



# REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

The causes of educational failure

September 2013



THE CENTRE FOR  
SOCIAL  
JUSTICE

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Requires Improvement: The causes of educational failure

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# About the Centre for Social Justice

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) aims to put social justice at the heart of British politics.

Our policy development is rooted in the wisdom of those working to tackle Britain's deepest social problems and the experience of those whose lives have been affected by poverty. Our Working Groups are non-partisan, comprising prominent academics, practitioners and policy makers who have expertise in the relevant fields. We consult nationally and internationally, especially with charities and social enterprises, who are the champions of the welfare society.

In addition to policy development, the CSJ has built an alliance of poverty fighting organisations that reverse social breakdown and transform communities.

We believe that the surest way the Government can reverse social breakdown and poverty is to enable such individuals, communities and voluntary groups to help themselves.

The CSJ was founded by Iain Duncan Smith in 2004, as the fulfilment of a promise made to Janice Dobbie, whose son had recently died from a drug overdose just after he was released from prison.

Managing Director: Christian Guy

# About Breakthrough Britain II

When the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) published *Breakthrough Britain* in 2007, the British political landscape was fundamentally altered. The policy-making context was changed and a tired national debate about tackling poverty was reinvigorated.

These experience-led reports – shaped by mass domestic and international evidence-gathering – presented an unprecedented diagnosis of poverty in the UK and outlined a fresh vision for fighting it. This vision rested on recognising that using money alone to combat disadvantage, as important as income is, is too narrow an approach.

Through these conclusions and the thousands of people who shaped them, the CSJ demonstrated the need to identify and tackle the root causes of poverty, not merely the symptoms. We showed that for too long, five pathways to poverty have characterised life in our poorest neighbourhoods. These are: family breakdown; economic dependency and worklessness; educational failure; drug and alcohol addiction and serious personal debt. These pathways are interconnected. For example, a child who experiences family breakdown is less likely to achieve at school. Someone who fails at school is less likely to enter work and more likely to be on benefits. Consequently they are then more likely to live in financial poverty and debt. And so the cycle continues.

As a result of *Breakthrough Britain*, a debate was initiated about social and family breakdown in the UK. Yet much has changed in the policy-making environment since we published in 2007. In particular, the economic crisis has led to one of the deepest and longest recessions on record and there will be significant public expenditure reductions to deal with the national deficit. We also have the first Coalition Government since 1945.

However, what remains clear within the debate about putting Britain on a secure financial footing is the need for a social recovery, as well as an economic one. The costs of social breakdown are significant and often preventable. The CSJ believes it is time to revisit *Breakthrough Britain*. In view of the monumental challenges now confronting policy-makers and society, such a review would lay fresh foundations for tackling poverty in an age of austerity. Once again, this must be based on recognition of poverty's root causes.

The CSJ has conducted a national audit of social breakdown for each of the six policy areas which comprise *Breakthrough Britain II*. This 'State of the Nation' report sets out the key problems and trends and will act as a 'springboard' for the main report to be published in Spring 2014, comprising a number of policy recommendations for government in relation to each of the policy areas.

# Preface

Education is a gateway to a better future for our nation's young people. Their time at school is an opportunity to discover the possibilities which lay before them and to gain the knowledge and skills they will need to step into adulthood. Or at least it should be.

Most young people in our country are offered a solid education and take their chance. The system, although requiring significant improvement, tends to equip the next generation with the skills they need to find work and make progress.

Radical and necessary reforms are now underway to give school leaders more freedom, to ask more of teachers and to improve standards dramatically. Some were set in train under the previous Government and some were called for by the Centre for Social Justice in our 2007 *Breakthrough Britain* education report. Many in Westminster and across the country agree with the need to focus on those themes, regardless of any practical concerns which emerge, and credit must go to Michael Gove for his determination to take on those who are satisfied with average.

But there remain stark inequalities within the education system as this interim report demonstrates. Over two million children attend schools that fall short of being good or outstanding. More than 230,000 pupils fail to achieve five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. For those on free school meals – the common poverty measure in our education system – only 36 per cent achieved five A\* to C grades compared to 63 per cent of those not eligible.

The report also reveals how certain ethnic groups fare – with white working class boys particularly struggling. We also reveal that some children start school at the age of four in nappies, with the behavioural level of one year olds, unable to answer to their name or speak.

This represents a significant and damaged minority. For those at the bottom, such educational failure and its poor outcomes can wreak havoc. All too quickly many are on the pathway to poverty, crime, social breakdown and worklessness in later life.

Through the lens of the children and families worst affected, our review focusses on five key themes: school readiness at entry level; school reform, including an assessment of Free Schools and the Academies programme; teaching; leadership and Further Education. We have gathered academic and anecdotal evidence from across the country, learning from those on the front line of educational failure.

In publishing this report my thanks go to the review's Chairman, Sir Robin Boshier, for his leadership and expertise, and to our excellent Working Group for being willing to give so much time to this work. They are: Sir Robin Boshier, Wendy Lee, Ros McMullen, Dame Sally Coates, Amanda Spielman, Diana Owen, Dr. Vanessa Ogden and Hazel Slavin. I am also grateful to CSJ team members Holly-Lee Davis, Alex Burghart and Sophie Carter, who have worked very hard to produce this crucial paper.

This is part one. For the next 12 months the team will develop ideas which can spark educational reform to transform the experiences of the poorest children and the work of schools in the most deprived neighbourhoods. But in publishing this state-of-the-nation report our hope is that it will act as a window into life at the bottom of our education system for people who are yet to see it. For others who are already familiar with these challenges, we hope it might be the encouragement they need to make a difference in the lives of the most disadvantaged children.

**Christian Guy**  
**Director, Centre for Social Justice**

# Members of the CSJ Working Group



**Sir Robin Boshier, Director of Primary Education at the Harris Federation of Academies, Chair**

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Sir Robin Boshier is the Director of Primary Education for the Harris Federation. Prior to this, he was a headteacher for 22 years and during that time he led three very different primary schools. Lately, he was the Executive Headteacher of the federation between Fairlawn, Haseltine and Kilmorie Primary Schools in Lewisham. Fairlawn was deemed by The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) as 'outstanding' in every category.

Robin is a National Leader of Education and Fairlawn was a National Support School, and was designated as one of the first Teaching Schools in the country. Sir Robin was awarded the National College Primary School System Leader of the Year award in 2010. He is a National Professional Qualification for Headship coach and has worked on the programme for over ten years.

Robin has experience as a Department for Education City Challenge Adviser and has led the London Challenge Primary Programme as the Operational Director. He was the Primary Headteacher on the board of the Department for Education 'Achievement for All' steering board and is currently a member of the Primary Reference Group.



**Wendy Lee, Professional Director, The Communication Trust**

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Wendy Lee is Professional Director for The Communication Trust, which is a consortium of mainly third sector organisations with an interest in children's speech, language and communication issues.

She has worked as a speech and language therapist for 25 years, both in clinical practice and in higher education. She has worked full time in the third sector since 2007 and has been involved in a range of projects for both I CAN and The Communication Trust.

Recent work has involved supporting the development of Speech, Language and Communication units of qualification, developing a wave 2 intervention as part of the A Chance to Talk project, consultation work with children and young people and as lead professional advisor for the national year of communication campaign. Wendy's specific area of interest is on working together with colleagues in education settings to enable ways of providing the best support for children with speech, language and communication needs in mainstream settings.



**Ros McMullen, Principal, David Young Community Academy**

Ros McMullen was a headteacher in Wigan between 2000 and 2004 where she turned around a school which was the 15<sup>th</sup> worst performing into one of the most improved schools in the country, gaining recognition both locally and nationally.

In 2005 she became Principal of David Young Community Academy and spent five terms preparing for the opening in September 2006. DYCA replaced two of the lowest performing schools in Leeds and has the highest deprivation indices of all secondary schools in Leeds.

In September 2012 DYCA became a founding member of the LEAF Academy Trust and Ros is the Chief Executive of the Trust. LEAF is an acronym for Love, Enterprise, Aspiration and Faith. Ros has been a National Leader of Education since 2011.



**Dame Sally Coates, Principal, Burlington Danes Academy**

Dame Sally Coates is the Principal of the Burlington Danes Academy in White City. Sally has worked in teaching since she was 22 and took on the headship at Burlington Danes in 2008.

She turned round the fortunes of the school which had previously been in 'special measures.'

Under her leadership, this has gone on to become one of the most improved schools in the country. Sally has expertise working with disadvantaged pupils and is also Chair of the Teachers' Standards Review Group. Sally also sits on the Lord Bew Review of Key Stage 2 Accountability and Testing.



**Amanda Spielman, Chair of Ofqual and Education Adviser for ARK Schools**

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Amanda Spielman is Chair of Ofqual and Education Adviser for ARK Schools, the education charity and academy sponsor, which she joined as part of its founding management team in 2005. She has had particular responsibility for the development of ARK's curriculum, assessment and teaching model to secure exceptional standards in high-disadvantage schools. She also serves on ARK's International Education board which oversees projects in India and Africa.

Amanda worked for more than 15 years in corporate finance, corporate strategy and business planning for Nomura International plc, Mercer Management Consulting, Bridgewater Business Analysis Ltd, Kleinwort Benson Ltd and Thomson McLintock, latterly at director and principal level.

She has been a trustee of Wales Millennium Centre, the charities Pilotlight and Saving Faces and the National Council of Women of Great Britain.



**Diana Owen, Chief Executive, L.E.A.D Academy Trust**

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Diana is the Chief Executive of the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust and has a wealth of experience working in different schools for over 20 years. She has been the headteacher of Huntingdon Primary School for the past 14 years and during this time has led it from special measures to outstanding. In 2010 she became an Executive Head taking responsibility and accountability for more than one school. Diana's previous teaching experience has been in both Nottingham and London.

Using a distributed leadership style has allowed Diana to support other schools both in Nottingham and around the country. In 2008 Diana became a National Leader of Education which has involved her working with and supporting schools' leadership teams nationally. As part of this role she has also met with ministers on a number of occasions to help steer government agendas.



**Dr. Vanessa Ogden, Headteacher, Mulberry School for Girls**

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Vanessa is the headteacher of Mulberry School for Girls in Tower Hamlets. She is currently leading the foundation of Mulberry University Technical College in the borough.

Vanessa's teaching career has spanned two decades of practice in inner-city schools across London. Mulberry School for Girls pioneers work on overcoming barriers to success caused by disadvantage and poverty. The school is a founding partner of 'City Excellence in Teaching', a cluster of schools developing teachers as expert practitioners in areas affected by social disadvantage.

Vanessa is a National Leader in Education, supporting schools in challenging circumstances. She is also a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Education and she has a doctorate specialising in education policy and school improvement. Vanessa is a trustee of Teach First and Chair of the Impact Committee.



**Hazel Slavin, Advisor, Kusuma Trust**

Hazel has a background in education, starting in Further Education in Whitechapel, where she taught Literacy to newly arrived immigrants, English Language and Literature. She was a team member of an innovative Schools Council curriculum programme on Health and Personal Education for 16–19 year olds and then Advisor in Health, Personal and Social Education in the Inner London Education Authority before moving to a Principal Lectureship at South Bank University where she ran a Diploma and Master's programme in Health Communication. She now works in International Development in Behaviour Change Communication for Health across the developing world and is the Chair of the Trustees of Women and Children First.

Hazel is an advisor to the Kusuma Trust UK, an independent grant making organisation that has provided a grant for the work of the committee. She has a deep interest in educational failure, with extensive experience in the field.



**Holly Lee Davis, Researcher, the Centre for Social Justice**

Lee is the lead researcher for educational failure, working on the quality of teaching, transitions and adult learning and skills development.

Lee graduated with First Class Honours from the London School of Economics, with a degree in Social Policy. She has also completed an MSc for which she was awarded Distinction. Before undertaking her masters, she worked in student housing and language provision, and has also worked abroad.

# Special thanks

The CSJ would like to thank the many people, schools and organisations who have kindly given their time to contribute evidence during the course of this review. Our thanks go to the Working Group for their time and expertise. Particular thanks go to Sir Robin Boshier, the Group's Chairman, for his incredible leadership and commitment to the review. Thanks also go to the group's advisers, Sir Peter Birkett and Martin Tune, and to Sophie Carter who was the initial CSJ researcher on this project. Special thanks go to Alex Burghart, CSJ Director of Policy, for his invaluable help and guidance.

We are also very grateful to the Kusuma Trust and to Deutsche Bank for their generous support for this paper.

The Kusuma Trust UK believes that every child and young person has the potential to transform and improve their life, and should have opportunities to grow and develop as active and productive citizens in their communities. Their mission is to facilitate and increase access to education and other life opportunities for children and young people, with a focus on the most economically disadvantaged.



*Born to Be* is Deutsche Bank's UK corporate citizenship youth engagement programme. With nearly 1 million 16–24 year olds in the UK not in employment, education or training, *Born to Be* seeks to break this cycle of youth unemployment through early intervention. It targets 11–18 year olds at risk of exclusion with education-led projects that aim to increase achievement, develop employability skills and raise aspirations.

The bank strongly encourages employees to get involved as personal and business mentors, coaches, advocates and supporters. Deutsche Bank aims to reach over 160,000 young people in the UK over the next four years and help them to fulfil their potential.



# Executive summary

Educational failure can have a catastrophic impact on a child's life chances and opportunities. Not only is it an injustice harming the outcomes of those children affected, it represents an economic and social strain on the whole of society that creates and perpetuates cycles of disadvantage. Children leaving school with few or no meaningful qualifications are less likely to enter into and progress in work and less likely to be able to support the learning of their own children.

England's education system is currently undergoing extensive and widespread reform, the full consequences of which will not be felt for some time. However, it is clear that there is a need for reforms to go further in order to spread success to those children and communities that it has yet to reach. This first, state-of-the-nation report into educational failure in England considers the factors that hold some children back, looks at some of the reforms already in process and asks on which areas the next phase of reform will need to focus.

## Measuring educational failure

Although results have been improving in recent years, an unacceptable number of children still leave school with very poor qualifications:

- Two out of every five pupils (more than 231,000) do not achieve five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics;<sup>1</sup>
- In 2011, 156,000 pupils who did not have statements of special educational need did not get an A\* to C grade in GCSE English, and 179,000 did not get an A\* to C grade in GCSE mathematics;<sup>2</sup> 120,000 did not get A\* to C in either;<sup>3</sup>
- Over 1,650 pupils finish Key Stage 4 with no A\* to G grades, including equivalent qualifications;<sup>4</sup>
- It is estimated that 8.1 million adults lack basic numeracy skills.<sup>5</sup>

1 Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (see Table 3a, applicable to all state funded schools)

2 Hansard, Written answers and statements, 12 November 2012

3 Ibid

4 Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (see Table 3a)

5 Department for Business Innovation & Skills, *2011 Skills for Life Survey*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012

## The children and families worst affected

The importance of family cannot be overstated. Children who benefit from supportive and engaged parents are far more likely to do well at school. Factors like parental time and engagement have a positive impact on outcomes at school, even when accounting for socio-economic background.

- Children are only at school for 15 per cent of their waking hours;<sup>6</sup>
- If parents engage with their child's education, their attainment increases by 15 per cent, regardless of the family's social background.<sup>7</sup>

The CSJ has been told that where children's parents do not hold high aspirations for them, it is unlikely that their children will. Where parents have had a poor experience of education and employment, it is understandably less likely that they will believe that education is worthwhile.

