posed by a lack of specialist provision.

Some APs report being forced to take students for whom the provision offered by the AP is not appropriate due to a lack of places in special schools.[77] While one quarter of LAs run an integrated AP and SEMH service, over half keep the provision separate.[78]

73 Research into the AP market has identified four "categories of need" for students in AP. See the Introduction for a description of these.
74 Learn Sheffield, 2019. *Alternative Provision in Sheffield: A Research Study.* (Internal report shared by the local authority)
75 Coventry Extended Learning Centre. Ofsted inspection report, June 2018. Accessible at: https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/22/134269
76 The risk of undermining local alternative provision plans was highlighted in a recent report. (Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis.* ISOS Partnership.)
77 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.78)
78 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis.* ISOS Partnership. (p.7)

Over half of LAs place children in AP due to a lack of specialist provision[79] and LAs that lack specialist SEMH provision at secondary level are more likely to experience additional demand pressures on AP.[80]

The government should consider the optimal level of specialist SEMH schools and review where in the country more SEMH provision might be needed. It is worth noting that eight of the 34 special free schools due to open in 2020–21 will specialise in SEMH needs.[81]

The CSJ will be doing more work on this question in future.

1.4 Provide capital improvements for those operating in unacceptably poor facilities.

It was striking as we travelled the country visiting PRUs and AP academies, to hear proud, aspirational staff and headteachers repeat the refrain that they want to be considered as a "school" – not a "unit", or a "dumping ground".

Headteachers and MAT CEOs chose to signal this in a variety of ways: by providing school uniforms, printing glossy prospectuses, or changing their school name to remove the word "unit" from the title. Many aimed to keep their school day as similar as possible to the routines in mainstream schools, to aid future reintegration.

One thing that is harder for headteachers to control, however, is the premises in which they are located. In our online facilities survey of state-maintained AP schools, four in five respondents described their facilities as "not on par with local mainstream schools". One described "inherited premises that we have made the best of but gives the message that our pupils are less important because they are attending sub-standard premises".

Heads in low-performing areas spoke to us about **teaching in buildings that are unfit for purpose, such as disused factories or pubs**, which are consequently viewed by students as a place to "come and be disruptive".

The government should **open a capital funding round** for APs to bid for funds. In the first instance, this should focus on AP estates whose location and quality signal to parents, students and teachers that they are not held in the same esteem as their peers in mainstream schools.

79 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis.* ISOS Partnership. (p.5)
80 Approximately two thirds of places in specialist SEMH are commissioned for secondary-age pupils, compared to one third in primary.
81 Schools Week, 2019. *Social and emotional needs focus for new SEND schools*

Develop and share expertise

It is important to have the right systems in place. But AP also needs highly trained people.

A recent government-commissioned literature review on AP found that workforce recruitment, selection, training, management and promotion was key to quality and that staff, particularly in full-time AP, needed specialist training in curriculum development and adaptation, special needs and counselling.[82]

The following recommendations are designed to support that goal.

Recommendation 2

2.1 Invest in an **AP workforce programme** and **prioritise AP schools in the new teaching school hubs**.

2.2 Scale up successful interventions from the **AP innovation fund** and fund a new round of evaluated programmes on themes such as curriculum and in-school AP bases.

2.3 Make AP schools an integral part of the current **SEND review**.

2.4 Make AP schools an integral part of the **mental health trailblazers**.

2.1 Invest in an AP workforce programme and prioritise AP schools in the new teaching school hubs.

A far higher proportion of teachers in AP are unqualified than in mainstream: 17 per cent compared to 8 per cent (and 13 per cent in special schools).

Workforce data records that three in five state-maintained AP schools employ staff without QTS in teaching roles.[83] When questioned about the reasons for this, some headteachers stated that they consider overall suitability for the job a more important criterion than QTS, or that specialisms in particular areas are more desirable.[84] AP heads we interviewed echoed this finding.

Conversely, some AP heads in low-performing areas told us of the struggle of running schools without qualified teachers. When teachers are unable to challenge pupils academically, we were told, the curriculum can shift to focus on "containment". They highlighted the knock-on negative effect on pupil attendance due to a lack of engagement with learning, and the consequent impact on academic outcomes.

In Tameside, the worst-performing area according to our metrics, the latest inspection report highlighted a number of shortcomings including: inconsistent teaching standards, a curriculum that fails to spark pupils' interest or aspirations, high staff turnover, frequent staff absence and high levels of temporary staffing.

82 Prince's Trust, 2014. *What is the alternative? Effective support for young people disengaged from mainstream education.* Thomson and Pennacchia

83 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: School Workforce*

84 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.116)

AP leaders cite recruitment of staff with the right blend of skills and knowledge as being more of a challenge than retention of staff once they have joined.[85]

We surveyed mainstream teachers to find out what would motivate them to work in AP and found that classroom teachers are more motivated by salary and specialist training, whereas more senior staff care more about having supportive peers.[86]

Based on these findings, we believe the government should follow through on their commitment to invest in an AP workforce programme, as promised in their response to the Timpson review of school exclusions.[87] The programme should include specialist training within a supportive peer network, in order to encourage experienced, qualified teachers to work in AP schools – and could be piloted in cold spot areas.

Given that AP leaders often recruit staff for their ability to handle difficult situations and to connect with students,[88] there is a strong argument for upskilling existing AP staff in teaching and learning, alongside a drive to recruit more qualified teachers to AP.

The workforce programme should train existing AP staff in curriculum development and adaptation, teaching and learning and special educational needs. An element of this programme should be to promote greater exchange and closer working between mainstream and AP schools.

The government has not yet finalised its proposed plans to replace teaching schools with teaching school hubs. To facilitate the spread of good practice, AP schools should form an integral part of these networks.

2.2 Scale up successful interventions from the AP innovation fund and fund a new round of evaluated programmes, on themes such as curriculum and in-school AP bases.

In 2018, the government launched a £4 million AP Innovation Fund to support nine pilot programmes aimed at delivering better outcomes for children in AP.[89]

The funded themes of post-16 transition, reintegration and parental engagement address a number of the problems we have seen in our analysis, specifically the trouble with sustaining destinations, and system capacity issues that could be solved by more effective approaches to reintegration.

Most PRUs and AP schools end at the end of year 11, at which point students tend to progress to FE colleges, sixth forms or apprenticeships, without the smaller class sizes and additional support they were receiving in AP.[90] This can cause challenges for sustaining positive destinations. AP headteachers report that students often have a number of false starts before settling in a positive destination.[91]

85 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.12)
86 Findings from TeacherTapp survey of over 6000 teachers
87 Department for Education, 2019. *The Timpson Review of School Exclusion: Government Response.* (p.6)
88 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.119)
89 Department for Education, 2018. *AP Innovation Fund*
90 The majority (86 per cent) of children in AP do not have an EHCP, which would qualify them for additional support post-16
91 Department for Education, 2017. *Alternative Provision: Effective Practice and Post 16 Transition*. Sue Tate Consulting Ltd.

Sustaining a destination longer-term is also a challenge for many. Although about half are in a positive destination after six months, government-commissioned research found that "many APs reported that the figure for positive transitions tended to drop off when pupils were tracked at the 12-month point after leaving the AP."[92]

Relationships with trusted support workers that continue beyond the placement in AP can help young people to make positive transitions post-16 where their engagement can be fragile.[93] Our conversations with AP staff at the schools we visited revealed a deep-rooted commitment to their pupils and a belief that they were best placed to support this transition, having worked hard to build strong relationships with the young people in their care.

The problem of capacity was raised by AP heads in several low-performing areas, who mentioned being over-capacity due to either high permanent exclusion rates or high numbers of students being directed into an AP placement but becoming "stuck" and never returning to their mainstream school.

Given the low attainment for children in AP in these areas, there is a strong argument for supporting programmes that boost the rates of successful reintegration into mainstream schools.

While AP schools in all areas are keen to reintegrate pupils, finding enough mainstream schools that are able and willing to do so is a key barrier.[94] School leaders in the low-performing areas added that AP schools need to be sufficiently well-staffed to enable a staff member to be off-site supporting the reintegration process.

Based on the evaluation report that is due in 2020, the government should commit to scaling up successful programmes**,** with a particular focus on areas of greatest need.

While the evaluation is being conducted, we recommend that the government fund a transition year to prevent skilled staff and programmatic memory from being lost, thus allowing successful programmes to scale up rapidly and effectively once they have been identified.

In addition, we recommend that the government fund a second Innovation Fund round for other vital aspects of AP where research evidence is lacking.

An obvious theme would be curriculum design and adaptation, as there is very little literature detailing the effectiveness of different approaches in AP.[95] This sentiment was echoed in our conversations with AP schools around the country, as well as in Ofsted reports from low-performing areas, such as Tameside, where it was judged that the curriculum "does not spark their interest or aspirations enough to make them want to learn"[96] and Coventry, where it was deemed not "well matched to pupils' interests and needs".[97]

92 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.152)
93 Department for Education, 2017. *Alternative Provision: Effective Practice and Post 16 Transition*. Sue Tate Consulting Ltd. (p.26)
94 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.12)
95 Department for Education, 2018. Investigative research into alternative provision. IFF Research Ltd. (p.34)
96 Tameside Pupil Referral Service. Ofsted inspection report, June 2018. Accessible at: https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2785973
97 Coventry Extended Learning Centre. Ofsted inspection report, June 2018. Accessible at: https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/22/134269

Another clear need is for trials on the effective use of in-school AP bases in areas where good AP schools are lacking or are geographically dispersed. Over the course of our visits we heard many schools and MATs considering setting up such provision but unable to find examples of good practice. One of our cold spot areas, Sheffield, is increasing the use of in-school AP bases due to concerns about the quality and curriculum coherence offered by other providers in their area.[98] In London, the Evening Standard has launched a campaign to fund mainstream schools to set up on-site inclusion units to the tune of £150,000 each.[99] At present, however, with very little research into what effective practice looks like, there is no guarantee that these children will receive better education and support than they might be able to access through a good AP school.

2.3 Make AP schools an integral part of the current SEND review.

A wider debate needs to take place about the overlap between SEMH specialist provision and AP schools.

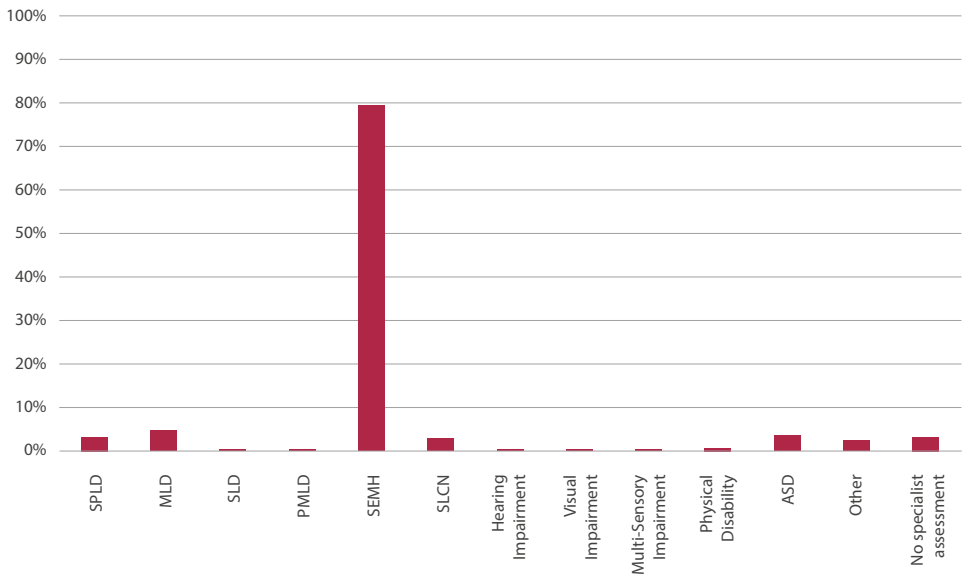
Pupils in AP schools are almost six times as likely to have SEN than children in mainstream schools, with 81 per cent on the SEND register, compared to 14 per cent in mainstream.[100,101]

The type of SEND for pupils in AP is particularly noteworthy, with AP schools being the only type of school to have one primary SEND dominate by a significant majority.

Figures 15, 16 and 17 below illustrate the primary SEND (SEN support and education, health and care plan (EHCP) combined) for children in different school types. Of the 81 per cent of children in AP with a recorded SEND, the largest category of primary need is SEMH at 79 per cent.

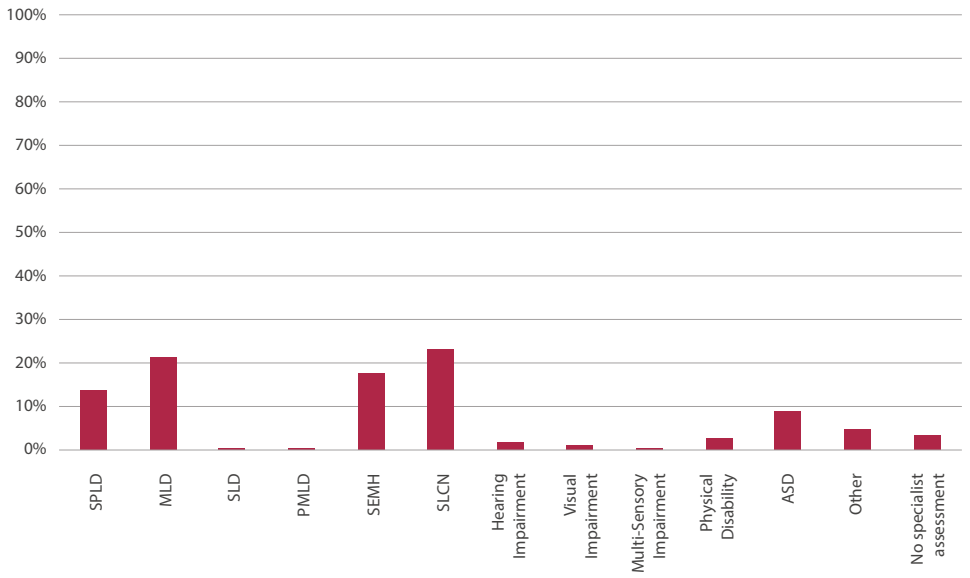
98 Learn Sheffield, 2019. *Alternative Provision in Sheffield: A Research Study, 2019.* (Internal report shared by the local authority)
99 Evening Standard, 2020. £150,000 per school over three years: How to apply for our fund seeking to radically cut exclusions
100 68 per cent receiving SEN support and 13 per cent with an EHCP, compared to 12 per cent and 2 per cent in mainstream
101 Department for Education, 2019. Statistics: Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Figure 15: Primary SEN: State-maintained AP schools



Source: CSJ analysis of Department for Education data[102]

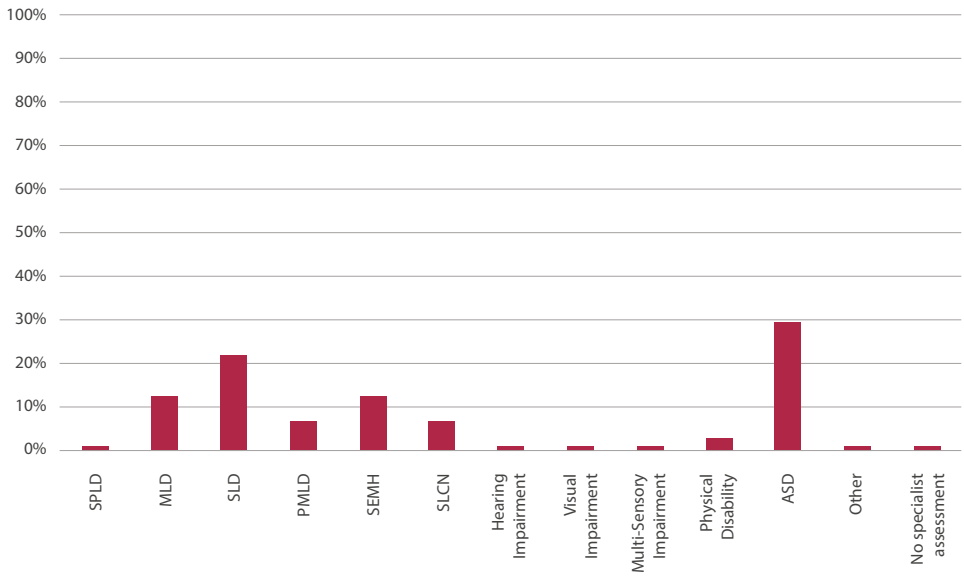
Figure 16: Primary SEN: Mainstream schools



Source: CSJ analysis of Department for Education data[103]

102 Department for Education, 2019. *Special educational needs in England: January 2019*
103 Ibid

Figure 17: Figure 17: Primary SEN: Special schools



Source: CSJ analysis of Department for Education data[104]

We were regularly told on our visits, however, that many children in AP have undiagnosed underlying speech, language and communication (SLC) needs.