White British pupils on free school meals (FSM) are thought to be particularly affected by low aspiration. These pupils are a major group, accounting for nine per cent of all pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, yet they perform worse than nearly all other groups:

- Only 26 per cent of white British boys eligible for FSM achieved five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, compared to 36 per cent of all pupils on FSM, 63 per cent of all other pupils, and, for example, 40 per cent of black boys on FSM.<sup>8</sup>

Children who come from families that have suffered family breakdown are likely to see it affect their education.<sup>9</sup> At the most extreme end of family breakdown, children who are taken into care perform considerably worse than almost any other group:

Only 15 per cent of children looked after for at least a year achieved five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, compared to 58 per cent for other children.<sup>10</sup>

Poorer children who are eligible for FSM often face multiple barriers to learning, including having less home support, weaker language and communication skills, and difficulties in basic literacy and numeracy.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, they often perform less well at school than other children. Last year only 36 per cent of pupils eligible for FSM achieved five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, compared with 63 per cent of those not eligible.<sup>12</sup>

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6 Campaign for Learning, *Animate Learning! Family Handbook*, London: Campaign for Learning, 2013

7 Oxford School Improvement, *The Pupil Premium: making it work in your school*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012

8 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

9 Goodman A et al, *Inequalities in educational outcomes among children aged 3 to 16, Final report for the National Equality Panel, 2009* [accessed via: <http://sta.geo.useconnect.co.uk/pdf/Inequalities%20in%20education%20outcomes%20among%20children.pdf> (23/02/13)]

10 Department for Education, *Outcomes for Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England, as at 31 March 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

11 See for example, Oxford School Improvement, *The Pupil Premium: making it work in your school*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012

12 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

However, whilst the disadvantages endured by children on FSM is of deep concern, the vast majority of children who leave school without good qualifications are not eligible: 78 per cent of those who did not achieve A\* to C in English and mathematics GCSEs last year were not recorded as eligible for FSM.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst some progress has been made, it has not been spread evenly across the country. For many years, attainment in London was recognised as poor. However London is now outstripping other parts of the country. Educational failure is especially acute across a number of regional areas. For example, in nine local authorities, fewer than 50 per cent of pupils achieved five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics last year.<sup>14</sup> In Knowsley, only 40.9 per cent of pupils did.<sup>15</sup>

## School readiness

By the time of their first assessment, conducted in the final year of the Early Years Foundation Stage, it is clear that many pupils are already some way behind other children:

- Six per cent of boys do not know that in English, print is read from left to right and top to bottom;<sup>16</sup>
- 19 per cent of children could not link sounds to letters, naming and sounding letters of the alphabet.<sup>17</sup>

However, this assessment is conducted after many children have already been in school for a year. The CSJ has heard heart-breaking accounts of children entering school with very low levels of development which put them at an immediate disadvantage relative to other pupils. The CSJ has been told of children entering school at the age of four who:

- Commonly act as though they are 12 to 18 months old;
- Are unable to socialise having had no practice at being sociable;
- Are still in nappies and not toilet-trained;
- Do not know their own names and are unable to speak.

This shockingly acute disadvantage stretches the capacity of schools and threatens to place those children at a disadvantage for the rest of their school careers as some of their contemporaries will already be several years more developed than they are. This stresses the importance of greater and more effective early intervention.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Department for Education, *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results in England, 2011/12*, London: Department for Education, 2012

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

## School reform

### Pupil Premium

The CSJ welcomes the introduction of the Pupil Premium to support the education of children on FSM by paying additional funds to their schools on a per capita basis. Whilst we accept that it was necessary to tie it to FSM in order to introduce it swiftly, we believe it is now time to consider how it can be better directed so as to include pupils who suffer from disadvantage but who may not be signed up and so that it is made part of Universal Credit.

### The Academies programme

By increasing the autonomy and flexibility of schools, the Academies programme has offered schools considerable opportunity to improve education for their pupils as they see fit. In particular, academy chains which can share experience and expertise are delivering considerable improvement to schools which have long suffered disadvantage.

It is important, however, that this success is extended to communities with the greatest need. The CSJ has learnt that some chains and federations have been slow to move into areas outside of London and that there are a number of local areas in which performance is poor that do not, as yet, benefit from the presence of a single academy that is part of a chain.

Similarly, the Academies programme has great potential for invigorating primary schools which are now entitled to become academies. It will be important to consider, however, how conversion might take place and be effective in a phase of education in which schools are much smaller and more numerous (16,784 against 3,281 secondaries).<sup>18</sup>

Free Schools are an excellent opportunity to bring new providers to disadvantaged areas. However, the CSJ is concerned that only a relatively small proportion of new schools – fewer than a fifth of those which opened in 2012 – have been started by charities; more must be done to harness the potential of the third sector to provide well-tailored support to disadvantaged communities. Similarly, too few Free Schools are, as yet, catering for the most disadvantaged pupils. In January 2012 only five of the 18 primary Free Schools and two of the six secondary schools had a higher proportion of children on FSM than the national average.<sup>19</sup>

The extension of academy freedoms to alternative provision will also allow for greater innovation when working with some of the most vulnerable children in the education system. It is important, however, that commissioners are equipped to find the most effective settings for children and are monitored to ensure that they are fulfilling this duty.

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<sup>18</sup> Department for Education, *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2013*, London: Department for Education, 2013

<sup>19</sup> Hansard, Written Answers and statements, 13 May 2013

## Teaching

The most important school-based factor affecting outcomes is the quality of teaching. This is especially important for disadvantaged children, with the most to gain from attending excellent schools. Yet too often, teaching is substandard and leadership is weak.

Over two million children attend schools that fall short of being good or outstanding.<sup>20</sup> According to Ofsted, the quality of teaching is good or outstanding in over 80 per cent of primary schools serving the least deprived areas but at only 69 per cent of those serving the most deprived communities.<sup>21</sup> The CSJ has heard how it is difficult for schools in some parts of the country to recruit good teachers in key subjects. In addition, whilst the quality of teachers now coming into the profession is considered to be of a high standard, it is vital that more is done to help existing teachers – who will form the majority of teachers for some time – to improve and develop.

A number of teachers and headteachers have raised concerns with the CSJ that many poor teachers are currently being circulated around the system. Whilst the Government has made reforms in this area, it is clear that substandard teachers are still being passed around the system because of ‘agreed references’ or ‘compromise agreements.’

## Leadership

Strong leadership is essential to helping schools provide excellent education for their pupils. Good leadership fosters the high quality teaching on which children depend. It is therefore concerning that effective leadership is not well distributed across the system.

In the most deprived areas of England, 74 per cent of primary schools have been judged good or outstanding for leadership and management, compared with 88 per cent of primary schools in the least deprived areas in England. The gaps also vary by region: leadership and management are less likely to be outstanding in secondary schools in some parts of the North East, compared to parts of London.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, good governors can be an effective tool in improving school quality by acting as a ‘critical friend’ to headteachers and monitoring school improvement. However, at present approximately 30,000 governor positions are vacant, calling into question whether the schools most in need of additional support are receiving it.<sup>23</sup> The CSJ has also heard concerns about whether the current system is making reasonable demands on the volunteers who currently act as governors.

20 Office for Standards of Education, Children’s Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills*, schools, London: Office for Standards of Education, Children’s Services and Skills, 2012.

21 Office for Standards of Education, Children’s Services and Skills, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children’s Services and Skills, 2013.

22 Ibid.

23 SGOSS, *Governors for Schools* [accessed via: <http://www.sgoos.org.uk/newsletters/251-sgoos-newsletter-september-2012.html?showall=&start=18> (15/08/13)].

## Further Education (FE)

FE should assist young people to move from education into employment. However, as a recent government review has recognised, FE providers often have to provide remedial support for students who have not acquired basic skills in secondary school.<sup>24</sup> FE caters for three times as many students eligible for FSM than at maintained school sixth forms and yet students at FE are not eligible for FSM and do not attract a pupil premium.

The Government has released national statistics on the destinations of 16–18-year-old Key Stage 4 and 5 students leaving FE.<sup>25</sup> This is a very positive step which should ultimately allow FE providers to be held to greater account. However, as yet national data do not show the destinations of the most disadvantaged students, those studying only to Levels 1 and 2.

## Conclusion

Whilst there is significant political commitment to the reform of the education system, far too many children are still being failed. The CSJ welcomes the Government's determination to set high standards for all children and to provide additional funding to support the most disadvantaged pupils. However, this can only be the first phase of reform. The next must ask how success can be spread to those pupils and parts of the system which have yet to experience it. In particular, we will ask:

- How the Pupil Premium can be fine-tuned to ensure that it helps more of those in need;
- How greater support can be given to disadvantaged children and their families prior to their arriving at school;
- How educational reform can be successfully further extended into primary schools;
- What more can be done to encourage effective chains and federations of academies to move into areas of greatest need;
- How the quality of teaching and leadership can be improved amongst the existing school workforce;
- What the new administrative architecture of the education system should look like as the role of local authorities continues to recede;
- How improvements can be made to the provision of FE so as to provide an effective transition between education and employment.

Answering these questions will help to ensure that the education system does even more to help the next generation of children overcome their disadvantages and fulfill their full potential.

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<sup>24</sup> Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, *Professionalism in Further Education, Interim Report of the Independent Review Panel*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Department for Education, *Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils: 2010 to 2011*, London: Department for Education, 2013.



# Introduction

Just as a good education is one of the surest routes out of poverty, so a poor education can trap people in it. Children leaving school with few or no qualifications are likely to be disadvantaged for life. Those who perform better are more likely to have better lives by a huge range of measures.<sup>26</sup> Nor is education simply about helping this generation move out of poverty. Those who perform worse are more likely to have children who themselves fail at school.

Educational failure undeniably affects career prospects, and can lead to low pay and worklessness.<sup>27</sup> Across the most developed countries in the world, employment rates are on average 18 per cent higher for those with an upper secondary education and 28 per cent higher for those with a tertiary education.<sup>28</sup> At the most severe end of educational disadvantage young people who do not receive a decent education are considerably more likely to end up in the criminal justice system. Nearly half of prisoners surveyed said they had no qualifications.<sup>29</sup>

*‘You can identify it from an early age. Without the right support, many of these youngsters may well end up in prison or a secure estate. You see these kids with so many problems around them and wonder how they can possibly cope. They don’t have solid families around them and they don’t have the resilience. The fact the majority of inmates have literacy problems means you can spot which kids will end up in prison. Last week, a primary school aged boy actually said to me “I know my life’s sh\*t.” Many of these kids think from an early age, that they’ve got no chance.’*

**John d’Abbro OBE, head of the New Rush Hall School**

School pupils represent the country’s next generation of citizens, voters and workers. A fair and effective education system must equip them with the right skills and opportunities to fulfill those roles. It must give children the best start in life.

It is questionable whether national investment in education over the past few decades has been effective. As a proportion of GDP, education spending has increased by approximately a fifth since 1991/92, taking total government spend to £92.8 billion and making education the third largest area of government spending after welfare and health.<sup>30</sup>

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26 OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD indicators*, Paris: OECD, 2013 (see for example, p202)

27 Ibid

28 Ibid

29 Ministry of Justice, *The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly sentenced prisoners*, London: Ministry of Justice, 2012

30 HM Treasury, *Statistical Bulletin: Public Spending Statistics*, London: HM Treasury, 2013

Despite this huge spend, standards are still not good enough. In 2011, 156,085 children (29 per cent) did not manage a C grade in GCSE English, 178,977 (33 per cent) did not manage a C in GCSE mathematics, and 120,248 did not manage a C in either subject.<sup>31</sup> Over 1,650 pupils in state-funded mainstream schools finish Key Stage 4 with no A\* to G grades, including equivalent qualifications.<sup>32</sup> More than a third of businesses are dissatisfied with the basic literacy of school and college leavers and nearly a third with their basic numeracy.<sup>33</sup> One in five employers are providing remedial training in one or more of English, mathematics and IT for those young people joining them lacking acceptable levels in these basic skills.<sup>34</sup>

## The context

The Coalition Government has driven forward educational reform at unprecedented speed. The number of academies has grown from 203 in 2010 (prior to the formation of the Coalition Government) to 3,086 as of August 2013,<sup>35</sup> greatly extending the amount of autonomy enjoyed by schools. The programme has also extended to encompass primary and special schools for the first time. A major effect of this has been to reduce the role of most local authorities in education and to lead to the development of a number of academy chains and federations. A Pupil Premium has been introduced so that poorer pupils attract additional funds to their schools. The Free Schools initiative has been launched and parents, charities and not-for-profit organisations have, to January 2013, established 79 new schools with many more planned.<sup>36</sup> League tables have been adjusted to encourage schools to focus on core subjects and to take account of all pupils' attainment. The relevance of many vocational qualifications has also been reviewed.

It is in the context of these rapid changes – the full effects of which are unlikely to be felt for some years – that this report is written. As was set out in *Breakthrough Britain*, the CSJ supports this broad direction of education reform – indeed a number of ideas that the Government has implemented were presented in our previous work on educational failure. The challenge for this state-of-the-nation report and its successor piece that will make recommendations to political parties is to ask how ministers can go further in spreading opportunity to the children, families and communities still cut-off from it.

## The scope of the report

The purpose of this state-of-the-nation report is to examine the failures of the mainstream education system and the reasons behind those failings – particularly where these affect the most disadvantaged members of society with the most to gain from formal education, as well

31 Hansard, Written answers and statements, 12 Nov 2012

32 Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (see Table 3a)

33 Confederation of British Industry, *Learning to grow: what employers need from education and skills*, London: CBI, 2012

34 Ibid

35 Department for Education, *All open academies August 2013* [accessed via: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/xlsx/a/all%20open%20academies%20aug%202013%20v1%2000.xlsx> (07/07/13)]

36 Department for Education, *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2013*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (This reflects the number of primary free schools, secondary free schools, special free schools and alternative provision free schools, open as of January 2013)

as to examine some of the key reforms introduced since *Breakthrough Britain*. This will form the foundations for *Breakthrough Britain II*, where the CSJ's Educational Failure Working Group will make a series of policy recommendations to improve on current practice.

We live in a meritocratic society where outcomes are expected to vary. However, equality of opportunity should be the norm. To achieve this we must better understand the source and nature of the disadvantages that some children are forced to combat on a daily basis. Whilst some stem from the home a child has come from, many failings are still rooted in our school system; the quality of teaching, in particular, has an exceptionally large impact on attainment for disadvantaged pupils.

There are many groups of disadvantaged children who require more from education. Children from poorer backgrounds are still considerably less likely to do well at school. Last year, only 36 per cent of pupils known to be eligible for FSM<sup>37</sup> achieved five or more GCSEs at A\* to C or equivalent including English and mathematics, compared with 63 per cent for all other pupils.<sup>38</sup>

However, the vast majority of children who suffer educational failure are not those from minority subsections of society, such as those eligible for FSM or those looked after in the care system. Of the 228,455 children who failed to get good passes in both English and mathematics GCSE last year – in itself a truly dismal figure – 78 per cent were not eligible for FSM.<sup>39</sup> However, they are considerably more likely to struggle to find work and to progress in it, risking the opportunities for their own children down the line.

The quality of a child's home learning environment and the support they receive from their parents have a colossal effect on their outcomes. Children are in school for 15 per cent of their waking hours/life between birth and the age of 16.<sup>40</sup> Parents on low incomes with difficult work commitments may struggle to find as much time to support their children as they would like. Similarly some parents are held back by addiction, domestic abuse or poor mental health. Where it happens, parental neglect has catastrophic effects on attainment. Parents who were themselves failed by the education system often distrust it to serve their children well. If parents do not have high aspirations for their children's education, it is unlikely that their children will.

Likewise, the importance of transitions and the cumulative effects of disadvantage cannot be underestimated. As the CSJ has long argued, it is vital to intervene early before disadvantages have accumulated and worsened. This report will shed light on the fact that too often children arrive at primary school underdeveloped and unready for learning. If a child starts school unable to answer to their own name, put a sentence together or understand simple

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37 Children eligible for free school meals is a common metric of income poverty. Children are currently eligible if for example, their parents receive any of a range of qualifying benefits, such as Income Support, and if they have ever received this in the last five years. Other groups are also eligible, such as looked after children and the children of service personnel.

38 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

39 Ibid

40 Campaign for Learning, *Animate Learning! Family Handbook*, London: Campaign for Learning, 2013

instructions – their chances of fulfilling their potential are immediately thwarted. Whilst literacy and numeracy are essential, so is good communication. A staggering 50 per cent of children in some areas of social disadvantage start school with poor language.<sup>41</sup>

Just as the early years affect what happens in primary school, secondary schools are partially reliant on the success of their feeder primary schools. Instead of excelling, pupils leaving primary school with inadequate levels of literacy and numeracy are forced to spend their time in secondary school catching-up. Many never do. Last year, 81 per cent of those who, at the end of primary school, scored in the top third of the Level 4 mark range in both English and mathematics went on to achieve at least five GCSEs A\* to C, including English and mathematics – whereas only 47 per cent of pupils who did not score in the top or middle third of the mark range did so.<sup>42</sup>

Responsibility cannot rest solely with primary schools. Poor transitions and outcomes also reflect low expectations from some secondary schools during Years 7 and 8. Low expectations from both families and schools have a significant effect on outcomes, with children responding to the expectations and aspirations held for them. Whilst what happens at the end of primary school (Year 6) is very important, so too is how this is supplemented by what happens at the start of secondary school in Years 7 and 8.

In some cases, so excellent is the quality of schools, their leadership and their teaching that they manage to overcome all the other disadvantages a child may face. The quality of teaching is the most important school-based factor determining pupils' educational outcomes.<sup>43</sup> Yet sadly, too often the quality of teaching is substandard and inert to reform. Excellent leadership and teaching should constitute a norm, rather than an example of best practice.

In looking at these key issues, we have sought not only to look at the plentiful data which exists for educational inputs and outcomes, but also to listen to the insight of those teachers and headteachers who work in the system and see its strengths, weaknesses and full potential. Their views have revealed factors which are not always revealed in the statistics and have brought to the fore issues that might otherwise be lost.

There are also subjects that the Working Group has decided not to consider. Notable amongst these is special educational needs (SEN). Whilst many young people with SEN – such as those in mainstream school and those in alternative provision – will be covered by the topics discussed here, we have not discussed the role of statementing or special schools. These extremely important issues would have made the study too long and deserve treatment in their own right.

Much excellent work is already done in our schools – indeed over the past 25 years there have been some important improvements in the quality of education across the country.

41 Ainscow et al, *An Evaluation of The Communication Trust's 'Talk of the Town' Project*, Manchester: Centre for Equity in Education, 2012

42 Department of Education, Press Release, *Package of primary school measures will raise ambition – and standards*, 5 March 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/package-of-primary-school-measures-will-raise-ambition-and-standards> (04/06/13)]

43 Chetty R, Friedman J and Rockoff J, *The long-term impacts of teachers: teacher value-added and student outcomes in adulthood*, NBER Working Paper No 17699, Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011

However, there is, unquestionably, a very long way to go. There are huge cohorts of children for whom school does not provide the tools they need in order to get into and progress in work. These young people will be disadvantaged for life. The intention of these two reports is to examine how the great successes that can be found in parts of the education system can be replicated and spread to the children, families, schools and communities that they are yet to reach. Doing this offers the chance to give the next generation greater advantages and opportunities, more security, and give them routes out of poverty.

## chapter one

# Measuring educational failure

By every measure, far too many children are still not achieving their potential in education. Any child, from any background, who leaves school without basic, applicable skills and qualifications is likely to be disadvantaged for life. Although there has been an increase in the number of young people achieving five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics (the most used benchmark) there are still a shockingly large number of children who are not meeting this basic level. More worryingly, it is recognised that despite the fact that the number of pupils passing GCSEs has increased almost every year, there is good evidence to suggest that this is in part representative of grade inflation rather than improvement.

This chapter looks at the extent of failure and inequality within the education system and considers whether standards really are improving.

### 1.1 GCSEs

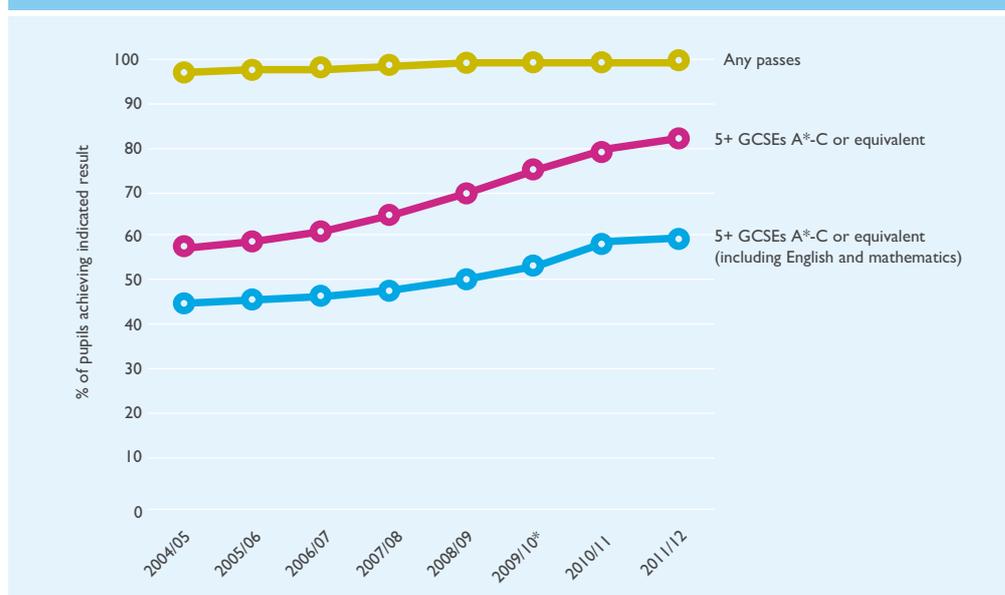
One of the simplest ways to measure educational failure is by the qualifications pupils have achieved by the time they complete compulsory schooling at KS4 (GCSE level). In recent years, the standard benchmark for pupils and schools has been based on a measure of five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics.

In 2012, though the results have improved almost every year since GCSEs began, two out of every five pupils (or more than 231,000 young people) did not hit the target of five A\* to C including English and mathematics.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (see Table 3a)

Figure 1: Time series of GCSE or equivalents attempts and achievements<sup>45</sup>



Whilst attainment would appear to have increased overall, too many children, schools, and areas are not keeping pace. Last year, 195 state-funded mainstream schools across England failed to hit the Government's GCSE floor standard of having at least 40 per cent of pupils achieve five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics.<sup>46</sup> In the same year, there were eight local authorities in which at least 20 per cent of schools fell below the GCSE floor standard. These areas are also amongst some of the most economically and socially disadvantaged in the country.<sup>47</sup>

Table 1

Local Authority	Percentage of schools below the floor standard
Nottingham	46.2
Barnsley	42.9
Knowsley	42.9
Blackpool	37.5
Isle of Wight	33.3
Stockton-on-Tees	25.0
Portsmouth	20.0
Thurrock	20.0
<b>TOTAL (State-funded mainstream sector)</b>	6.6

At secondary level, in 2011, one in ten schools in the most deprived decile failed to reach the KS4 floor target, compared with only one in 100 in the least deprived. The same pattern

<sup>45</sup> Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

<sup>46</sup> Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013; a school is below the floor standard if less than 40 per cent of pupils achieve five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics and the expected progress between KS2 and KS4 is less than the median of 70 per cent in English and less than the median of 70 per cent in mathematics.

<sup>47</sup> Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

is present at primary school: one in five schools in the most deprived decile failed to reach the floor target at KS2, compared with only one in 50 schools in the least deprived areas.<sup>48</sup>

*'Educational failure for disadvantaged young people opens up an even wider gulf to their peers and potentially impacts their life as an adult with restricted work opportunities leaving low-paid work, welfare or "off the market" (illegal) activities as the only really viable options.'*

**Matt Band, Executive Director at One in a Million (charity and Free School)**

Whilst the majority of pupils do gain at least one pass at grade C, attaining a C or above in both English and mathematics is increasingly viewed as the bare minimum level all pupils should achieve. Such passes are essential for most careers as entry-level employment frequently expects passes in these subjects as a prerequisite for applications, as do most university courses.

Despite the fundamental importance of these subjects, nearly a quarter of a million pupils – 228,455 pupils or 41 per cent of pupils at state-funded schools did not get A\* to C in both English and mathematics last year.<sup>49</sup> Whilst this marks a substantial improvement from the 60 per cent of pupils who were not passing both subjects in 2002/03, it still means that, since that time, over three million children have not been able to hit this most basic of benchmarks.<sup>50</sup>

*'It's genuinely tragic how many pupils are leaving school without the basic qualifications to get onto the next steps in life, often only missing out on crucial grades, particularly in English and mathematics at GCSE by a small margin. Failure to achieve this important benchmark severely limits their chances of going on to further education, employment or training, leading to all manner of social problems, and worst of all, destroying their self esteem and potential.'*

**Susannah Clark, Action Tutoring**

Of further concern are children who receive no good grades at GCSE. Over 1,650 pupils leave school with no passes (A\* to G grades) at all, including equivalent qualifications.<sup>51</sup> When equivalents are excluded the figures are even starker: In 2011, there were a shocking 2,177 secondary schools where ten per cent of pupils did not achieve one single grade at A\* to C, excluding equivalents and 371 in which 30 per cent or more did not.<sup>52</sup>

## 1.2 Basic skills

An indicator of past educational failure is the large number of adults currently lacking good literacy and numeracy skills. These are the basic skills all members of society should have. The most recent Skills for Life Survey estimates that 5.1 million adults have Entry Level 3 or below Literacy Levels and 8.1 million had Entry Level 2 or below numeracy skills.<sup>53</sup>

48 Hansard, Written answers and statements, 12 November 2012

49 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

50 Hansard, Written Answers and Statements, 17 July 2013

51 Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (see Table 3a)

52 Hansard, Deposited paper [accessed via: [http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2012-1706/PQ128019\\_v2.xlsx](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2012-1706/PQ128019_v2.xlsx) (20/08/13)]

53 Department for Business Innovation & skills, *2011 Skills for Life Survey*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012

Poor literacy skills are a substantial barrier to progressing once in work. 63 per cent of men and 75 per cent of women with very low literacy skills have never received a promotion.<sup>54</sup> It also makes it far harder for parents affected to support and nurture their children's learning at home, for example, by reading to their children or by keeping track of homework set.

*'Literacy is everything. Some schools don't recognise that some of their pupils are the NEETs<sup>55</sup> of tomorrow. They think all the future NEETs are in the pupil referral units, when in reality, they're the ones who can't read or write properly – the ones sitting right under their noses.'*

*Robert Loach, deputy headteacher of Harrogate Pupil Referral Unit*

Progress has certainly been made in improving literacy. The key indicator, the percentage of pupils reaching the level expected for their age in reading and writing tests at age 11, has increased from 63 per cent in 1997, to 85 per cent last year. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above (the expected level) in KS2 reading tests increased by three percentage points from 84 per cent in 2011 to 87 per cent in 2012.<sup>56</sup>

This partly reflects achievements made through the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. This was established in 1997 to raise standards of literacy in primary schools over a five- to ten-year period.<sup>57</sup>

Attention has also focussed on improving children's numeracy. In 1997 the National Numeracy Pilot began and became the National Numeracy Strategy in 1999. By 2010, 98,000 more pupils achieved the expected standard than in 1998.<sup>58</sup> In 2008, 79 per cent of pupils achieved expected levels in Maths at KS2 and in 2012, 84 per cent of pupils did so.<sup>59</sup>

In an attempt to make further progress, the Government has raised the floor standard so that from 2014, primary schools will need to have at least 65 per cent of pupils achieving Level 4 (the expected levels of most 11-year-olds) in reading, writing and mathematics.<sup>60</sup> If the floor standard had been 65 per cent in 2011, 1,915 schools could have been below the floor. In 2012, 476 schools were below the primary school floor standard, but if the 65 per cent floor standard had been used – this would have risen to 866 schools.<sup>61</sup>

There remains enormous concern that too many young people leave school unfit for the work place. 35 per cent of businesses are dissatisfied with the basic literacy of school and college leavers and 30 per cent are dissatisfied with their basic numeracy.<sup>62</sup>

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54 Dugdale G and Clark C, *Literacy changes lives: An advocacy resource*, London: National Literacy Trust, 2008

55 NEETS represent young people not in education, employment or training

56 Department for Education, *National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2 in England, 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2012. Assessments involving English are not directly comparable to previous years.

57 Beard R, *National Literacy Strategy, Review of Research and other Related Evidence*, Suffolk: Department for Education and Employment, 2000

58 Department for Education, *The National Strategies 1997–2011, A brief summary of the impact and effectiveness of the National Strategies*, London: Department for Education, 2011

59 Department for Education, *National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2 in England, 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2012

60 Department for Education, Press Release, *Package of primary school measures will raise ambition – and standards*, 5 March 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/package-of-primary-school-measures-will-raise-ambition-and-standards> (08/06/13)]

61 Ibid

62 Confederation of British Industry, *Learning to grow: what employers need from education and skills*, London: CBI, 2012



In our report, *Signed on, Written off*, we evidenced the importance of 'soft' skills. We argued that 'soft' skills or 'employability' skills are more interpersonal and intuitive, and whilst they are identifiable, they are less easily taught or measured. Examples include motivation, communication, problem-solving and self-management.<sup>63</sup> The National Careers Service also outlines the importance of key 'soft' skills that employers need from their workforce, such as good communication, commitment and good time management.<sup>64</sup> Securing a job is one thing, but key skills like good manners and good time-keeping will help a person sustain, and then progress once in work.

A CSJ employer survey found that 82 per cent of entry level employers rated attitude and work ethic as important to progression versus 38 per cent for literacy and numeracy.<sup>65</sup> The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) also suggests many British employers view recruitment with an 80/20 rule – where 20 per cent of the weighting is concerned with 'hard' skills and 80 per cent to non-certified generic and 'soft' skills.<sup>66</sup>

## 1.3 Changing standards

### 1.3.1 The rise of attainment and grade inflation

With the exception of 2012 and 2013, GCSE exam results have risen year on year since they began. Whilst this should suggest that attainment is rising, there is concern that this masks a more stagnant reality. It is becoming well acknowledged that whilst there have been improvements, grade inflation is one factor behind this rise.

In its 2012 report Ofqual stated that:

*'We know that the current system can lead to grade inflation, for various reasons. Awarding committees may apply the benefit of the doubt when making decisions about whether to set a grade boundary mark at, say, 67 or 68: they will often recommend the lower mark, which will inflate rather than deflate overall outcomes. These decisions are understandable and are made with the best intentions. But if they are made each time grade boundaries are set, the cumulative effect of these small changes is that results creep slowly upwards, without there being any real evidence of improvement in the quality of students' work.'*<sup>67</sup>

Grade inflation makes it harder to identify the highest achieving students, makes it harder to track genuine progress, and risks downplaying some pupils' accomplishments.