ISOS Partnership researchers also reported that a "strong theme" they heard during their fieldwork was of "pupils who had SEN but whose needs had not been identified in mainstream school or who had been given the label of 'SEMH' when further assessment revealed that pupil's behaviour was the result of underlying and unmet communication and interaction or learning needs."[105]

This observation is supported by a body of research linking language and learning with behavioural problems in school-age children. A recent meta-analysis of 22 studies summarised the evidence thus: "Although causal or directional mechanisms of these relations have yet to be established, descriptive evidence supports a strong association between linguistic and behavioural competence. That is, children who exhibit problem behaviour tend to have low language proficiency, and children with low language proficiency tend to exhibit problem behaviour."[106]

If this is the case for children in AP in England, however, the data is not being recorded and reported. We requested DfE data on secondary SEN for all children in AP and found that of those with SEMH as a primary need, only 2 per cent had a recorded secondary SLC need (only one in ten had any recorded secondary need).[107]

104 Ibid
105 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis.* ISOS Partnership. (p.51)
106 Hollo, Wehby and Oliver, 2014. *Unidentified Language Deficits in Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Meta-Analysis. Exceptional Children.* (p.3)
107 FOI to Department for Education

AP schools are often required to function as centres of expert SEND assessment and referral yet they lack the specialist staff to do this. Some APs are required to take children on the autistic spectrum for example, and with mental health conditions, when there are insufficient special school placements available.[108] Yet the government's SEND review, launched in September 2019,[109] makes no mention of AP.

We recommend that AP schools should be an integral part of the government's ongoing SEND review, with a particular focus on the availability of accurate expert assessment, the role of the SENCO in AP, and access to specialist settings and services.

2.4 Make AP schools an integral part of the mental health trailblazers.

We believe it is incontrovertible that AP schools need the services of highly qualified mental health specialists, both to work with children and to provide clinical supervision for staff. These schools have a higher concentration of vulnerable children than mainstream. Almost half of excluded children are (or have been in the past) designated children in need, compared to one in ten for the school-age population.[110] Two thirds of children in AP have an identified SEMH need.

Yet the government's flagship programme for delivering mental health support in educational settings – the mental health trailblazers[111] – uses education mental health practitioners (EMHPs) who have received just one year of training as the school-based mental health expert.[112] We spoke to one EMHP Programme Director and three practice tutors, all of whom considered EMHPs insufficiently qualified to deal with the level of need in AP or special schools.

An analysis of need must be conducted for AP and special schools, to determine the appropriate level of practitioner required for these settings. The mental health trailblazers must be adequately resourced to provide the appropriate level of specialist practitioners to AP and special schools.

Data quality on a par with mainstream schools

We have seen when attempting to create a table of outcomes for children in AP, that it is currently impossible to track all children, monitor their educational outcomes or indeed, ensure the quality and safety of all the providers who are educating them.

These are some of our most vulnerable pupils for whom data collection and tracking should be at least equal to, if not more rigorous than, their peers in mainstream schools.

108 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.78)
109 See www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-into-support-for-children-with-special-educational-needs
110 Based on analysis of exclusions for three cohorts of secondary school pupils, conducted for the Timpson review. Timpson, 2019. *Timpson review of school exclusion: technical note – tables.* (Table 9)
111 The joint DfE-NHS programme currently runs 77 trailblazers across the country, accompanied by Mental Health Support Teams and a link programme designed to bring together education and mental health services across all schools and colleges in England. See www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers
112 See www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/news/could-you-be-education-mental-health-practitioner

Recommendation 3

3.1 **Improve data collection and tracking** for pupils in AP.

3.2 Gather more data on **unregistered providers**.

3.3 Develop national **benchmarks tailored to AP schools**.

3.1 Improve data collection and tracking for pupils in AP.

While this report has focused primarily on pupils single registered in state-maintained AP, we were unable to gather accurate data for three groups of pupils, who remain largely unaccounted for. These are: any pupil who is attending AP but not single registered there, any pupil attending provision commissioned directly by a mainstream school and any pupil in in-school AP.

While the AP census attempts to collect data on pupils in AP beyond the state-maintained sector, it focuses exclusively on LA-commissioned AP and is considerably less detailed than data returned from state-maintained AP schools.[113]

The AP census is collected annually, rather than termly, and does not include sufficient detail on attendance, enrolment status, the academic year pupils are in, or the actual number of hours pupils spend at the setting.

Key statistical releases consistently amalgamate the results of pupils in state-maintained AP with the results of pupils on the AP census, yet not all these children are in AP – in fact, the majority are in independent special schools. This obscures an accurate analysis of the outcomes for pupils in AP.

Work must be done to bring the AP census up to par with the school census, and to ensure that data on children in AP is separated from children in special schools.

Even when children are placed in state-maintained AP schools, published statistics relate only to the 16,134 pupils who are single registered. There are a further 10,288 pupils who are dual registered, yet no data is captured by LAs or the DfE about how long these children spend in AP, whether they return to a mainstream school or not, or what their outcomes are.

The Timpson review recommended that schools should be required to submit information through the school census on off-site direction into AP, including: why they commissioned the AP, how long the child spends in AP and how regularly they attend.[114]

Timpson also recommended that all pupil moves out of school should be tracked, to ensure children are receiving suitable education at their destination. We heartily support both these recommendations.

113 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative Provision Census 2019: guide*
114 Timpson, 2019. Timpson review of school exclusion. (p.15)

3.2 Gather more data on unregistered providers.

We do not currently know how many unregistered providers exist.[115] We also know very little about how many are being used for how many children and for how many hours and to teach which subjects.

If an AP provider is commissioned solely by schools and not by the LA, no data is even captured by the DfE about the existence of the provider.

Our two main concerns centre on quality of education and safeguarding.

The CSJ is currently conducting research into this area and will publish more detailed recommendations in due course.

3.3 Develop national benchmarks tailored to AP schools.

As we have repeated throughout this paper, our research found a paucity of national data by which to judge success in AP.

DfE guidance outlines the common elements of quality AP as:

- good academic attainment on par with mainstream schools – particularly in English, maths and science (including IT) – with appropriate accreditation and qualifications;
- that the specific personal, social and academic needs of pupils are properly identified and met in order to help them to overcome any barriers to attainment;
- improved pupil motivation and self-confidence, attendance and engagement with education; and
- clearly defined objectives, including the next steps following the placement such as reintegration into mainstream education, further education, training or employment.[116]

Of these, government data addresses only points one and (partially) four. There are no standardised measures for AP schools to evidence progress in the social and emotional aspects of child development that form two out of the four "elements that AP should aim to achieve."[117]

Neither are reintegration rates monitored centrally, yet this is a key factor that should be measured when considering the success of a local AP system, especially in the primary phase and key stage 3.[118]

Where data does exist, different measures may conflict with one another, causing significant shifts in outcomes due to the small pupil population. For example, reintegration of several high-attaining pupils to mainstream schools during key stage 4 would significantly impact the overall GCSE results of an AP school.

115 FFT Education DataLab, 2019. *Nobody knows how big the unregistered alternative provision sector is*
116 Department for Education, 2013. *Alternative Provision Statutory guidance for local authorities.* (p.10)
117 Department for Education, 2013. Alternative Provision Statutory guidance for local authorities. (p.10)
118 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.120)

The markers of success will also differ depending on the setting – for example, primary AP will focus on reintegration whereas key stage 4 AP may prioritise destinations.

In 2012, the government's behaviour advisor, Charlie Taylor, recommended AP schools should all create "baselines against which to measure progress (including towards reintegration into mainstream schooling, further education, or employment)".[119] AP leaders have echoed this request.[120] Other research has recommended developing a quality kitemark for AP, encompassing the process of referral, communication with the referring school and family, support for special needs, curriculum provision, and supervision, training and development of staff.[121]

AP heads and MAT CEOs we spoke to expressed a desire to be able to benchmark themselves against other AP schools of similar size and with similar intake. While the small pupil numbers in AP could make this challenging, the government could facilitate the collection and sharing of accurate information that AP schools could use to identify their relative strengths and weaknesses and learn from others who are performing well.

We recommend the development of a set of national benchmarks tailored to AP schools that take into account their specific context and challenges.

For the traditional measures, progress from point of entry to the AP school should be prioritised over raw scores. Additional measures could include factors such as family engagement, outreach, improvements in literacy and numeracy or on socio-emotional scales, and successful reintegration into mainstream schools. They must be adaptable to different local models of AP and to the particular pupil population of each school. The CSJ is committed to researching and developing proposals in this regard.

Given that AP schools are often the provider of last resort, the benchmarks must never provide a disincentive to accept a child onto their roll. They must be designed with the purpose of enabling AP schools to improve, raise standards, and learn from one another, but must under no circumstances create a high-stakes accountability system for AP.

National fair funding for AP and SEND

Having effective systems and an upskilled workforce is essential. But equally important is adequate funding, delivered in a way that is equitable across the country and allocated in such a way as to incentivise decisions that are best for each child.