Research on 3,000 KS3 pupils sitting a mathematics paper containing questions identical to one set in 1976 showed that whilst GCSE results have improved, levels of understanding are

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63 Centre for Social Justice, *Signed On, Written Off*, An inquiry into welfare dependency in Britain, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013

64 National Careers Service, *What are the 'soft skills' employers want?* [accessed via: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/aboutus/newsarticles/Pages/Spotlight-SoftSkills.aspx> (18/07/13)]

65 Centre for Social Justice, *Creating Opportunity, Rewarding Ambition*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2011

66 Confederation of British Industry, *Shaping Up for the Future: The Business Vision for Education and Skills*, London: CBI, 2007

67 Office of Qualifications and Exam Regulations, *GCSE English 2012*, Coventry: Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation, 2012

broadly similar to what they were more than 30 years ago.<sup>68</sup> Grade inflation is also evident when comparing GCSE results with OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data used to compare different countries' educational performance. Whilst GCSE results have improved each year, PISA data implies a decline in the UK's performance. A 2011 OECD report stated that improvements in exam results are out of sync with independent indicators of performance, suggesting 'grade inflation could be a significant factor.'<sup>69</sup>

In response to allegations of grade inflation, some schools have adopted alternative exams like the IGCSE or the International Baccalaureate. Following scrutiny of the English GCSE marking scandal in 2012, the debate on grade inflation intensified. Data from the Financial Times showed that for 2011/12, English seems to have become slightly harder overall, particularly concentrated at the C/D borderline.<sup>70</sup> The Government also announced that a single board would take responsibility for all examinations, although this appears to have now been abandoned.

*'In the past answers to lower order skills, knowledge and understanding were given the same weighting as higher order answers; and there was over marking at the C/D border as the pressure comes on schools from pupils and their parents, Ofsted, local performance tables and the DfE. I understand that Ofqual is very much aware of these factors and is looking for means to ensure this is not the case in future assessments. However, there needs to be a more statistical and scientific analysis of results to reflect expected standards as required for a modern and effective workforce be it in academia or the workplace. This should be comparable with those countries leading on education.'*

Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski DBE, Executive Head, Altrincham Grammar School for Girls and CEO, Bright Futures Educational Trust

## 1.4 Qualifications and gaming

Existing league tables have also incentivised schools to choose exams based on how easy they are to pass, rather than on their value for pupils. The five A\* to C benchmark also incentivised some schools to focus on attainment in five subjects alone, rather than stretching pupils beyond this.

Moreover, perverse incentives encouraged 'cream-skimming,' occurring where pupils close to the C/D boundary receive greatest attention by teachers.<sup>71</sup> Disturbingly, this encouraged some schools to neglect pupils at opposite ends of the spectrum – those who could have done far better (and instead allowed to 'coast' at the C mark) and those too far away from the C/D boundary to merit attention.

68 TES Newspaper, *Hit and myth: the truth about standards*, 11 December 2009

69 OECD, *Economic Surveys United Kingdom*, Paris: OECD, 2011, p10

70 Financial Times, *English GCSE and grade inflation*, 07 January 2013

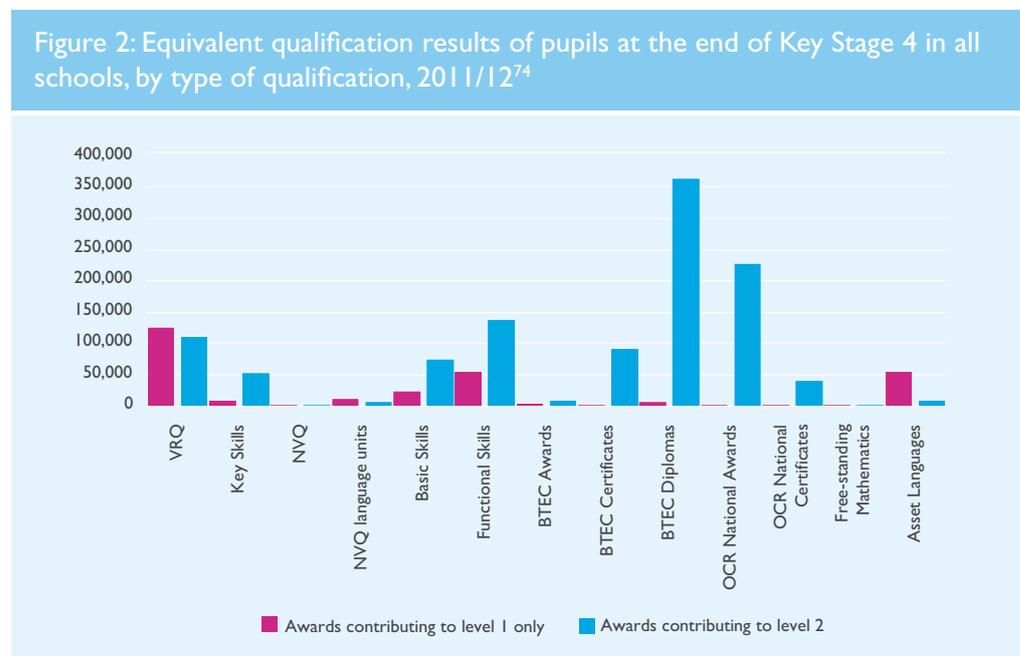
71 Department for Education, *Secondary School Accountability Consultation*, London: Department for Education, 2013

In recognition of this, Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove announced plans to reform league tables, proposing a more meaningful accountability system. This will involve two new measures:<sup>72</sup>

- The percentage of pupils in each school reaching an attainment threshold in English and mathematics;
- An average point score showing how much progress every student makes between KS2 and KS4 (age 7–16).

The average point score measure will reflect pupils' achievement across a broad range of eight subjects and will ensure that the results of all students contribute to a school's league table results. A focus on progress is also positive, as it reflects the 'distance travelled' by students and encourages them to continually strive towards higher standards, benefitting pupils at both the higher and lower ends of the attainment spectrum.

Similarly, until recently, GCSE tables have not compared like with like. Since their introduction, GCSE tables have allowed consideration of a number of subjects as being 'equivalent' to GCSE passes. Some schools have encouraged pupils to take 'equivalents' to boost their league table rankings. Many equivalents have been worth multiple GCSEs, despite often being regarded as considerably easier than core academic subjects. This led to a situation where pupils may have the equivalent of 12–15 GCSEs but lack passes in English or mathematics.<sup>73</sup> For example, a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) First Certificate is worth two GCSE A\* to C grades, and a First Diploma is worth four. As the graph below shows, BTECs have dominated this trend.



72 Speech by Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Curriculum, exam and accountability reform, 7 February 2013

73 Wolf A, *Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report*, London: Department for Education, 2011

74 Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (e.g. see chart 6)

Following a review of vocational education by Professor Alison Wolf, the Government has reduced the number of GCSE equivalent qualifications available, from 3,175 to 125. Of these, only 70 will count towards the five A\* to C benchmark.<sup>75</sup> To prevent gaming, each qualification will also count for a maximum of one GCSE.

The potential extent of gaming is seen in the staggering number of pupils who, in 2011, sat one of the qualifications that will no longer be included in 2014 tables. For example, 110,885 pupils took a Vocationally Related Qualification (VRQ) Level 2 in Computer Use, 10,960 took a course in Self Development and 10,078 took a course in Hazard Control. Other courses which have been axed include a BTEC in Fish Farming, Keyboarding Application and a VRQ Level 2 in Cake Decorating.<sup>76</sup>

Whilst this will mark an improvement, it will not itself improve outcomes. Amanda Spielman, Chair of Ofqual and Education Adviser for ARK Schools, predicts that the cuts to the number of equivalents will have an impact, but many of the “cut” equivalents will be redesigned to fit the new criteria. Indeed, any system can be gamed, however well-designed.

There have also been concerns that many schools were entering fewer and fewer pupils for core academic subjects. To ensure that GCSEs taken were of value, in 2010, the Government introduced a new GCSE performance measure called the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) requiring passes in English, mathematics, the sciences, one language, and history or geography. In a speech earlier this year, Michael Gove referred to this measure as showing ‘just how many students were getting the core elements of a liberal education. The sort of education those who can pay for their children’s schooling demand as of right.’<sup>77</sup>

The Government argues this has been done in order to reverse a decline in entries in core academic subjects like history, geography and foreign languages. Using the EBacc criteria, attainment has been extremely low. In 2012, only 16 per cent of all pupils and only 5 per cent of pupils on FSM achieved the EBacc.<sup>78</sup>

This is important given the evidence that pupils’ overall subject choice has a substantial impact on later outcomes. Regardless of pupil characteristics, pupils are more likely to achieve five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, when they study EBacc subjects.<sup>79</sup>

## 1.5 International comparisons

Despite the increases in spending on education highlighted in the introduction, relative to other countries, standards in education have not increased substantially.

75 Department for Education, Press Release, *Performance tables: only the highest quality qualifications to be included*, 31 January 2012 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/performance-tables-only-the-highest-quality-qualifications-to-be-included> (08/04/13)]

76 Hansard, Deposited Papers, 17 July 2012

77 Speech by Secretary of State for Education Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, *The Progressive Betrayal*, 05 February 2013

78 Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

79 Deloitte, *Quality Counts: What can analysis of the National Pupil Database tell us about educational outcomes?* London: Deloitte, 2012

A supposed fall in the international PISA league tables has been heavily cited as a premise behind many of the Government's sweeping educational reforms. In 2011, Michael Gove referred to PISA figures as evidence of an internationally comparative decline in standards, damning it as 'Literacy, down; numeracy, down; science, down: fail, fail, fail.'<sup>80</sup>

Between 2000 and 2009 (the latest year for which data are available), England fell from fourth to 16<sup>th</sup> in science, from eighth to 27<sup>th</sup> in mathematics and from seventh to 25<sup>th</sup> in reading.

**Table 2: England's rankings in the PISA results for 15-year-olds in science, mathematics and reading between 2000 and 2009<sup>81</sup>**

Subject	Rankings for England		
	2000 (32 Countries)	2006 (57 Countries)	2009 (65 Countries)
Reading	7th	17th	25th
Mathematics	8th	25th	27th
Science	4th	14th	16th

The strong performance of East Asian education systems stands out in these rankings. In the 2009 PISA mathematics study, Shanghai was ranked top, Singapore second, Hong Kong third, South Korea fourth, Taiwan fifth and Japan ninth.<sup>82</sup> Their education systems have played a role in their economic performance and are now having a strong influence on our policy-making environment.

The high value these countries place on education is reflected in the quality of their teachers and in the emphasis on learning at home; evidenced through parents' investment in tutoring services and the large number of hours spent in independent study.<sup>83</sup> This implies the need for a cultural shift recognising the value of education. East Asian children significantly out-perform their English peers, even within the English education system.

TIMSS (Trends in International Maths and Science Study) also identifies Japan, Hong Kong and Korea as high maths test performers. However, whilst PISA rankings suggest our standards have fallen, TIMSS suggests England's performance may have risen over roughly the same period as the PISA data.<sup>84</sup> Dr. John Jerrim, a lecturer at the Institute of Education, told the CSJ that 'the changes in our PISA rankings over time are not conclusive and the fall in our PISA ranking doesn't hold up to any real statistical scrutiny.'

TIMSS focusses on children's ability to meet an internationally agreed curriculum, whereas PISA examines functional ability – how well young people can use the skills in 'real life' situations.

80 Hansard, Oral Answers to Questions, 7 February 2011

81 Department for Education, Press Release, *Major international study shows England's 15-year-olds performing poorly in mathematics, science and reading*, 7 December 2010 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-international-study-shows-englands-15-year-olds-performing-poorly-in-mathematics-science-and-reading> 06/07/13]] (PISA uses countries/economies)

82 Jerrim J and Choi A, *The mathematics skills of school children: How does England compare to the high performing East Asian jurisdictions?* DoQSS Working Paper No. 13-03, London: The Institute of Education and the University of London, 2013

83 Pearson, *The secrets of Asian education success* [accessed via: <http://thelearningcurve.pearson.com/articles/article/the-secrets-of-asian-education-success> (07/06/13)]

84 Jerrim J and Choi A, *England's "plummeting" PISA test scores between 2000 and 2009: Is the performance of our secondary school pupils really in relative decline?* London: The Institute of Education, 2011

TIMSS is said to more closely resemble our national curriculum and may explain why performance was better on this test.<sup>85</sup>

Additionally, the two most recent PISA tests were set in November or December rather than in March, April or May. This means that pupils sitting tests in earlier years had approximately five months more schooling than those tested in 2006 and 2009. The total number of countries in PISA has also increased from 43 in 2000 to 65 in 2009: Dr John Jerrim argues it is easier to come tenth in a league of 43 than it is in a league of 65.<sup>86</sup> These caveats are important given how much emphasis has been put on PISA rankings by policymakers.

OECD data also show that in the UK, expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP exceeded the OECD average, and exceeded countries like Korea and Japan.<sup>87</sup>

Either way, international comparisons show that despite spending more than many other countries, there has not been a marked improvement in the relative performance of our education system.

## 1.6 Conclusion

The extent of failure in our education system remains shocking. Far too many children are leaving school ill-equipped to progress in life and work. There is an urgent need to drive up standards for those pupils – regardless of background – who may leave school without even basic qualifications. Whilst there have been some improvements it is clear that there is still an extremely long way to go. The rest of the report looks at some of the factors that continue to hold children back, the groups of young people who suffer from disproportionate disadvantage, and the current quality of schools, teaching and leadership.

85 Jerrim J and Choi A, *The mathematics skills of school children: How does England compare to the high performing East Asian jurisdictions?* DoQSS Working Paper No. 13-03, London: The Institute of Education and the University of London, 2013

86 Jerrim J and Choi A, *England's "plummeting" PISA test scores between 2000 and 2009: Is the performance of our secondary school pupils really in relative decline?* London: The Institute of Education, 2011

87 OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD indicators*, Paris: OECD, 2013. (See chart B2.2 p184. This refers to non-tertiary education [not universities] and includes public and private funding).



## chapter two

# The children and families worst affected

'I would advise every child to choose their parents wisely.'<sup>88</sup>

**Professor Sir Michael Rutter**

Disadvantage is not spread evenly across society. Tragically, some children are far more likely to experience worse outcomes in education. Children's backgrounds and families have an enormous impact on their educational outcomes. This impact is reflected across a variety of dimensions, all affecting the ability to learn at both school and at home. Correlation is not necessarily causation and it can be difficult to isolate the effects of one particular disadvantage on outcomes. Many of these factors – parental aspiration, parental education, parental addiction and income poverty – are likely to occur simultaneously, therefore exacerbating the disadvantages children face.

This chapter considers the factors that make it harder for young people to do well at school and looks at some of the groups who are particularly badly affected.

*'You can put schools right, but the other factors don't necessarily change. This stuff will still be going on in the background. Instead of regenerating the estate, we are the escape tunnel out of it. The social context is a driver of educational failure. You can have great schools with exceptional leaders that will overcome it, but they won't overcome it 100 per cent of the time for 100 per cent of the children. It is very difficult for the school to change that context.'*

Ros McMullen, CEO of LEAF Academy Trust and Principal of the David Young Community Academy in Leeds

88 Oxford School Improvement, *The Pupil Premium: making it work in your school*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

## 2.1 Aspiration

Aspiration is very closely associated with educational attainment, regardless of a young person's background.<sup>89</sup>

Parents of those children who succeed against the odds are those that reinforce high standards of behaviour and academic expectation. A Department for Education funded project on quality provision, found that even if these parents did not have much money or a high educational attainment, they strongly believed in their own ability to support their child's learning – and where they were unable to, they found others who could.<sup>90</sup>

Children seen as 'clever' develop a more positive self-image, which is reinforced both at school and at home. However; children who experience learning difficulties or who are not regarded as very clever often develop a negative self-image and 'a sense of helplessness' – contributing to a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement.<sup>91</sup> One head told us that 'in the vast majority of cases a lack of aspiration explains variation in outcomes.'

Parental interest and aspiration have a particularly large effect on economically disadvantaged children. Parents from higher socio-economic groups tend to have higher aspirations: only half of parents in the bottom quintile think their child is likely to apply to university, compared to four out of five parents in the top socioeconomic position quintile.<sup>92</sup>

Aspirations and ambition also vary across ethnic groups. Frank Field MP argues that the fact some ethnic groups do exceptionally well points to clues in the home environment: children from families of Chinese ethnicity seem far more able to overcome all the disadvantages associated with being income-poor.<sup>93</sup>

Sir Greg Martin is the Executive Head of the Durand Academy, where 97 per cent of pupils are from an ethnic minority and around 50 per cent are eligible for FSM. He told the CSJ that:

*'most of the parents hold high expectations of their children, despite themselves facing multiple disadvantages. This reflects parents' recognition of the importance of good qualifications, for their children – many of whom may suffer from other disadvantages – to have the very best chance of succeeding in life.'*

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89 Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, The Institute of Education. *Determinants of Aspirations*, London: Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, 2008, p16

90 Siraj-Blatchford I et al, *Performing against the odds: developmental trajectories of children in the EPPSE 3–16 study*, Research Brief DFE-RB128, London: Department for Education, 2011

91 Ibid

92 Institute for Fiscal Studies, *The Role of Attitudes and Behaviours in Explaining Socio-Economics Differences in Attainment at Age 16*, 2010 [Accessed via <http://www.ifs.org.uk/wps/wp1015.pdf> (14/08/2013)]

93 Field F, *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances. London: Cabinet Office, 2010

One study found that parents' educational aspirations for their children to continue in full-time education were significantly higher among all minority groups than for white British parents.<sup>94</sup> It also found that Indian parents were most likely to have paid for private classes or tuition in subjects also taught in school and white British parents the least likely.<sup>95</sup>

Professor Denis Mongon, Senior Associate at the Innovation Unit, writes about a gap white British low-income families face between aspiration (what young people hope for) and expectation (what they think will really happen).<sup>96</sup> Low expectations can arise because of what they see happen to older generations in their family or because of what they see happen to their peers in the years above at school.

Many have reiterated how the decline of manufacturing industries has led to long-term and intergenerational unemployment in some communities which has understandably affected educational aspiration. Ruth Lupton, Professor of Education at the University of Manchester, told the CSJ that 'because success in education was not a pre-requisite for the industrial employment that young people in white working class communities would have traditionally have expected to get, further and higher education were not necessarily perceived as important.'

Rick Mower, Chief Executive at Aspire Oxford, a charity supporting homeless and disadvantaged people back into work, told the CSJ that 'there are now far fewer jobs to go to in some areas- but recognition of the value and relevance of education hasn't caught up. Plus, third-generation worklessness is much more common and the lack of working role models in many families is often a major part of the problem.'

*'Families where generations of parents have been on benefits have created dependency and a lack of aspiration and ambition for what education can deliver. Many of the families I see don't value what education can offer. Instead, there is a culture of "easy money" – where the parents look first to avenues like benefits, compensation claims, engaging in illegal activity and the informal economy.'*

Headteacher in the midlands

### White working-class pupils

*'Raising the aspirations and results of white working-class boys would do more than anything to cut the supply route to Britain's burgeoning underclass.'*

**Rt Hon Frank Field MP in evidence to the CSJ**

Whilst children on FSM are as a whole, far more disadvantaged than other children, white boys on FSM are now the lowest attaining group of all. White British children do not constitute a minority – they represent a large group of children presently failed by the system. In 2012, there were 51,521 white British

94 Strand S, *Minority Ethnic Pupils in the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)*, Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research, Department of Children, Schools, and Families, Nottingham: University of Warwick, 2007

95 Ibid

96 New Statesman, *The problem of low educational attainment among white working class students*, 28 March 2013 [Accessed via <http://www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2013/03/problem-low-educational-attainment-among-white-working-class-students> (14/08/2013)]

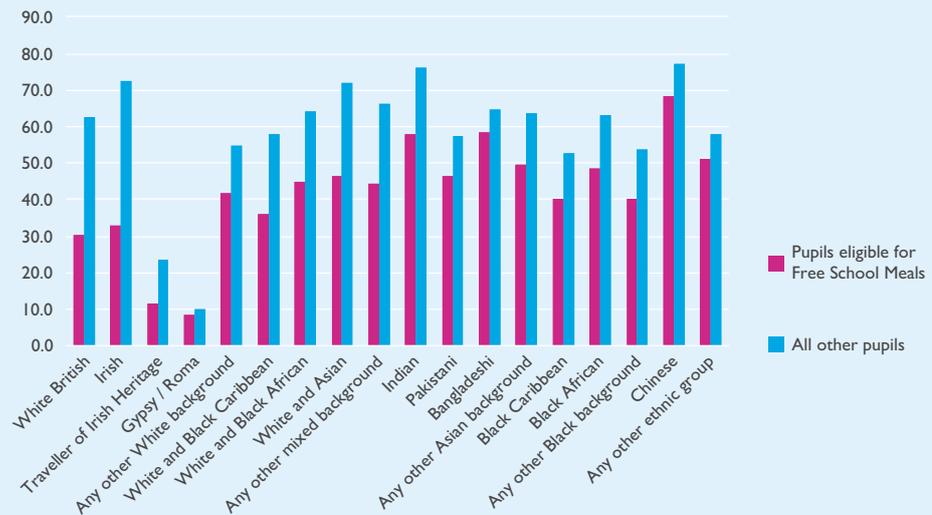
pupils eligible for FSM at the end of KS4 – representing just under two-thirds (64 per cent) of the total number of pupils eligible for FSM and nine per cent of the whole cohort.<sup>97</sup>

Last year only 26 per cent of white British boys eligible for FSM achieved five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. This compares with 36 per cent of all pupils on FSM and 63 per cent for all other pupils. At 40 per cent, attainment for black boys eligible for FSM is far higher.<sup>98</sup> White British girls on FSM are also amongst the lowest attaining: last year, only 35 per cent attained five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics, compared with 41 per cent of all girls on FSM, and 68 of girls not eligible for FSM.<sup>99</sup>

Policymakers have so far failed to close the gap for British white boys on FSM: the gap is now 0.5 percentage points wider than in 2007/08. By contrast, the gap for pupils from a black background has narrowed by an impressive 3.9 percentage points.<sup>100</sup>

The graph below shows that Gypsy / Roma children do particularly badly (although constituting a minority) whilst children of Chinese and Indian ethnicity are the highest attaining. The attainment gap between white British pupils on, and not on FSM, is startling.

Figure 3: Achievements at GCSE and equivalent for pupils by ethnicity and FSM status, 2011/12



The reasons for this growing attainment gap between the country's major ethnic groups are complex, but it is clear that schools are not always dealing with the issue. During a 2011 survey of 37 secondaries, Ofsted noted that none of the schools were focussing specifically on engaging with the families of white British students, where they were a minority.<sup>101</sup> It noted that one high-attaining, inner-city secondary

97 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (See table 2a)

98 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

99 Ibid

100 Ibid

101 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Removing barriers to literacy*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2011

school was working effectively with groups like black Caribbean boys and Somali girls but that the same school had not attempted similar work with its lowest-attaining group: white British students eligible for FSM. Another primary school had been judged outstanding at its previous inspection, but senior staff had not recognised that the achievements of the white British pupils (forming a minority in the school) were now particularly poor: 30 percentage points lower than other students in the same cohort.<sup>102</sup>

*'I too have sat through whole rafts of assemblies about Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks and Jessie Owens. The only white person mentioned all term is Adolf Hitler. ... There must be more identifiably working-class white male writers in Britain than Simon Armitage. Surely, there's also the odd chemist or mathematician. It might be nice if white kids got to know about them.'*

**Phil Beadle, former UK Secondary School Teacher of the Year<sup>103</sup>**

Hugh Rayment-Pickard, Director of Development and External Affairs at IntoUniversity, told the CSJ:

*'In some communities where we work – in West Nottingham, for example – there are white working-class families who can't always see the usefulness of education. And you can find a "so what?" attitude towards post-16 education. These families are at a disadvantage because they don't know anyone who went to university, so can't easily see the relevance of progression routes into higher education. In some ways it's unfair to expect parents to be advocates of higher education to their children, because they themselves don't have this aspiration.'*

Hugh told us that some of IntoUniversity's centres receive more applications from ethnic minority parents than white working-class parents. He said that even if these parents did not go to university themselves, there is a high cultural value placed on education and the professions, and an esteem attached to going to university.

## 2.2 Parental education

The impact of parents' education is highly significant in influencing the outcomes of their own children. As one contributing factor, parents who did not achieve at school are more likely to have children who suffer the same.<sup>104</sup> This means that getting education right is not only advantageous for those children now in school, but also for their own children in years to come.

Another reason why these children are less likely to do well at school is because parents with poor literacy, or who had a negative experience at school, are less likely, and less able, to support their children's learning. Professor Chris Husbands told the CSJ that 'society must invest hugely in parents' education: school should be a place where parents (as well as children) learn.'

Juliette Collier, Deputy Chief Executive of the Campaign for Learning, said that parents who had bad experiences of education can have a deep distrust of schools. This can contribute to antagonism between both the parents and the teachers.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> The Guardian, *Working Class Zeros, White boys failing, you say? Let them be plumbers*, 13 December 2005

<sup>104</sup> OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD indicators*, Paris: OECD, 2013

*'All parents want the best for their children. But if you found learning and school irrelevant or humiliating yourself when you were young, it's difficult to build a positive relationship with your child's school and help your child effectively. Children are only at school for 15 per cent of their waking hours: if we want the best outcomes for children, we must therefore create positive, equal partnerships between parents and teachers, so they can work together and support each other to raise children's motivation and achievement. Teachers don't currently get training and support to work with parents, despite the body of research evidence that demonstrates that what parents do has a huge impact on children's attainment. This is the single biggest thing we could do to start breaking down barriers and help them work with parents towards a shared goal.'*

Increasing parental education has a positive effect on children's outcomes evident at age four; which continues to be visible up to and including the high stakes exams taken at age 16.<sup>105</sup> The higher a parent's educational attainment the more likely it is to have a positive effect on their child's schooling. Young people from families with low levels of education are less than half as likely to be in higher education, compared with the proportion of such families in the population.<sup>106</sup>

Children of parents with degrees spend twice as much time on homework, reading and study in the home as children from less educated families. A third of 15-year-olds whose parents had little or no formal education claimed that no (or almost no) homework is ever set for them. This compared with only ten per cent of those with graduate parents.<sup>107</sup>

Middle-class children are also two and a half times as likely to have a computer; over four times as likely to have more than 200 books in the home and are significantly more likely to borrow books from a public library.<sup>108</sup> Parents from higher social groups are also more likely to help their children with homework, pay for tutors and engage in school activities.<sup>109</sup>

Juliette Collier criticises the way funding streams tend to be siloed – designated to either the child or the adult, instead of seeing this as an opportunity for whole family learning. She told the CSJ that an adult who found learning irrelevant or humiliating the first time round is unlikely to put themselves in that position again. Yet when learning is framed around their child's needs, this motivates parents to reengage with learning, in order to be able to support their children. This first step builds parents' confidence, so that they can then see learning as an opportunity to develop their own skills, for their own gain.

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105 I CAN, *Language and Social Exclusion*, London: I CAN, 2009 [accessed via: <http://www.ican.org.uk/~media/ican2/Whats%20the%20Issue/Evidence/4%20Language%20and%20Social%20Exclusion%20pdf.ashx> (03/08/13)]

106 OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD indicators*, Paris: OECD, 2013

107 Sutton Trust, *Evidence of educational support out of school*, 2009 [Accessed via [http://www.suttontrust.com/public/documents/Sutton\\_Trust\\_Home\\_Education\\_Support.pdf](http://www.suttontrust.com/public/documents/Sutton_Trust_Home_Education_Support.pdf) (14/08/2013)]

108 Sutton Trust, Press Release, *New report reveals stark education gaps beyond the classroom*, 1 December 2009 [Accessed via <http://www.suttontrust.com/news/news/new-report-reveals-stark-education-gaps-beyond-the-classroom/> (14/08/2013)]

109 Ibid



## 2.3 Parental engagement

Parental engagement in education has a huge impact on their children's schooling. If parents engage with their child's education, their attainment increases by 15 per cent, regardless of the social background of the family.<sup>110</sup> Professor James Law, an international expert in speech and communication, told the CSJ that parental interest is key:

*'too often, parents fail to realise how important it is to talk to their infants and misguidedly think that the children can't understand, they can't talk and therefore there's just no point in explicitly teaching them new words or helping them develop their language. They couldn't be more wrong.'*

Pupils are more likely to do well at KS4 if they have supportive parents, even after controlling for a wide range of family background and school characteristics, as well as attainment at age 11.<sup>111</sup> Parental interest alone also increases a child's chance of moving out of poverty as an adult by as much as 25 percentage points.<sup>112</sup>

Dr Vanessa Ogden, head at Mulberry School for Girls, told the CSJ that parental interest has a vital impact on school outcomes, hence the importance of schools building strong relationships with families. Poor attendance in primary school is especially problematic because it sets in motion trends around truancy and subsequent low attainment.<sup>113</sup>

*'I often see single mothers in my community who are raising their child/ren, leave their child's education to the school instead of seeing it as the responsibility of both parents (even if the relationship breaks down) to work in partnership with the school to ensure their child reaches his or her full potential. The priority is that child/ren are safe, fed, clothed and clean and educational attainment often falls by the wayside. I see lots of children who aren't doing as well as they could be doing at school because many single mums just don't have the time and energy to invest in their education.'*

Selena Gray, Journalist

Seamus Oates, Executive Head of the TBAP Multi-Academy Trust and The Bridge Alternative Provision Academy, warns that society must not stigmatise parents given that 'they're a big part of the problem so you've got to make them a big part of the solution.' Another headteacher told the CSJ that many parents do not trust government parenting classes which they viewed as stigmatising and patronising. By contrast, her pastoral staff talk to parents about the issues concerning them, such as housing, benefits and relationships:

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110 Oxford School Improvement, *The Pupil Premium: making it work in your school*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012

111 Institute for Fiscal Studies, *The Role of Attitudes and Behaviours in Explaining Socio-Economics Differences in Attainment at Age 16*, 2010 [Accessed via <http://www.ifs.org.uk/wps/wp1015.pdf> (14/08/2013)]

112 Department for Work and Pensions, *'Bucking the trend': What enables those who are disadvantaged in childhood to succeed later in life?* Leeds: Corporate Document Services, 2006, and see also Field F, *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances. London: Cabinet Office, 2010

113 Department for Education, *Young children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm: Experiences on entering education*, London: Department for Education, 2012

*'Parents ask how to get their kids up in the morning, because they just don't know how and never set those boundaries in place. But now they've got to because they're in trouble with courts over non-attendance.'*

### School Home Support

Jan Tallis is Chief Executive of School Home Support, a charity working with families to improve attendance and educational outcomes for disadvantaged children. They emphasise that a successful approach must ensure children are given aspirations and the opportunity to overcome the educational failure of their parents.

She told the CSJ that poor outcomes are not caused simply by financial poverty but by 'poverty of aspiration and knowledge.'

*'Providing basic, practical support like clean school shirts and providing a washing machine helps parents better support their children and leads to improved outcomes at school... You wouldn't believe how often the reason these children aren't going to school is because they've been bullied for being dirty.'*

## 2.4 Family breakdown

A stable and supportive family environment has a monumental impact on children's success at school. The environment that children wake up to, and the environment to which they come home after a long day at school, has a massive effect on their ability to learn and concentrate. Family breakdown creates instability at home, and stretches lone parents' time and resources which often has a knock-on effect on a child's education. Family breakdown is a major problem facing the country. Over three million children are growing up in lone-parent households,<sup>114</sup> about a million of whom have no meaningful contact with their fathers.<sup>115</sup>

Sir Robin Boshier, Director of Primary Education at the Harris Federation of Academies, emphasises that 25 years as a headteacher has taught him that society must not underestimate the impact of family breakdown – and the colossal effect a parent leaving home has on children. He argues that having male teachers is positive but this is not a substitute for a child having male role models at home.