119 Department for Education, 2012. *Improving Alternative Provision.* Taylor. (p.7)

120 International Journal of Inclusive Education, 2016. *Hugs and behaviour points; Alternative education and the regulation of 'excluded youth'.* Thomson and Pennacchia. (p.8)

121 CfBT Education Trust, 2011. *Achieving successful outcomes through Alternative Education Provision: an international literature review.* Gutherson, Davies, and Daskiewicz. (p.4) And: Prince's Trust, 2014. *What is the alternative? Effective support for young people disengaged from mainstream education.* Thomson and Pennacchia. (p.6)

Recommendation 4

4.1 Develop a **national fair funding formula for AP and SEND** with equitable treatment for all school types.

4.2 Develop a suite of **templates for AP service-level agreements** based on existing good practice.

4.1 Develop a national fair funding formula for AP and SEND with equitable treatment for all school types.

Our data analysis found huge variation in outcomes for pupils in AP in different parts of the country. The boxplot of this report shows how this variation is far more pronounced than for the same metrics in mainstream schools.[122]

In order to determine the relationship between AP quality, educational outcomes and funding, we need an accurate picture of what is being spent per pupil on AP, in different LAs. This is surprisingly hard to ascertain.

Government-commissioned research found that the average cost of a place in state-maintained AP is £18,000 and ranges from £10,000 to £44,253.[123] The information they requested from LAs was the "average cost by provider type and phase of a full-time equivalent place in AP for a full academic year".

What this does not tell us, however, is the actual spend per pupil-day. Many pupils spend less than a full academic year in AP, and two in five AP schools who answered our FOI reported receiving more pupils in 2018 than they were funded for.[124]

Moreover, AP funding is complicated and varies by LA. A simplified explanation is as follows: state-maintained AP schools are funded through a combination of "place funding" (calculated by multiplying a rough prediction of the number of students by £10,000) and "top-up funding". The "top-up" may be paid in full, or pro-rata depending on how long the student spends at the AP school. For any pupils above the predicted number of students, only the "top-up" amount is paid.

To investigate whether the differences in outcomes and quality were correlated with differing funding levels, we requested funding data for the past three years from all 351 state-maintained AP schools, and received responses from 175. We also analysed the AP spend reported in the outturn data from all LAs.

122 See Figure 14 on page 48

123 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative provision market analysis.* ISOS Partnership. (p.6)

124 Analysis of data from FOI responses from 171 AP schools. Of the 107 who provided their pupil allocation number (PAN), at least 40 reported receiving more students than they were funded for

Conducting any meaningful analysis of this data proved problematic, however. The outturn data varied wildly from year to year in a way that didn't mirror the changes in pupil numbers in AP and we were forced to consider it unreliable.[125] Moreover, some LAs pay for students who are dual-rolled in AP schools, yet these pupils do not appear on the pupil numbers data.[126] Our FOI responses were no easier to analyse, revealing huge discrepancies in the funding models, which was further complicated by the fact that children spend differing amounts of time in AP.[127] We were unable reliably to calculate a metric that would be comparable across different LAs, such as "funding per pupil-day".

Under the present funding arrangements, it is impossible to make any reliable pronouncements about the correlation between funding and quality, or to judge what the optimal level of funding should be for a given set of services. While our table of AP quality metrics can point to LAs where children are achieving poor outcomes, it cannot indicate what relationship there might be with adequate funding, or the lack thereof.

Due to our inability to reliably isolate AP spend from special schools, we are also unable to ascertain to what extent the reduction in the high needs budget in recent years has affected AP schools specifically.

The National Audit Office (NAO) calculated that between 2013–14 and 2017–18, the DfE increased high-needs block funding by £349 million (7.2 per cent in real terms). However, they concluded that because of a 10 per cent rise in the number of pupils in special schools and those with EHCPs in mainstream schools, high-needs funding per pupil fell by 2.6% in real terms over that period, from £19,600 to £19,100.[128]

In 2017–18, four in five councils overspent their high needs budget – which funds both children in AP and children with SEND – a situation the NAO called "unsustainable".[129]

The government is currently reviewing the high needs budget. In doing so, it should work with APs and LAs to develop a national fair funding formula for AP and SEND administered through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The intention is to ensure that all AP schools are adequately funded to provide high quality education and support services, and to allow better assessments of relative AP quality in future.

125 On a national level, funding increased by £32 million between 2015/16 and 2016/17 then fell by £16 million the following year, while pupil numbers rose continuously over this time, from 33,761 to 37,881 then 39,580. Some notable fluctuations include Nottinghamshire, which rose from £3.7m for 281 pupils in 2015/16 to £14.2m for 310 pupils in 2016/17 then dropped to £2.4m for 390 pupils in 2017/18. Dorset went from £8.0m to £4.3m then £4.5m over the same period, for 159, 213 and 218 pupils respectively.

126 All AP pupils in Kent, for example, are dual rolled but funded by the LA.

127 All AP schools receive £10,000 per place, for a number of places (pupil allocation number, PAN) agreed in advance with the local authority or ESFA. This is paid whether or not the places are filled but is not paid for any children whom the AP school accepts over and above the PAN. Top-up funding is then paid for the actual number of pupils who are sent to the AP school. Top-up funding varies by LA, and in some cases, by pupil characteristics. It can be paid in full for the whole year, or pro-rata according to the number of days, weeks, or terms that the student attends. Some AP schools also receive pupils directly from schools for short- or long-term placements, and are paid separately for this, also according to different formulas.

128 National Audit Office, 2019. Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in England. (p.4)

129 Schools Week, Dec 2019. The SEND funding crisis can't be hidden any longer. Accessible at: https://schoolsweek.co.uk/the-send-funding-crisis-cant-be-hidden-any-longer

Where there is no good AP school in an area able to work collaboratively with schools to enable pupils with high behaviour needs to engage with the curriculum, part of this funding should be available to schools to set up in-school AP bases or buy in services from other providers.

The fair funding formula must be combined with a standardised funding delivery model to ensure equity between geographical areas and different types of school. For example, place funding for special free schools is provided directly by the ESFA whereas for AP free schools, it is recouped from the host LA's high needs budget. This process creates financial incentives for LAs to bid for special free schools and not AP free schools. Decisions to approve one type of school over another should be based on need, not discrepancies in the funding model.

Any changes to how AP is funded should: consider the need for APs to be able to guarantee staff contracts from year to year; take account of research findings that the AP market is supply-driven and does not function like a traditional market in terms of cost, but should be considered as a system; ensure that mainstream schools are never incentivised to exclude children rather than access support; ensure that APs are never incentivised to hold onto pupils rather than reintegrate them; and conversely, that mainstream and AP schools have sufficient resources to support successful reintegration.

The CSJ will be researching AP funding in more depth and developing proposals in this regard.

4.2 Develop a suite of templates for AP service-level agreements (SLAs) based on existing good practice.

A national funding formula will only be fair if the services expected from AP schools are the same across the country. Yet we have spoken to AP MATs who operate multiple SLAs and funding agreements across different LAs, which impairs their ability to provide an education of equal quality across all of their schools.

Two of the themes that were raised repeatedly in our visits and conversations with AP schools were outreach services to mainstream schools, and post-16 monitoring.

We visited two AP schools that reported tracking and following up with every student for over two years after they left, although only one was specifically funded by the LA to do so, to redress historically high NEET rates.

Funding for post-16 support is by no means standard, however. Previous research reports that "AP providers were attempting to address [NEET rates] to an extent, via roles such as transition coordinators who offered more long-term support into the first six months or so, but it is important to note that this was often done on a voluntary basis, or was subsidised by the provider themselves, as they did not receive funding to support pupils once they had left at 16."[130]

130 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.14)

Similarly with outreach work, research found that parents of pupils in AP schools with an outreach programme "felt this had made the transition into a full-time placement easier, as they and their child had an existing relationship with the staff there".[131] Staff were also more positive about the referral process in terms of information provision, but many AP schools regretted that due to budget constraints they were not able to carry out as much of this kind of outreach work as they would have liked.[132]

In our visits, we found that while some AP schools were contracted and funded by the LA to provide outreach, others were not.

The government should work with AP schools and LAs to draw up a suite of SLA templates, based on a comparative analysis of existing practice, combined with their recent research into effective AP systems and high-quality AP.

The SLAs should be adaptable to differences in size, phase and specialism of different AP schools but should lay out the basic elements of good practice including post-16 transitions, parental engagement, SEN assessment and specialist support, reintegration and outreach to mainstream schools. The funding formula should be sufficient to deliver these services to a high standard.

131 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.92)
132 Department for Education, 2018. *Investigative research into alternative provision.* IFF Research Ltd. (p.132)

appendix
Data limitations

Aspects of AP quality we have been unable to assess

Throughout this paper, we have sought to use publicly available data to compare the quality of AP across the country. There are many other elements that we believe to be fundamental to assessing AP quality, that we have been unable to incorporate into this report.

We were unable to assess aspects related to pupils' emotional wellbeing and development, such as social isolation, relationship development and behaviour improvement, which are particularly pertinent for pupils in AP.