John d'Abbro OBE, head at the outstanding rated New Rush Hall School, told the CSJ that family breakdown lies at the root of almost all exclusions he sees. Many of the boys grew-up without fathers and a lack of discipline at home meant they tested boundaries at school.

Some even suggested there are cultural changes at play too:

<sup>114</sup> Office for National Statistics, Statistical Bulletin: Families and Households, 2012, [accessed via: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-278923> (03/04/13)]

<sup>115</sup> Centre for Social Justice, *Fractured Families: why stability matters*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013

*'I'd get pillared for being racist if I said this, but I never used to see Asian students in the pupil referral unit and now I do. Perhaps this reflects the second generation changes that some Asian families now face around family breakdown that some Afro-Caribbean families faced in the 1970s.'*

Anonymous headteacher, in evidence to the CSJ

The National Equality Panel used surveys to analyse the impact of family type on educational attainment, finding a persistent cognitive advantage amongst the children of married parents, compared to other family types.<sup>116</sup> In addition, children from lone-parent families in both the UK and Hong Kong have statistically significant lower levels of educational aspiration than those from two-parent families.<sup>117</sup>

Children can flourish further if they experience a safe and secure family environment. This not only concerns children from broken families, but those growing up in homes where there is significant conflict, tension, a lack of stability and a revolving door of new partners. These children are far less likely to do well at school.

A three-year UK longitudinal study of 230 children aged 11–13 drawn exclusively from two-parent families found that parental conflict was linked to a subsequent lowering of children's educational attainment, largely attributed to the children's consequent sense of 'self-blame.'<sup>118</sup> Children in couple families experiencing conflict had poorer outcomes than children in lone-parent families.<sup>119</sup> Family breakdown also affects attainment because of its effects on income poverty. Approximately four in ten children in lone-parent families are in income poverty, compared to just over two in ten children in couple families.<sup>120</sup>

*'I've got one Year 9 boy in my class; he's a good kid and actually quite articulate when he speaks. But he can hardly write. He can write his name and things like that but he couldn't write a paragraph. I keep trying to explain the difference between a full-stop and a comma, and he just doesn't get it. But then you hear about how many times he's moved school and how many times he's moved home and it starts to make sense, how he got to this point. He doesn't know his dad at all. His social worker told me that literally every single time she's been to visit his mum; she's got a new boyfriend living there. He's got absolutely no stability. We're doing our very best for him but it's hard because he's 13 now.'*

Teacher, anonymous

The temporary and transient nature of men in the home means many children do not have stable male role models, and instead, have a succession of men passing through the home. In the CSJ's report, *Fractured Families: why stability matters*, we argued that where family

116 Goodman A et al, *Inequalities in educational outcomes among children aged 3 to 16, Final report for the National Equality Panel, 2009* [accessed via: <http://sta.geo.useconnect.co.uk/pdf/Inequalities%20in%20education%20outcomes%20among%20children.pdf> (23/02/13)]

117 Wang M, and Sek-Yum Ngai S, 'The Effects of Single Parenthood on Educational Aspiration: A Comparative Study of Children in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong', *Child & Youth Services*, 32, 2011, pp.135–154.

118 Harold G T, Aitkin J J and Shelton K H, 'Inter-parental conflict and children's academic attainment: a longitudinal analysis', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48, 2007, pp. 1223–1232.

119 Mooney A, Oliver C and Smith M, *Impact of Family Breakdown on Children's Well-Being*, London: Department for Children, School and Families, 2009

120 Department for Work and Pensions, *Households Below Average Income, an analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 – 2010/11*, London: Department for Work and Pensions, 2011 (after housing costs)

structures change again and again, such as with the introduction of new partners, this has a particularly negative effect on children. Research using the Millennium Cohort Study found that mothers who re-partner are less likely to have a good relationship with their child, are less likely to engage in educational activities and are more likely to use negative discipline.<sup>121</sup>

Kanika Mayi runs a programme at Waltham Forest Council for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students otherwise not fully engaged with education. Kanika herself grew up on a council estate in a deprived part of London and was one of only a few in her area to go to university. She told the CSJ that family breakdown and father absence is a significant factor behind low attainment, especially among the BAME communities she works with:

*'growing up, most of the kids on the estate didn't have fathers. They were disengaged at school and had no discipline at home. Lots of the boys joined gangs and lots of the girls got into bad relationships with men. But all they needed and wanted was a father. Even though my parents split-up when I was little, both my parents were very involved in my upbringing and education – that made the difference for me.'*

## 2.5 Child neglect and abuse

Neglect can have a considerable impact on a young person's education. Sadly, neglect, abuse and maltreatment affect a large proportion of children across the country.

'The big issue is that there are just lots of dirty, unkempt, uncared-for children. It's emotional and physical neglect.'

**Jonty Clark, Executive Head of Beckmead School**

Abuse and neglect can have a dangerous effect on brain development. As trauma hinders brain development, children exposed to chronic and unpredictable stress, for example, if a child has a parent who lashes out in fury, will suffer deficits in their ability to learn.<sup>122</sup> Children who suffer neglect tend to have lower grades, increased absence, increased disciplinary problems and higher rates of school dropout.<sup>123</sup>

Of those children who have suffered neglect:<sup>124</sup>

- Over 50 per cent experienced some type of difficulty in school – including poor attendance and disciplinary problems;
- Roughly 30 per cent had some form of cognitive or language impairment;

<sup>121</sup> Holmes J and Kiernan K, *Fragile Families in the UK: evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study*, Draft Report, 2010, p12

<sup>122</sup> Centre for Social Justice and The Smith Institute, *Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens*, London: Centre for Social Justice and The Smith Institute, 2008

<sup>123</sup> Abuse and Neglect, 23 December 2009 [accessed via: [http://www.education.com/reference/article/abuse-and-neglect/#B \(06/07/13\)](http://www.education.com/reference/article/abuse-and-neglect/#B (06/07/13))]

<sup>124</sup> Ibid

- More than 22 per cent showed evidence of a learning disorder;
- Approximately 25 per cent required some form of special education services.

Abuse and neglect harm the emotional and behavioural development of at least half the children affected by it. A study found that those who experience maltreatment as infants had the worst outcomes at age five.<sup>125</sup>

Schools are in a unique position to flag up problems, given that they see children on a consistent basis. Yet, as discussed below, specialist services do not always effectively communicate with schools and the 2011 Munro Review of Child Protection emphasised that services are too focussed on adults with too little attention on the children affected by adults' problems.

One head told us about a 14-year-old boy in her school:

*'He has very challenging and disruptive behaviour, which can be a danger to those around him. His father is a violent criminal and we know that he comes from a very chaotic home environment – where there are overlapping issues around disadvantage and abuse constantly in the background. He clearly needed medical attention and yet nothing was being done. So last week, we as a school took it upon ourselves to take him to A&E – only for his mum to get angry with us because she had to pick him up from the hospital and said we'd wasted her time! There needs to be awareness of the contexts we work with on a day-to-day basis and that some of these pupils have so many problems that educational attainment is not their major concern.'*

Another head told us about an eight-year-old boy who would soon be starting at the school:

*'mum and gran were stood in my office, and they said to me "he's a nightmare. A f\*\*\*\*\* nightmare. Good luck with him." And this little boy was just stood there in the middle. It was just excruciating to watch. This is extreme emotional neglect we're talking about.'*

## 2.6 Children in care

At present approximately one in every 170 children in England are looked after by the state.<sup>126</sup> Children in care start off extremely disadvantaged, with these disadvantages often exacerbated by the care system. These children are more likely to need additional support with their emotional, mental or physical health and wellbeing than any other group.<sup>127</sup> Many of them will suffer enormous disruption during their school years. Every year 7,000 children have three or more placements.<sup>128</sup> Of the children leaving care in the year to 31 March

<sup>125</sup> Ward H et al, *Young children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm: Experiences on entering education*, Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough: Loughborough University, 2012

<sup>126</sup> Department for Education, *Children looked after by local authorities in England, including adoption*, London: Department for Education, 2012

<sup>127</sup> All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, *Education Matters in Care, A report by the independent cross-party inquiry into the educational attainment of looked after children in England, 2012* [accessed via: [http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/data/files/Education\\_Matters\\_in\\_Care\\_September\\_2012.pdf](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/data/files/Education_Matters_in_Care_September_2012.pdf) (19/08/13)]

<sup>128</sup> Burghart A, *A Better Start in Life*, London: Policy Exchange, 2012

2011, around 1,270 had had more than ten placements.<sup>129</sup> Instability of other kinds is also commonplace. Although figures are not routinely collected, surveys suggest that some children have more than 20 different social workers whilst they are in care.<sup>130</sup> Another survey also found that almost half the group had attended six or more schools and seven had attended more than ten different schools.<sup>131</sup>

The levels of attainment for these children are appalling. Only 15 per cent of children looked after for at least a year achieved five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics last year, compared with 58 per cent for non-looked after children.<sup>132</sup>

As a result of the poor educational outcomes experienced by so many children in care, the Government has allocated Pupil Premium funding for children who have been in care for more than six months.<sup>133</sup> It has also built on the work of the last government which set up the Virtual School Head (VSH) initiative as a way of improving attainment and provision for looked after children. A VSH is someone who has been appointed by the local authority to promote the educational achievement of all the children looked after by that council. These children are on a 'virtual' school roll, although physically spread out across schools in the borough and beyond.<sup>134</sup>

As a school may have a very small number of children in care on its register; they may not have the expertise to support the needs of these children. By contrast, the VSH will have specialist knowledge and experience, which they can then use to support headteachers. They can also liaise with the local authority and with all schools in the area on how they can promote the learning and education available to these children.<sup>135</sup>

Looked after children in local authorities with strong VSH arrangements in place have achieved improved results. Last year, 40 per cent of looked after children in Warrington achieved five good GCSEs and 38 per cent in North Tyneside.<sup>136</sup> This compares to the national average of 15 per cent who achieved five A\* to Cs including English and mathematics last year.<sup>137</sup>

This Government has announced plans to make the VSH a statutory post with responsibility for discharging the existing duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of their looked after children.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Ibid (data provided by the Department for Education for the report)

<sup>130</sup> Centre for Social Justice, *Couldn't Care Less*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2008

<sup>131</sup> Barnardo's, *Failed By The System, The views of young care leavers on their educational experiences*, London: Barnardos, 2006

<sup>132</sup> Department for Education, *Outcomes for Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England, as at 31 March 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

<sup>133</sup> Department for Education, *How schools can support looked after children*, 04 May 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/education/a00208595/school-support> (20/08/13)]

<sup>134</sup> The Who Cares Trust, *Virtual headteachers*, [accessed via: <http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/pages/virtual-headteachers.html> (17/08/13)]

<sup>135</sup> Department for Education, *Improving the adoption system and services for looked-after children*, 31 July 2013, [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-adoption-system-and-services-for-looked-after-children> (16/08/13)]

<sup>136</sup> Department for Education, *Help for children in care to achieve better school results*, 12 December 2012 [accessed via <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/help-for-children-in-care-to-achieve-better-school-results> (18/08/13)]

<sup>137</sup> Department for Education, *Outcomes for Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England*, as at 31 March 2012, London: Department for Education, 2012

<sup>138</sup> 'Edward Timpson MP letter to all directors of children's services and lead members', London: Department for Education, 12 December 2012

This is a step in the right direction, one that the CSJ called for in 2008.<sup>139</sup> However, more must be done to improve the outcomes of children in care and the outcomes they experience when they leave care. Contributing to our understanding of these issues, the CSJ is conducting research into outcomes and interventions for care leavers which we will report on over the course of the next year.

## 2.7 Domestic violence

The CSJ's report, *Beyond Violence: Breaking cycles of domestic abuse*, highlighted evidence that children caught up in domestic abuse are at greater risk of suffering behavioural and educational problems.<sup>140</sup> Domestic violence is associated with depression, loss of confidence, stigma, isolation, sleep deprivation and drug or alcohol misuse. Growing up in a home where there is domestic violence can result in lower cognitive functioning, poor educational engagement, poorer problem solving skills and lower attainment.<sup>141</sup> Consequently, domestic abuse has a terribly negative impact on educational outcomes.

The risk of domestic violence is almost doubled when there are children in the household.<sup>142</sup> An estimated 950,000 children are affected by domestic violence, either directly or indirectly as witnesses.<sup>143</sup> It is estimated that around one in six children who are aged between 11 and 17 have experienced domestic violence between adults in their homes.<sup>144</sup>

Becky Rogerson, Director of My Sister's Place, a Middlesbrough-based charity which offers services to women affected by domestic violence, told the CSJ about the catastrophic impact domestic violence has on children's education:

*'These children sometimes spend the night at A&E or at the police station. Many mothers say to me "he'd never do it in front of the kids" – but the kids pick up on that and it's common for older children especially to miss school or stay up all night acting as a "human-shield." When these children do go to school, they're just too exhausted, or too worried to learn.'*

The shortage of local refuges means families can be sent across the country, often at short-notice. This means they must change schools and often end up staying in temporary B&B accommodation, where they turn up at school without books or clean clothes. This not only means these children fall behind, but sadly it often leads to bullying, which is itself associated with negative outcomes and poor attendance.

Jonty Clark, Executive Head of Beckmead School, told the CSJ that domestic violence is almost always present as an underlying cause of the severe attachment issues affecting the majority of the children at the school:

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139 Centre for Social Justice, *Couldn't care less*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2008

140 Centre for Social Justice, *Beyond violence: Breaking cycles of domestic abuse*, London: Centre For Social Justice, 2012

141 Wagstaff M, *Through the eyes of a child: How do children who have experienced domestic violence see the world*, Bristol: University of Bristol, 2009

142 Home Office Research Project, *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, London: Home Office, 2004

143 4Children, *The Enemy Within, 4 million reasons to tackle family conflict and family violence*, London: 4Children, 2012

144 Radford L et al, *Child abuse and neglect in the UK today*, London: NSPCC, 2011

*'eventually, the children and their mums will open up about these problems at home, as they start to trust us. Often, domestic violence is linked to mothers having multiple and transient partners in the home.'*

Dr Elly Farmer, a Clinical Psychologist, told the CSJ that:

*'Children who are being abused or who are living with domestic violence frequently struggle to make the most of learning opportunities at school – many experience traumatic memories intruding into their minds without warning, interrupting trains of thought that are so key to understanding; they often cope with difficult memories and feelings by either retreating from reality and/or by being on “red alert” and either one means that they may find it extremely difficult to concentrate; and low self-esteem and shame act to inhibit children from taking on the challenges which are so often at the heart of new skills emerging.'*

## 2.8 Addiction

Addiction to drugs and/or alcohol not only affects those with the addiction themselves, but it has serious and far reaching consequences on their children, often affecting their performance at school.

This is not a marginal issue. There are an estimated 700,000 children in Britain living with a dependent drinker and 335,000 children live with a dependent drug user.<sup>145</sup>

These problems affect children of all ages. Women using cannabis whilst pregnant tend to have babies with a lower birth weight and have lower subsequent cognitive ability.<sup>146</sup> When in school, these children often worry about parents' safety, experience bullying or miss school to care for dependent parents. Parental addiction can lead to neglect and abuse as these parents struggle to prioritise their children's needs.