On a related note, we have been unable to capture the extent to which APs help pupils to reintegrate into mainstream education. Some APs prioritise returning pupils to mainstream education and have very few pupils at the end of key stage 4, as a consequence. In these cases, our analysis provides very little insight into how successful these APs are.

This report focuses heavily on the outcomes of pupils in secondary AP. While the inspection ratings and attendance rates of primary AP schools are included in the analysis, the remaining metrics do not provide insights into the quality of AP for pupils in primary school.

Neither could we report on family engagement, or partnership working with mainstream and special schools, LAs or other agencies.

We were unable to report on the range of qualifications that pupils in AP are achieving. Rates of GCSE English and maths grades 9–4 alone do not allow us to assess the broader curriculum offer made to pupils.

Finally, the pupil population in AP is highly transient, with many pupils spending only a number of weeks or months in AP before being moved into mainstream or special schools. Due to the frequency of census data collection, not all pupils who spend time in AP will be recorded as such, and many more individual pupils may be educated in AP at some point in the year than the numbers suggest.[133]

133 See blog by FFT Education Datalab for a more detailed explanation (FFT Education Datalab, 2019. *Timpson Review reflections part one: not all pupils who end up in alternative provision have been permanently excluded*)

Inspectorate ratings

Conceptual issues

Inspectorate ratings to date are not necessarily a reliable indicator of the present quality in AP.

Unlike the data used in the rest of this report, they are not updated annually, but capture a snapshot of quality as assessed at a given time.[134] In some cases, we are comparing one AP that last received a full inspection in 2019 with another whose last full inspection was in 2013.

On a related note, inspectorate ratings have been challenged as being unreliable by design, being subject to both human error and unconscious bias.[135]

As of September 2019, a new Ofsted inspection framework has been implemented,[136] which will change how Ofsted inspects AP. However, most inspection ratings used in this report will be historic and performed under the old framework.

Coverage

It is particularly difficult to assess quality of AP due to the lack of information we have on the pupils who are educated in AP. The issues with data coverage broadly fall into two camps:

- Our figures on the number and distribution of pupils in state-maintained AP are unreliable as they only account for pupils who are single registered.
- We have extremely limited data on pupils who are in AP that is not state maintained.

How many pupils are educated in AP, including dual registration?

Figure 18 provides a snapshot of how many pupils were recorded as being educated in AP in January 2019, combining dual and single registration. This is our best estimate of relative proportions of the AP pupil population in each LA, at a given point in the school year.[137]

The huge variation between different areas of the country is noteworthy. Focusing only on those LAs where we consider the data to be reliable,[138] the proportion of children in AP ranges from approximately 1 pupil per 10,000 to 140 pupils per 10,000.

We have ranked this graph to display the areas with the highest rate of pupils in AP when single-registration and dual-registration are combined.

134 For this report we used the latest inspections as of September 2019
135 Allen, 2017. *Ofsted inspections are unreliable by design*
136 Ofsted, 2019. *Education Inspection Framework*
137 N.B. This data is still incomplete: due to the way AP data is collected, we were able to obtain dual-registration data only for state-maintained AP, and single registration data for state-maintained and independent AP.
138 Some LAs recording a rate of zero do not have their own AP and tend to commission places in neighbouring authorities. Others may have closed in between census dates and thus the data is unreliable.