Some parents will be completely unable to care for their children. Many of these children are then looked after by 'kinship carers.' A study found that whilst these children fared significantly better than those looked after in non-kin foster care, they still fared worse than children in the general population. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire about three to 16 year olds. 34 per cent of the group scored abnormally on the SDQ scale.<sup>147</sup>

Andrew Brown from Mentor UK told the CSJ that 'teachers are the ones that notice when a parent turns up drunk or when a child is late for school. They can spot things other services can't.' However, teachers are not always trained in spotting the signs or in knowing what

<sup>145</sup> Manning et al, 'New estimates of the number of children living with substance misusing parents: results from UK national household surveys' *BMC Public Health*, 9, 2009

<sup>146</sup> Sherwood R.A, Keating J and Kavvadia V, 'Substance misuse in early pregnancy and relationship to fetal outcome', *European Journal of Pediatrics*, 158, 1999, pp488–492

<sup>147</sup> University of Bristol in partnership with Buttle UK, *The Poor Relations? Children and Informal Kinship Carers Speak Out*, Summary Report, 2013

procedures to follow. He criticises what he sees as a 'culture of suspicion' where teachers can feel it is not their place to interfere or ask parents difficult questions.

The children of problematic drug users are seven times more likely to grow up with drug and alcohol problems themselves.<sup>148</sup> The long-term effects of this are severe. Research spanning 38 countries found a positive correlation between those who had experienced early drunkenness and five other risky behaviours – smoking, cannabis use, injuries, fights and low academic performance.<sup>149</sup>

## 2.9 Mental health

Mental health can have a substantial impact on educational outcomes, contributing to difficulties concentrating, learning and in getting on with peers. Children are affected either because their parents suffer from mental health problems, or because they experience them directly.

Many children grow up with a parent who, at some point, will have some degree of mental illness.<sup>150</sup> At any one time it is estimated that as many as one in six of the population experience mental ill health. Around 630,000 adults are estimated to be in contact with specialised mental health services.<sup>151</sup>

Alarming, no data is collected either nationally or locally about how many adults receiving specialised mental health services are parents or carers.<sup>152</sup> However it is estimated that 30 per cent of adults with mental ill health have dependent children.<sup>153</sup> Many parents with long-term mental health problems face alcohol or drug problems as well.<sup>154</sup>

The effects on children and their education are substantial. Children may find it necessary to act as carers, either for their parents or for siblings – leading them to miss school and fall behind. There are an estimated 175,000 young carers in the UK who are caring for a parent or other family member with mental health problems.<sup>155</sup> If a parent is admitted to hospital, this can also be extremely disruptive and stressful.<sup>156</sup>

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148 Mckeganey N, 'Pre-teen Children and Illegal drugs', *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 11, 2004, pp. 315–327

149 Kuntsche E, 'Not Early Drinking but Early Drunkenness Is a Risk Factor for Problem Behaviors Among Adolescents from 38 European and North American Countries', *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 37, 2013.

150 The Royal College of Psychiatrists, *Parental mental illness: the impact on children and adolescents: information for parents, carers and anyone who works with young people*, [accessed via: <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/parentsandyouthinfo/parents/carers/parentalmentalillness.aspx> (27/06/2013)]

151 Family Action, *Families Affected by Parental Mental Health Difficulties*, briefing [accessed via: <http://www.family-action.org.uk/uploads/documents/Mental%20health%20briefing%231%23.pdf> (15/08/13)]

152 Office for Standards of Education, *What about the children? Joint working between adult and children's services when parents or carers have mental ill health and/or drug and alcohol problems*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, 2013

153 Family Action, *Families Affected by Parental Mental Health Difficulties*, briefing [accessed via: <http://www.family-action.org.uk/uploads/documents/Mental%20health%20briefing%231%23.pdf> (15/08/13)]

154 The Royal College of Psychiatrists, *Parental mental illness: the impact on children and adolescents: information for parents, carers and anyone who works with young people* [accessed via: <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/parentsandyouthinfo/parents/carers/parentalmentalillness.aspx> (27/06/2013)]

155 The Mental Health Foundation, *Parents*, [Accessed via: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-a-z/P/parents/> (14/08/13)]

156 Ibid

Naturally, some will become withdrawn and find it near-impossible to concentrate on their school work.<sup>157</sup> They may experience greater levels of emotional, psychological and behavioural problems.<sup>158</sup> In addition to worrying about their parents, sadly, some children will face stigma or bullying at school.<sup>159</sup>

About one in five children have a mental health problem in any one year and one in ten at any one point in time.<sup>160</sup> This can substantially affect their learning. Three in five children with SEN will also develop a mental health problem<sup>161</sup> and children of single-parent families are twice as likely to have a mental health problem as children of two-parent families.<sup>162</sup> Around 60 per cent of looked after children have been reported to have emotional and mental health problems.<sup>163</sup>

Common mental health problems affecting pupils include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), depression and eating disorders. Conduct disorders are the most common reason for referral to mental health services for young children. They affect approximately 6.5 per cent of boys, and 2.7 per cent of girls.<sup>164</sup>

The response to supporting these children is, sadly, often inadequate. This is deeply concerning given the prevalence and impact mental health problems can have on children and their education. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is an umbrella term covering services like support and advice and more intensive interventions such as inpatient care. Worryingly, access to CAMHS is often limited. Sarah Brennan, Chief executive of YoungMinds, told the CSJ that many heads are frustrated with CAMHS. Even when they are able to access services, its 'silo-approach' and rules around confidentiality mean almost no information can then be relayed back to the school.

The School Survey run by the Audit Commission found that a large proportion of schools were not satisfied with mental health support provided. 44 per cent of schools rated the effectiveness of local services in meeting the mental health needs of children and young people as below satisfactory.<sup>165</sup> Two-thirds of local authorities have reduced their CAMHS budget since 2010 with one council reporting a drop of 41 per cent.<sup>166</sup>

157 The Royal College of Psychiatrists, *Parental mental illness: the impact on children and adolescents: information for parents, carers and anyone who works with young people* [accessed via: <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/parentsandyouthinfo/parents/carers/parentalmentalillness.aspx> (27/06/2013)]

158 The Mental Health Foundation, *Parents* [Accessed via: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-a-z/P/parents/> (14/08/13)]

159 Ibid

160 The Mental Health Foundation, *Lifetime Impacts: Childhood and Adolescent Mental Health, Understanding The Lifetime Impacts*, 2005

161 Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, *Mental health and emotional well-being The new dimension in the curriculum for children and young people with special educational needs*, London: Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, 2010 [accessed via: [http://www.education.gov.uk/complexneeds/modules/Module-3.4-Emotional-well-being-and-mental-health/All/downloads/m12p010b/mental\\_health\\_and\\_emotional\\_wellbeing.pdf](http://www.education.gov.uk/complexneeds/modules/Module-3.4-Emotional-well-being-and-mental-health/All/downloads/m12p010b/mental_health_and_emotional_wellbeing.pdf) (16/06/13)]

162 Meltzer H et al, *Mental Health of Children and Adolescents in Great Britain*, London: The Stationery Office, 2000

163 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, public health guidance 28: *Looked-after children and young people*, Manchester: National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2010

164 The Royal College of Psychiatrists, *Conduct disorders: an overview* [accessed via: [http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/files/samplechapter/80\\_3.pdf](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/files/samplechapter/80_3.pdf) (16/08/13)]

165 Audit Commission, *National School Survey Results*, London: Audit Commission, 2008 [accessed via: <http://archive.audit-commission.gov.uk/auditcommission/SiteCollectionDocuments/AnnualReports/2008/SchoolSurvey2008.pdf> (28/07/13)]

166 Young Minds, *Local authorities and CAMHS budgets 2012/2013 Briefing*, [accessed via: [http://www.youngminds.org.uk/about/our\\_campaigns/cuts\\_to\\_camhs\\_services](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/about/our_campaigns/cuts_to_camhs_services) (09/06/2013)]

Pupils also often refuse to access CAMHS externally. Some leaders have therefore taken it upon themselves to pay for a CAMHS worker to come into their school, and offer support on-site where the pupils can easily, and more readily, access the services. John d'Abbro told the CSJ that 'the pupils won't go to CAMHS so I've had to bring CAMHS to the pupils.' Seamus Oates also has a CAMHS worker on-site as otherwise 'the stigma is so great that the pupils would never access it. Or at best, they would go once and never go again.'

The stigma surrounding mental health, especially for young people, remains a substantial problem. Jonty Clark told the CSJ that 'some of the families find any association with CAMHS stigmatising following unsuccessful engagements with older siblings. The CAMHS model fails to realise the utter chaos affecting most of these families – where traumatic events like death, parental imprisonment, unemployment and illness are almost "normal" life-events. These families are affected by crisis after crisis.'

Camden Clinical Commissioning Group, in partnership with Camden Council, ensures that CAMHS is in secondary schools for at least one day a week – increasing pupils' propensity to access support on-site. Sarah Brown, Senior Joint Commissioning Manager of Children Schools and Families at the London Borough of Camden, said that:

*'mental health shouldn't be seen as something children either "do or don't have" but more holistically as a continuum of needs. This means offering support early on and addressing needs before they escalate.'*

Amanda Spielman told the CSJ that there are certainly substantial levels of mental health problems in schools and yet simultaneously:

*'mental health is a continuum – there's a danger of us boxing all the problems up together with a big label when actually some problems are normal issues around adolescence.'*

## 2.10 Speech and language difficulties

Children with poor language skills are more likely to struggle in education, whereas those with good language skills are less affected by the negative influence of socio-economic disadvantage and more likely to succeed in education and employment.<sup>167</sup> Approximately one in every 62 children (1.61 per cent) is known to have Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).<sup>168</sup>

Because communication precedes literacy, if children cannot first communicate effectively, it will be considerably harder for them to learn to read or write.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Blanden, J 'Bucking the trend': What enables those who are disadvantaged in childhood to succeed later in life? London: Department for Work and Pensions, 2006

<sup>168</sup> Law J et al, *Early language delays in the UK*, Newcastle University and Save the Children, London: Save the Children, 2013

<sup>169</sup> Hart B and Risley T R, *The Social World of Children Learning to Talk*. Baltimore, Paul Brookes, 1999

A large-scale study of children born in and around Bristol in the early 1990s found that the communication environment – including how many books a child has in the home and how much television is watched – is a more dominant predictor of early language and of 'school readiness' than social background.<sup>170</sup> Children owning more books and who were taken to the library more frequently at age two achieved higher scores on the school assessment when entering primary school.<sup>171</sup>

These disadvantages persist into adulthood: 35 per cent of offenders have only basic-level speaking and listening skills.<sup>172</sup>

Professor James Law observes that:

*'boys tend to develop later than girls in the early years and tend to be more commonly referred to specialist children's services. Concern is sometimes expressed about boys being singled out as being "problems" early on in primary school because they have difficulties expressing themselves and teachers sometimes assume that they are being naughty when they simply do not understand what is being said to them. Recent data suggest that, although school exclusions are falling overall, those in primary schools and especially those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs are rising.'*

SLCN has a significant effect on employment prospects. As shown, good communication and related 'soft' skills are viewed by employers as being absolutely fundamental. There is an emphasis on more customised high value goods and services<sup>173</sup> where success often depends on the quality of interactions between employees and customers.<sup>174</sup>

Some communities are particularly badly affected by SLCN. The Communication Trust found in their Talk of the Town project in Wythenshawe, South Manchester, that more than 50 per cent of children start school with poor language. Most disturbingly, 26 per cent of children had such poor speech, language and communication skills that in many areas they would qualify for a statement of SEN.<sup>175</sup>

170 Roulstone S et al, *Investigating the role of language in children's early educational outcomes*, Department for Education, Bristol: University of the West of England, Bristol, 2011

171 Ibid

172 C4EO, *Grasping the Nettle: Early intervention for children, families and communities*, London: Centre for Excellence and outcomes in Children and Young People's Services, 2010

173 Delarue A Van Hootegem G, Procter S, and Burrige, M, *Teamworking and Organisational Performance: A Review of Survey-based Research* *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 2007, pp127–148

174 Coats D et al, *Advancing opportunity: the future of good work*, London: The Smith Institute, 2009

175 Ainscow et al, *An Evaluation of The Communication Trust's 'Talk of the Town' Project*, Manchester: Centre for Equity in Education, 2012

## The Communication Trust, *Talk of the Town*

The programme, *Talk of the Town*, was developed by The Communication Trust, a coalition of almost 50 voluntary and community organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication. The work grew from a pilot in Wythenshawe, a deprived area of Manchester; funded by the Department for Education. It aims to facilitate early identification, encourage joined-up working and improve outcomes for children with SLCN. It addresses the high level of poor language that exists, especially in areas of social deprivation.

The programme provides targeted training for teaching staff through part-time speech and language therapists, to deliver evidence-based interventions for raising attainment. It also supports leadership to embed a sustainable, long-term strategy to support all children's communication needs.<sup>176</sup>

Wendy Lee from the Communication Trust told the CSJ that teachers typically do not have knowledge of communication development in the same way as they do with reading and writing. Teachers can struggle to identify children who may be significantly behind, seeing only symptoms of the issue; poor behaviour, poor literacy, poor attainment and poor self-esteem, rather than the problem itself. Teachers need to be better able to recognise when children are falling behind. She said that under-identification of children with SLCN is a massive issue and in the *Talk of the Town* project, teachers were missing around 40 per cent of the children with difficulties.

## 2.11 Children on free school meals

Children in income poverty are noticeably less likely to fulfill their educational potential, often facing multiple barriers to learning, such as:

- Less home-support for their learning;<sup>177</sup>
- Weaker language and communication skills;<sup>178</sup>
- Difficulties in basic literacy and numeracy skills;<sup>179</sup>
- Potentially less likely to believe they can control events affecting them;<sup>180</sup>
- Low parental education;<sup>181</sup>
- Low aspirations;<sup>182</sup>
- Poorer health.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>176</sup> Education Endowment Foundation, *The Communication Trust: Talk of the Town*, 20 March 2013 [accessed via: <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects/the-communications-trust-talk-of-the-town> (17/08/13)]

<sup>177</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Poorer children's educational attainment: how important are attitudes and behaviour?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010

<sup>178</sup> Sutton Trust, *Low income and early cognitive development in the UK*, London: Sutton Trust, 2010

<sup>179</sup> Every Child a Chance Trust, *The long term costs of literacy difficulties and The long term cost of numeracy difficulties*, 2009

<sup>180</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies, *The role of attitudes and behaviours in explaining socio-economic differences in attainment at age 16*, Economic and Social Research Council, 2010 [accessed via: <http://www.ifs.org.uk/wps/wp1015.pdf>(18/02/13)]

<sup>181</sup> OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD indicators*, Paris: OECD, 2012

<sup>182</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies, *The role of attitudes and behaviours in explaining socio-economic differences in attainment at age 16*, Economic and Social Research Council, 2010 [accessed via: <http://www.ifs.org.uk/wps/wp1015.pdf>(18/02/13)]

<sup>183</sup> Spencer N, *Health Consequences of Poverty for Children, End Child Poverty with the support of the GMB* [accessed via: [http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/files/Health\\_consequences\\_of\\_Poverty\\_for\\_children.pdf](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/files/Health_consequences_of_Poverty_for_children.pdf) (17/08/13)]

The standard measure for income-related poverty in education is whether a child is known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM). In January 2013, 1,265,770 pupils were eligible for and claiming FSM.<sup>184</sup> Although, as discussed below, this measure is not perfect, it serves an easy means of revealing the issues that some children with parents on low incomes face.

### Free School Meals

FSM enable parents to claim a free school dinner for their child, representing a 'social safety net' of nutrition for some children.<sup>185</sup>

Estimates vary, but families with two children qualifying could save £741.00 over the year.<sup>186</sup> They therefore also represent significant financial relief, especially for those families with several children.

Children are currently eligible for FSM if their parents receive any of the following benefits:<sup>187</sup>

- Income Support;
- Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance;
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit and Child Tax Credit (CTC), provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit (WTC) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190;
- Where a parent is entitled to WTC Run-on; and
- Children who receive a qualifying benefit in their own right.