Figure 18: Proportion of pupils in AP by type of AP and enrolment status

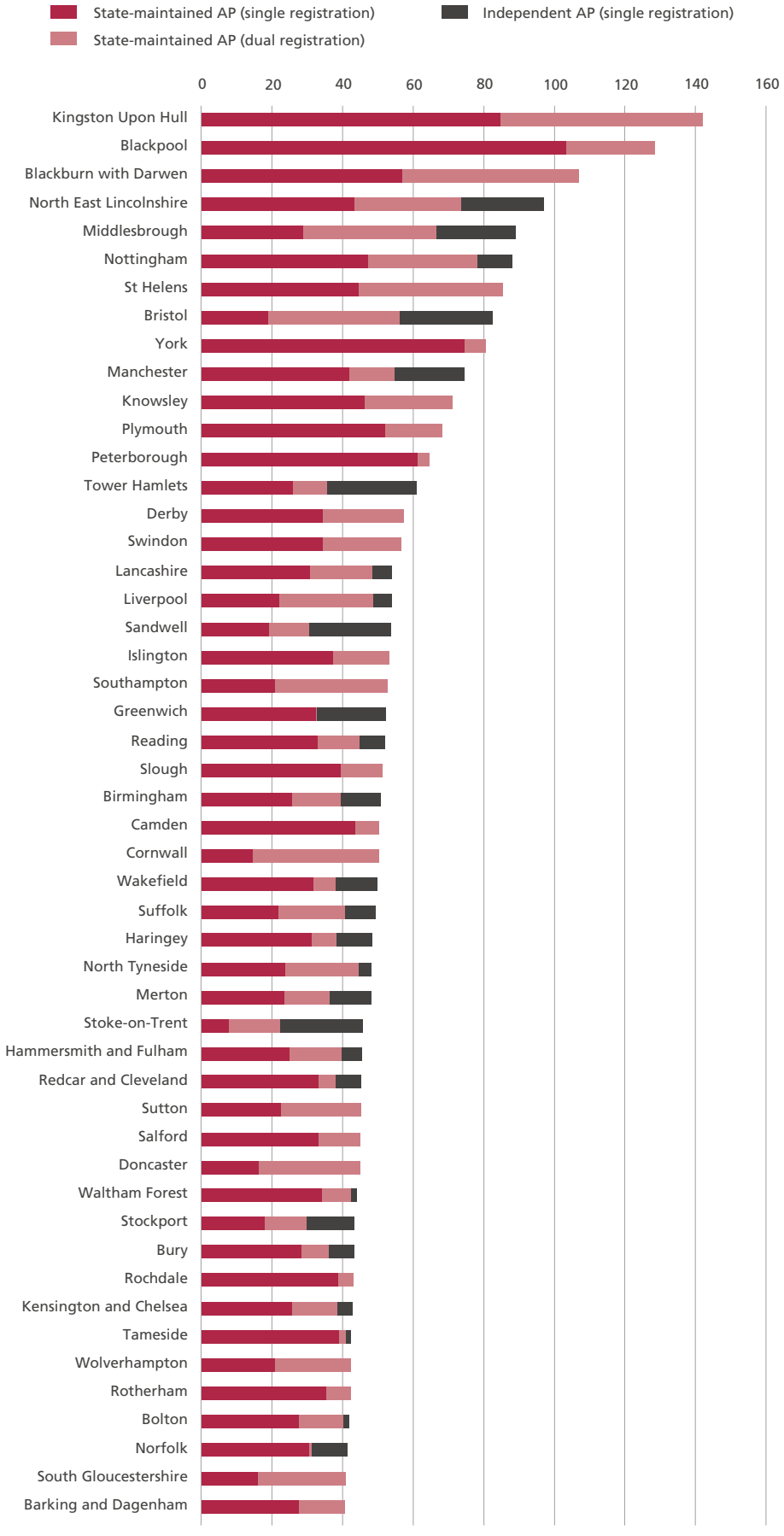


Figure 18 continued

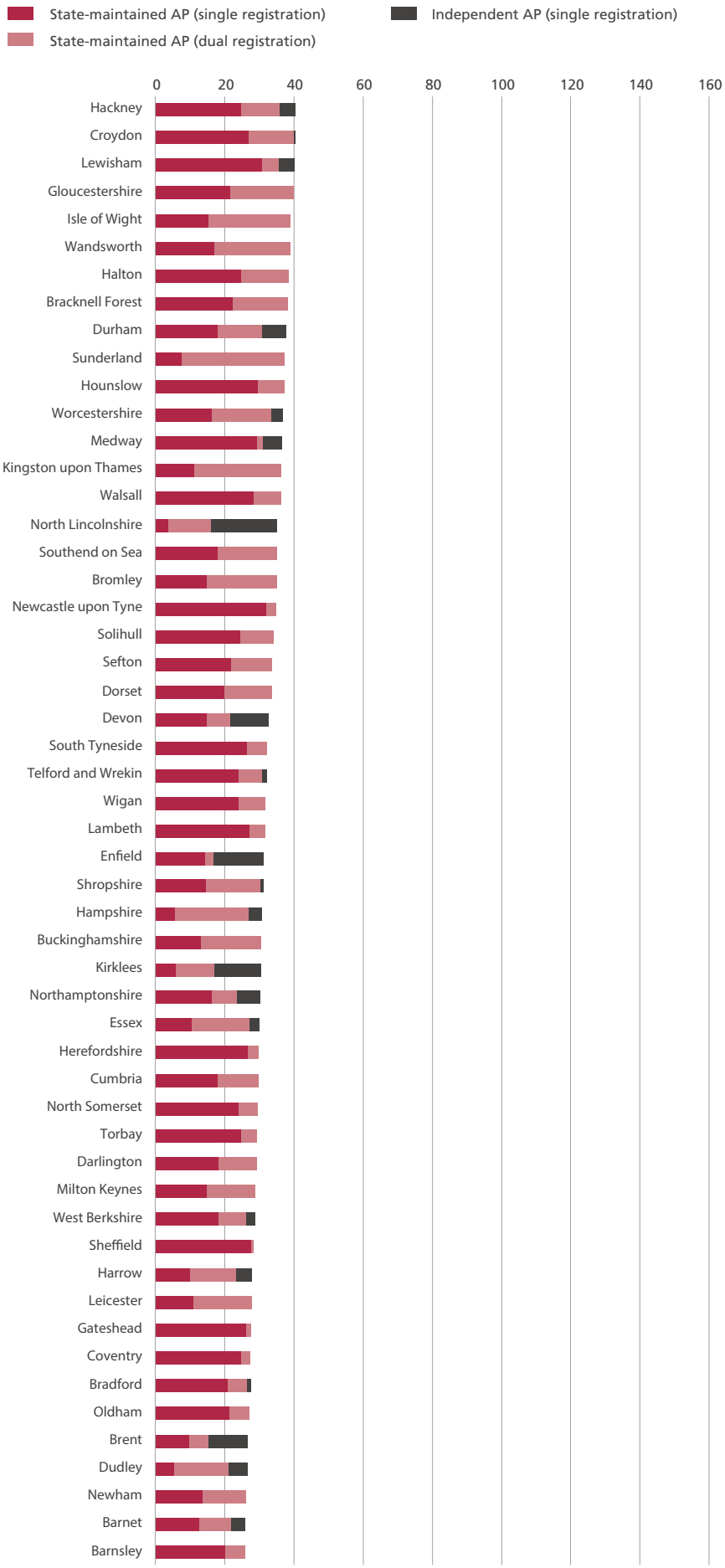
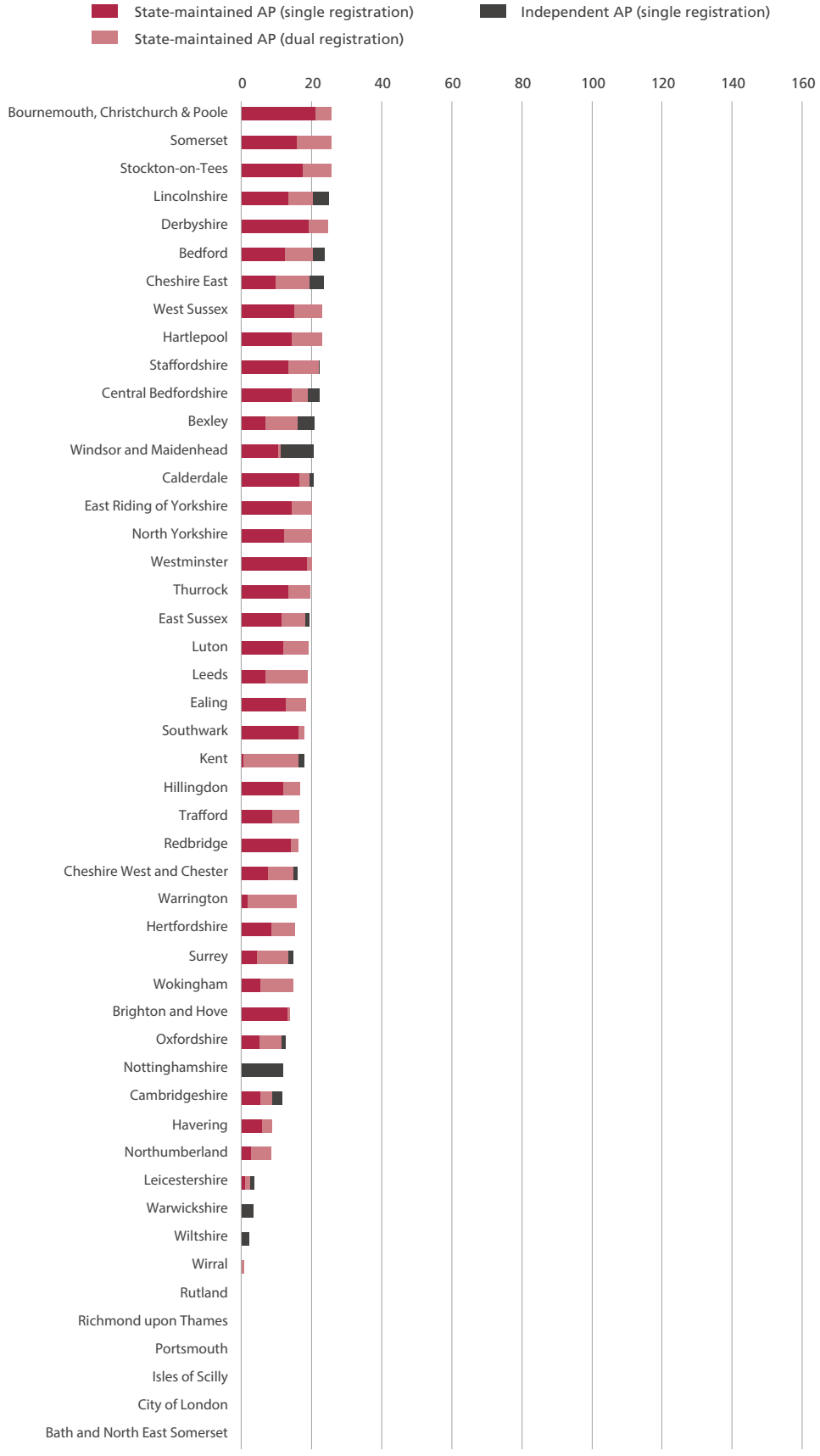


Figure 18 continued



CSJ analysis of figures obtained via an FOI[139]

139 FOI to the Department for Education

Getting Data on Any Pupils not in State-Maintained AP

State-maintained AP is not the only form of AP that exists in England. Other sources of AP include: independent AP, unregistered AP, illegal schools, UK learning providers, work-based placements, further education colleges, and placements in mainstream and special schools.

In England, we collect data on AP outside of the state-maintained AP sector only if it is the LA that is commissioning it. Therefore, in the cases where non-state-maintained providers are solely commissioned by a school, we do not capture any data at a central level about its existence.

Even the data that we collect on LA-commissioned, non-state-maintained AP is patchy. It is collected through the AP census, which has a misleading title as it does not exclusively capture data on AP. It actually captures data for all non-state-maintained provision the LA commissions, including independent special school places.[140]

We have attempted to identify anything on the AP census that is an independent AP school, as this is the only type that will have an inspection rating, and can thus be compared with state-maintained AP.

We used several sources to compile a list of independent AP. Primarily, our analysis is built on the list of independent AP crowdsourced by FFT Education Datalab and The Difference.[141] We have further added to this list by verifying two further lists: a list of all primary independent schools in 2017[142] and a list of all schools on the AP census with pupils at the end of key stage 4 in 2018.[143] In total we have identified 116 independent APs with 3,219 pupils.

There is no way to be certain that we have identified all pupils on the AP census that are in AP rather than specialist provision. One way we explored of verifying this list was to compare the total population we identified in our analysis against the combined school census and AP census.

In our analysis, we shaded those on the AP census with an EHCP and those without differently. The reasoning was that those on the AP census with an EHCP would more likely be in specialist provision.

An FOI to the DfE revealed that 85 per cent of pupils on the January 2019 AP census had an EHCP[144] and thus, if our assumption held, only 3,967 pupils on the AP census would actually be in AP, rather than the total 26,128.[145]

Figure 19 shows the difficulties that lie in using whether a pupil has an EHCP or not to ascertain whether we had reliably captured all pupils in AP.

140 Department for Education, 2018. *Alternative Provision Census 2019: guide.* (p.45)
141 FFT Education Datalab and The Difference, 2018. *Help us to investigate independent alternative provision*
142 What Do They Know, 2017. *List of independent schools*
143 FOI to the Department for Education
144 FOI to the Department for Education
145 Department for Education, 2019. *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, 2019*

Figure 19: Identifying pupils in AP

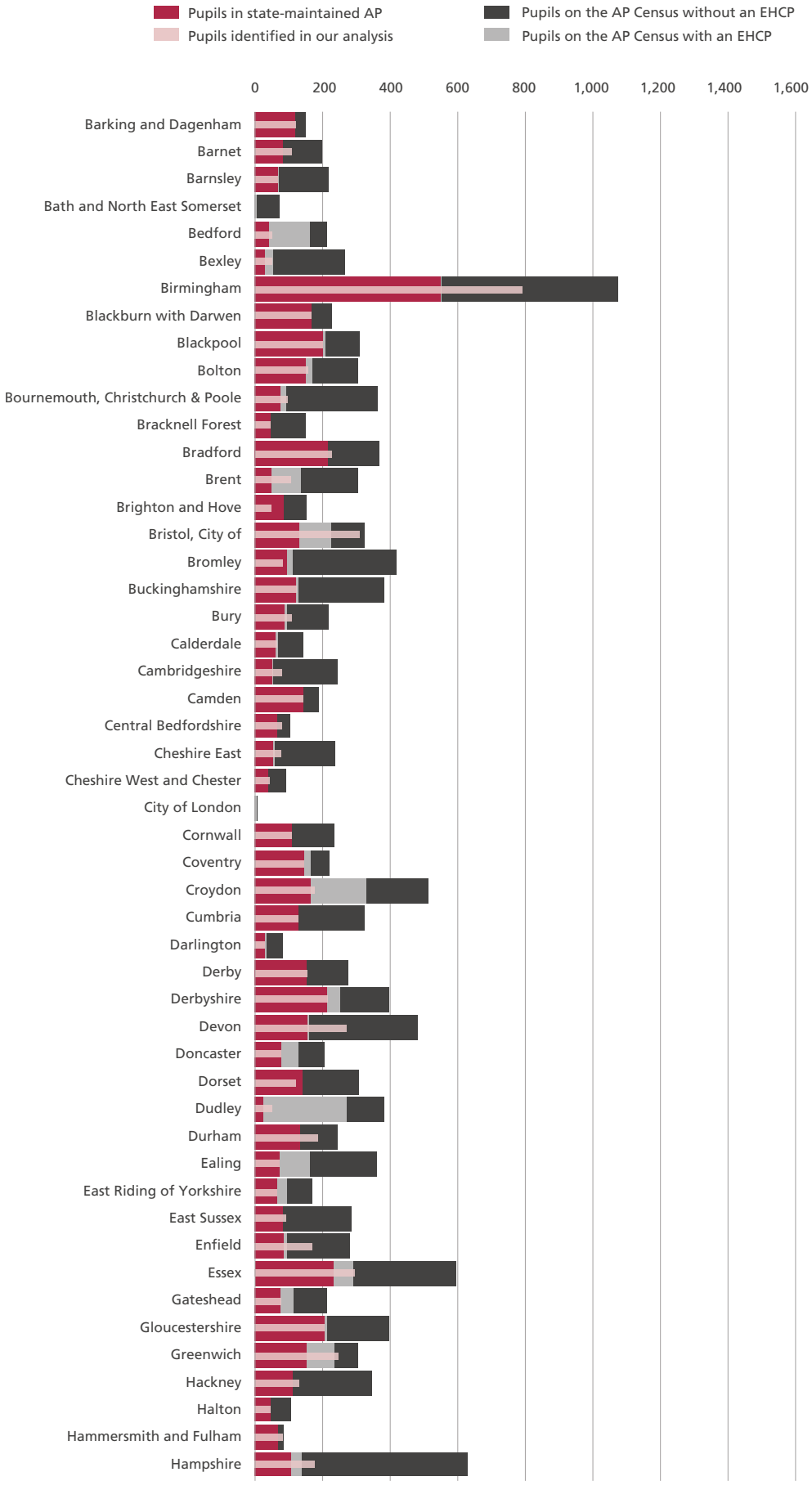


Figure 19 continued

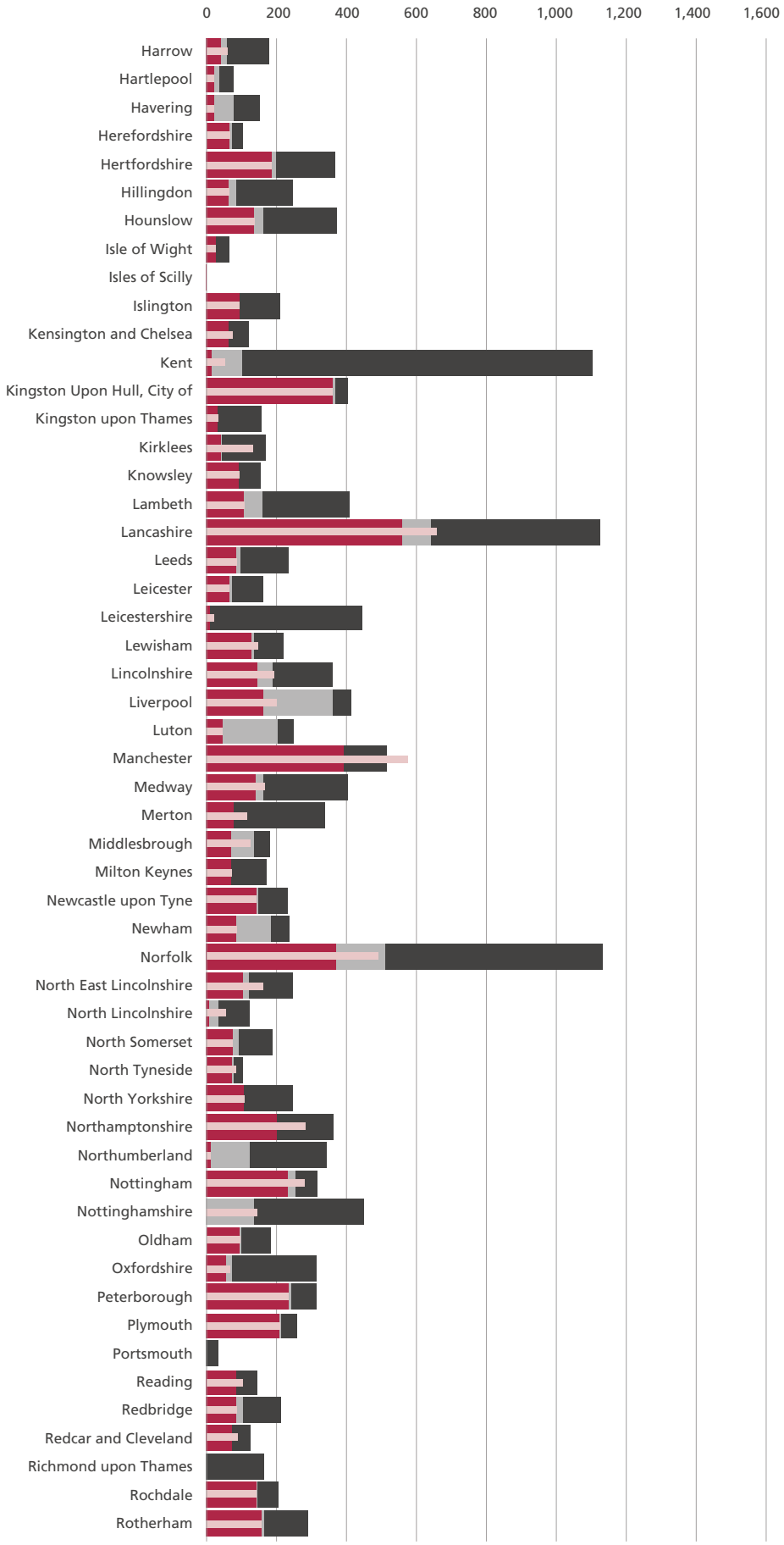
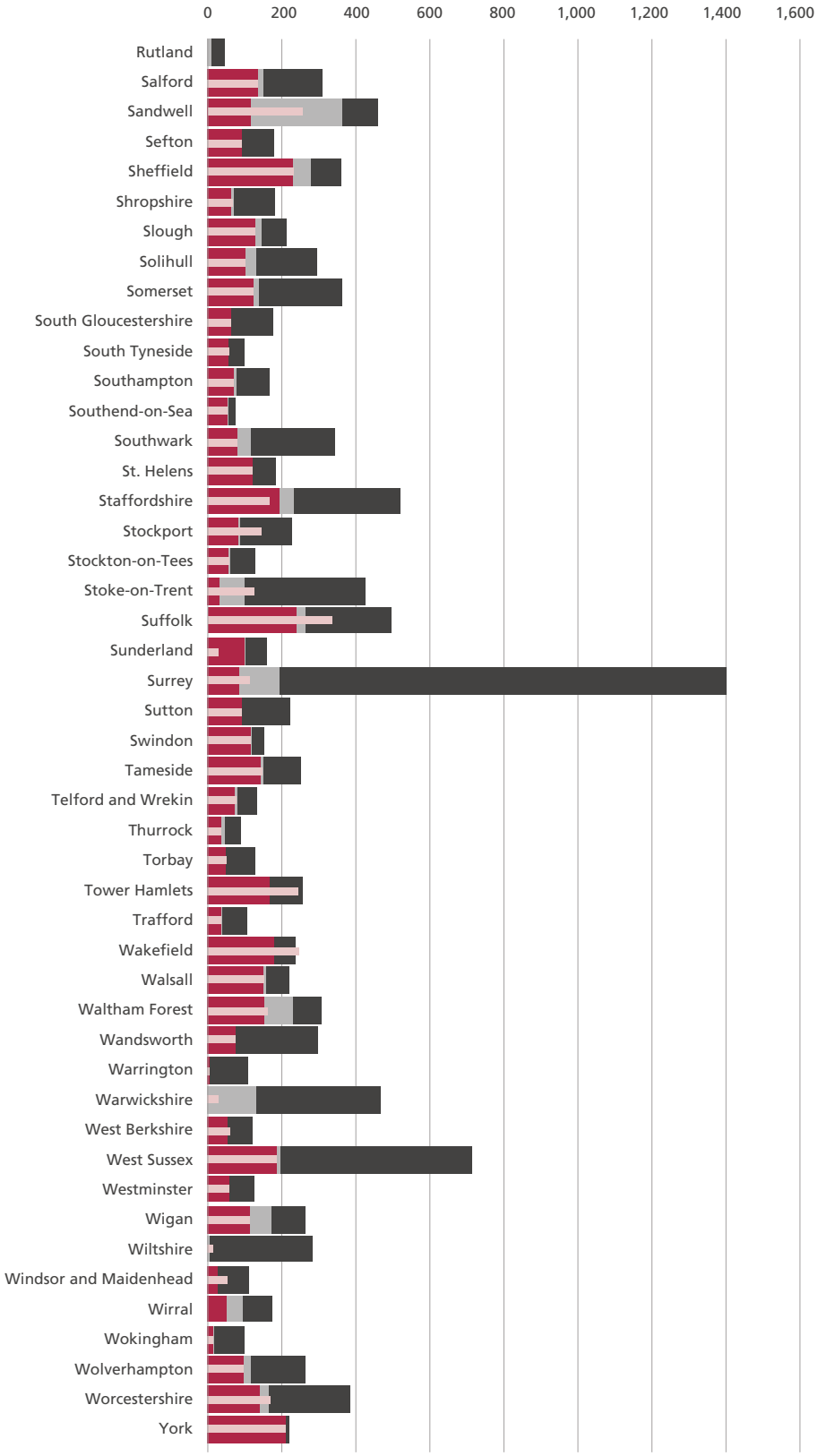


Figure 19 continued



Source: CSJ analysis of figures obtained via an FOI[146]

146 FOI to the Department for Education

In some cases, we have under-identified the number of pupils in AP on the school census and on the AP census with no EHCP. It is likely, in these cases, that some form of AP exists, that is recorded on the AP census, which we have failed to identify.

In other cases, we over-identified the total number of pupils on both the school census or the AP census. This could have been caused either by a case of misidentification – a school in our analysis of independent schools was incorrectly verified as being an AP – or by identifying an independent AP that is commissioned by someone other than the LA (such as a school).

It is not clear that we can easily separate out AP and special school placements on the basis of whether a pupil has an EHCP, as 13 per cent of pupils in state-maintained AP have an EHCP.[147]

Therefore, trying to separate out schools on the AP census into the category of "special" and "AP" on the basis of whether their pupils have an EHCP is inherently problematic.

Further Issues

There are further issues that affect our attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of AP.

In this analysis, we identified some areas that have no state-maintained AP. As such, what we can reliably say about their AP offering is limited. We reached out to these LAs and they told us that they either placed their pupils in state-maintained AP in another LA or placed their pupils in mainstream, special or FE providers that also catered for non-AP pupils. We have had to focus on schools that we believe to be wholly AP and assign their pupils to the LA in which they are based; thus we were unable to incorporate this information into our analysis.

We have also been unable to comment on subcontracting, a practice that we know happens often in AP. We have had to take the inspectorate rating of the AP where a pupil is single registered even in the cases where a pupil is receiving the majority of their education from a subsidiary alternative AP.

Part of this has been because of the lack of data that explains where pupils are subcontracted to other APs, but this is also caused by the complexity of assessing the quality of unregistered provision, which is not inspected by Ofsted.

Ofsted has started to list and comment on the providers PRUs subcontract, so to some extent the inspectorate ratings account for this. The CSJ will be publishing further analysis on the quality of unregistered provision in the coming months.

147 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: Special Educational Needs (SEN)*

Finally, it is worth noting that this paper does not make any comment about home-educated pupils. There are no clear government-collected figures on Elective Home Education (EHE). The Association of Directors of Children's Services provides the most comprehensive LA survey of EHE.[148] From their survey, it is estimated that 54,656 pupils are electively home educated.

Their figures suggest that while the majority of cases of EHE are part of a philosophical or a lifestyle choice, in some parts of the country pupils are moving towards EHE to avoid school exclusion. The government's 2018 call for evidence further supports this, attributing the growth of EHE in recent years to more negative factors including "a perceived lack of suitable alternative provision for those children who would benefit from it".[149]

At present, we cannot make any comparison between pupils who have moved to EHE to avoid being placed in AP and pupils who are educated in AP.

GCSE results

Conceptual issues

We have analysed academic success by focusing exclusively on the grades pupils achieve in maths and English GCSEs at the end of key stage 4. We have not made any comment about the success in achieving any other Level 2 qualifications in these subjects because of the lack of publicly available data on qualifications beyond GCSEs.

Coverage

The figures used in this chapter relate only to pupils single registered in state-maintained AP at the end of key stage 4.

The DfE GCSE results data includes separate statistics for pupils in AP.[150] However, we do not use this published dataset in our analyses. These published statistics amalgamate the results of all pupils in state-maintained AP with over 2,000 pupils appearing on the AP census.

For the reasons detailed in the section above on inspection ratings, we cannot be certain that every child who appears on the AP census is in AP. Therefore, these figures are derived from an FOI which relates only to the results of pupils who are single registered in state-maintained AP.

We also cannot say anything about the results of pupils who are dual registered in AP at the end of key stage 4. If a pupil is dual registered, their results belong to the main school. This can be confusing, as many AP schools include pupils who are dual registered in the results they publish on their websites.

148 The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd, 2019. *Elective Home Education Survey.* (p.1)
149 Department for Education, 2019. *Elective Home Education: Call for Evidence 2018*
150 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: GCSEs (Key Stage 4)*

Destinations

Conceptual issues

We have focused on pupils who sustain a positive destination, classified as education, training or work for at least two terms. Our analysis is unable to account for longer-term destinations.

Coverage

This analysis covers the destinations of pupils in state-maintained AP. Similar to GCSE results, the published dataset from the DfE classifies includes all pupils on the AP census.[151] We have therefore distilled the data for our analysis to exclude these pupils, because of the uncertainty surrounding the AP census.

Again, the destination figures relate only to single-registered, not dual-registered pupils.

Attendance

Conceptual issues

The absence figures relate to the overall absence sessions as a proportion of all possible sessions. Our figures are aggregated up from an institution level.[152]

Attendance figures are not published at a pupil level, for confidentiality reasons. Without figures at the pupil level, we cannot explore whether high levels of absences are caused by all pupils missing a few sessions or by a small group of pupils who are persistently absent.

To create a more refined measure, we would have liked to produce a metric that displays the extent to which pupils in AP improve their attendance rates over time but that data is not available.

Coverage

Once again, our analysis relates exclusively to pupils in state-maintained AP due to limitations with the available data. In the case of attendance, there is no data collected for any pupils on the AP census.

The attendance figures presented here relate only to pupils aged between 5 and 15.[153] While this covers a greater range of ages than metrics relating to GCSE results or destinations at the end of key stage 4, it is worth noting that data is not collected for pupils in year 11. Therefore, we cannot make any comparisons about pupils' attendance and engagement with AP in year 11 and their key stage 4 outcomes.

151 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: destinations of key stage 4 and 16 to 18 (KS5) students*
152 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: pupil absence*
153 Department for Education, 2019. *Schools census 2018 to 2019*

Qualified teachers

Conceptual issues

In our analysis, we focus solely on teacher qualification status. We could have chosen to look at other variables such as the teacher-to-pupil ratio, or the number of days lost to sickness or the number of vacant positions.

However, we chose to focus on qualification status because of the clear discrepancy between mainstream and AP qualification rates and because the proportion of teachers who are qualified is a relatively sticky variable, less volatile over time.

Coverage

The figures we have used are derived from responses to the School Workforce Census. This census is commissioned by the DfE and relates only to state-maintained schools.[154]

Our analysis was further restricted as some state-maintained AP schools did not respond to the workforce census.[155]

154 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: school workforce*
155 Department for Education, 2019. *Statistics: school workforce*

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