Children eligible for FSM routinely perform less well at school than those who are not. Last year, only 36 per cent of pupils eligible achieved five GCSEs A\* to C including English and mathematics compared to 63 per cent of those who were not.<sup>188</sup> Whilst attainment has improved for each income decile year-on-year, there is still a sizeable attainment gap between income groups and a child's background continues to dictate their attainment throughout their school career.<sup>189</sup>

At primary school only 66 per cent of pupils eligible for FSM achieved expected levels in Key Stage 2 (age 7–11) English and mathematics, compared with 82 per cent of all other pupils.<sup>190</sup>

Furthermore, children eligible for FSM within more advantaged areas are often less likely to do well at school than those eligible in more deprived areas. This occurs because, tragically,

184 Department for Education, *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2013*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (This refers to pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals who have full time attendance and are aged 15 or under, or pupils who have part time attendance and are aged between 5 and 15)

185 Holford A, Institute for Social and Economic Research University of Essex, *Take-up of Free School Meals: Price Effects and Peer Effects*, University of Essex: ISER, 2012

186 Newcastle City Council, *Free school meals: Frequently asked questions*, 27 September 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/education-and-learning/grants/free-school-meals-frequently-asked-questions> (19/08/13)]

187 Department for Education, *Apply for free school meals*, [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals> (06/05/13)]

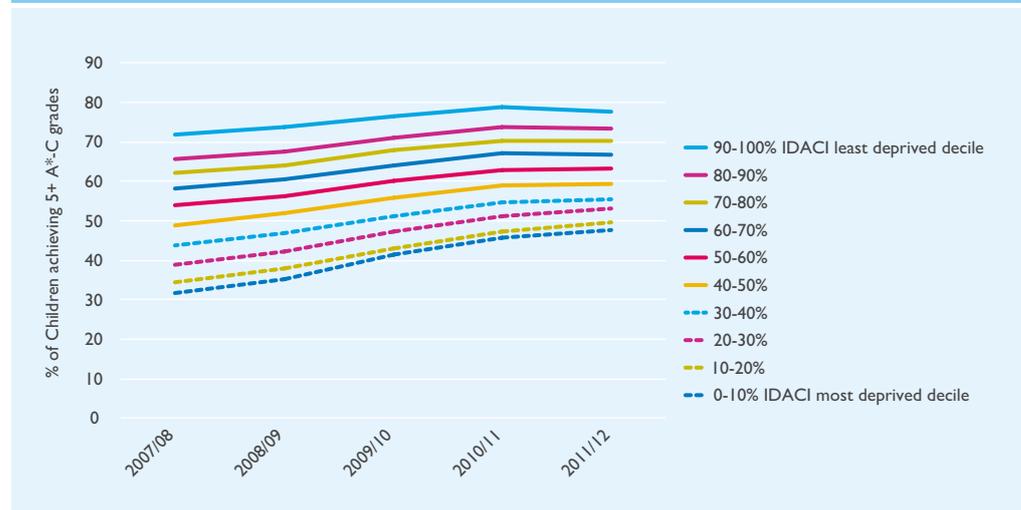
188 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England, 2011/12*, London: Department for Education, 2013

189 Hansard, *Written Answers*, 22 Apr 2013

190 Department for Education, *National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2 in England, 2011/12*, London: Department for Education, 2012

their failures are being 'hidden' behind the successes of the majority. This is a huge injustice penetrating the heart of our education system.

Figure 4: Percentage of Children achieving 5+ A\* to C GCSEs including English & mathematics by decile of deprivation (IDACI)<sup>191</sup>



Areas like Buckinghamshire, Dorset and Surrey have some of the lowest levels of deprivation in the country, but are among those with the worst results for disadvantaged pupils. For example, the attainment gap between those eligible for FSM, and the rest of pupils, is 38 percentage points in West Berkshire and a staggering 43 percentage points in Buckinghamshire. By contrast, many of the local authorities with higher levels of deprivation have smaller attainment gaps; areas like Southwark and Tower Hamlets.<sup>192</sup>

Whilst investment in education has benefitted those at the bottom, it has failed adequately to close attainment gaps at KS4. Professor Chris Husbands, Director of the Institute of Education, told the CSJ that:

*'one of the unintended consequences of New Labour's policies was that whilst performance rose, the gap did not truly narrow... If you improve inputs in a society which is highly unequal, you will almost certainly widen the gap between outcomes. One of the consequences of increasing teacher quality has been to increase the gap in pupil outcomes. In policy, we often talk about the fact we want to raise standards and also, to narrow the curve. But it's almost impossible to develop universalistic interventions which do both.'*

Professor Chris Husbands, in evidence to the CSJ

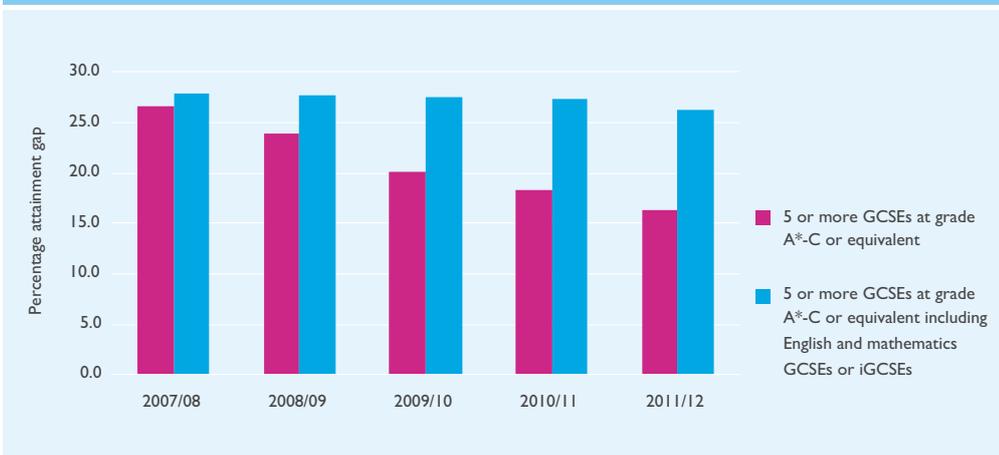
Additionally, whilst the use of benchmarks can be helpful in monitoring standards, they can also be misleading. The difference in attainment between those on and not on FSM varies depending on which benchmark is used.

<sup>191</sup> Hansard, Written answers and statements, 22 Apr 2013

<sup>192</sup> Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

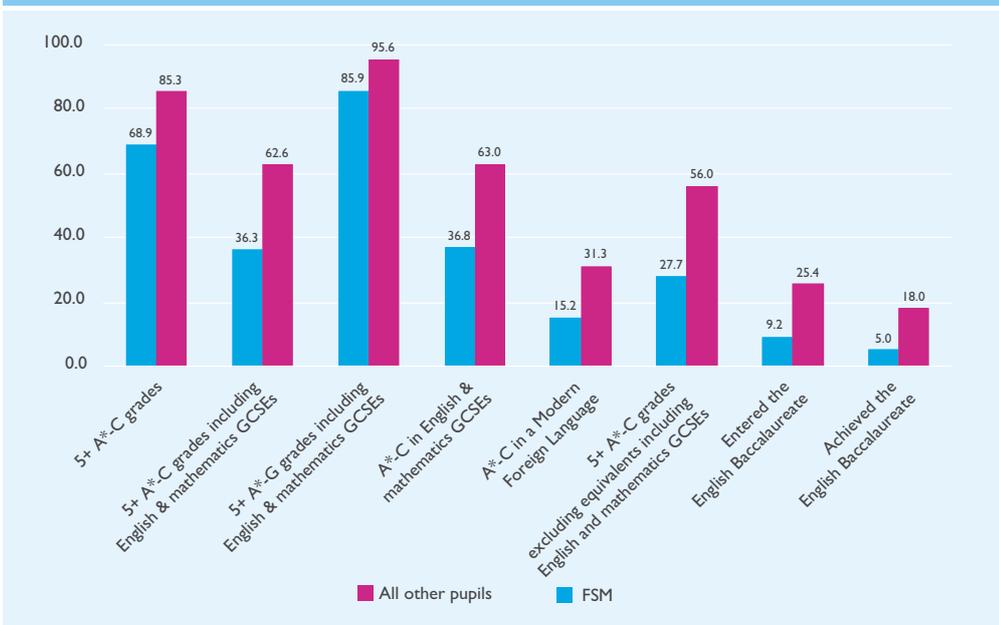
As Figure 5 shows, when looking at those achieving five A\* to C grades, the attainment gap has decreased substantially each year. However, when including English and mathematics, the gap is not only much larger, it has scarcely reduced at all.

Figure 5: FSM attainment gaps 2007/08 to 2011/12<sup>193</sup>



The gap is even larger when excluding equivalents from the benchmarks. As discussed in Chapter One, many equivalent qualifications have been criticised as being low value, with some schools encouraging pupils to take them as a means of boosting their rankings on league tables. These issues mean that far less progress has been made in the very subjects that have the greatest effect on children's access to continued learning and access to employment.

Figure 6: Attainment at Key Stage 4, 2011/12<sup>194</sup>



<sup>193</sup> Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

<sup>194</sup> Ibid



## 2.12 Regional disadvantages: the national vs. local picture

Educational failure is unevenly distributed across the country. Unfortunately, some children are automatically disadvantaged by where in the country they happen to live and by where they go to school. In some areas schools are operating in an incredibly challenging context, often dealing with extremely complex social problems.

*'If a politician stood in my office and looked out the window, I could guarantee they would see a drug deal, or a shoplifter taking requests. On "order-day," parents stand outside the school-gates placing orders with the local shoplifters. There is a sense that they shouldn't have to pay for things.'*

Anonymous headteacher in the North of England, in evidence to the CSJ

Educational failure is especially acute across a number of regional areas. Knowsley, in particular, has very poor results; last year only 40.9 per cent of pupils achieved five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. In Nottingham, the figure was 49.6 and in Kingston upon Hull, 47.8.<sup>195</sup>

**Table 3: Local authorities where fewer than 50 percent of pupils achieved five or more A\* to C including English & mathematics GCSEs<sup>196</sup>**

Local Authority	Percentage of pupils attaining five GCSEs A* to C including English and mathematics, 2011/12
Knowsley	40.9
Isle of Wight	44.5
Barnsley	45.3
Middlesbrough	47.6
Kingston upon Hull, City of	47.8
Blackpool	47.9
Hartlepool	48.8
Peterborough	49.3
Nottingham	49.6

Destination measures show that not a single student at schools or colleges in eight local authorities – Sandwell, Islington, Barking and Dagenham, Swindon, Knowsley, Halton, Barnsley and Rochdale – attended Oxbridge.<sup>197</sup>

Recently, Ofsted has suggested that coastal towns are now amongst the most educationally disadvantaged and deprived parts of the country,<sup>198</sup> something that the CSJ's own research has supported.<sup>199</sup> In relatively isolated communities with intergenerational unemployment, aspirations are understandably low.

<sup>195</sup> Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

<sup>196</sup> Ibid

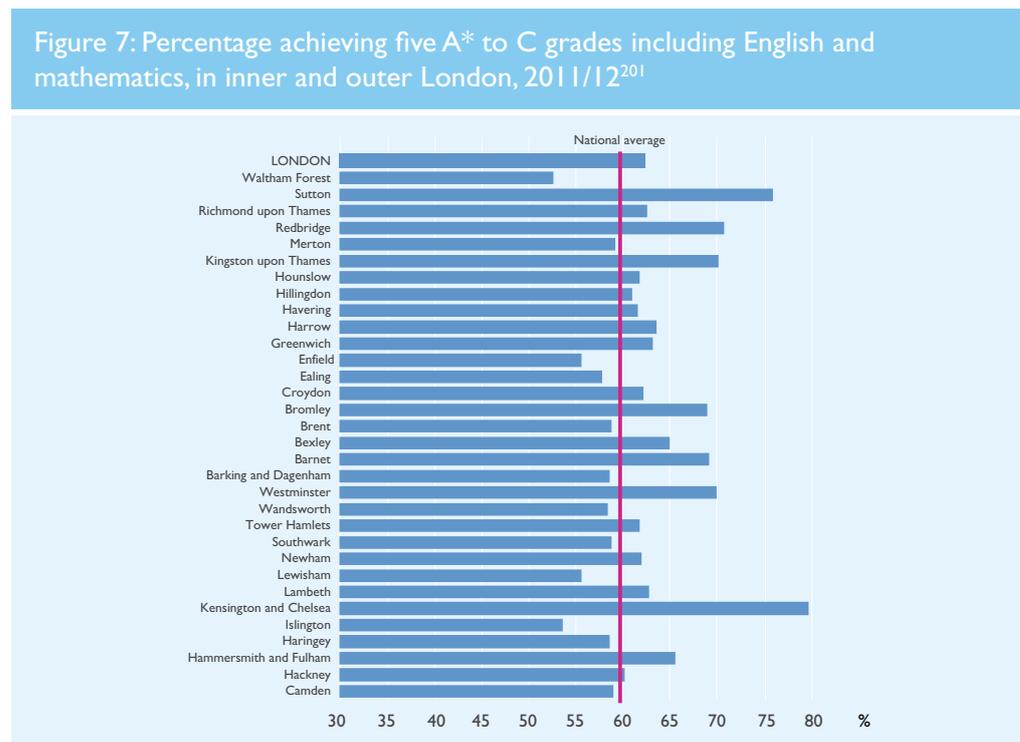
<sup>197</sup> Department for Education, *Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils: 2010 to 2011*, London: Department for Education, 2013

<sup>198</sup> Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2013

<sup>199</sup> Centre for Social Justice, *Turning the Tide: social justice in five seaside towns*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013

One region, however, has managed to improve its results quite dramatically. For many years, attainment in London was recognised as poor; however this is no longer the case. Instead London is now outstripping other parts of the country.

In Tower Hamlets, in particular, an impressive 61.8 per cent attained five GCSEs A\* to C including English and mathematics. This is despite having very high levels of deprivation and numbers of children eligible for FSM.<sup>200</sup>



London local authorities dominate the table of those councils sending the highest proportion of students to university – with Redbridge (66 per cent), Ealing and Enfield (both at 64 per cent) at the top.<sup>202</sup>

There is marked inequality in a child's access to high quality schools. London in particular has experienced a substantial increase in attainment over the years. One of the key reasons for this success, after many years of failure, has been the London Challenge (see below) which, between 2003 and 2010 managed to improve substantially the quality of schools in the capital. So far attempts to replicate its achievements – in the Greater Manchester Challenge and City Challenge (working in the Black Country) – have failed to match its results, suggesting, as discussed in Chapter 3, that it may be easier to draw high quality school leaders and teachers to London than to other regions.<sup>203</sup>

200 Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

201 The Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England, 2011/12*, London: Department for Education, 2013

202 Department for Education, *Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils: 2010 to 2011*, London: Department for Education, 2013

203 Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The London Challenge*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2010

## Case Study: The London Challenge

The London Challenge school improvement programme was established in 2003 to improve outcomes in low-performing secondary schools in London, fostering an ambition to close attainment gaps with the rest of the country.

A range of challenges affected London secondary schools, including variable quality of teaching, weak leadership, a growing shortage of teachers willing to teach in London schools and significant poverty in areas which needed considerable regeneration.

During the policy's eight-year duration, London moved from being the worst performing to one of the highest performing regions at KS4.<sup>204</sup>

London Challenge used independent, experienced education experts, known as London Challenge advisers, to identify need and broker support for underperforming schools. It cut through local authorities' responsibilities for schools' performance, creating a bespoke programme for each targeted school in accordance with need, led by a supporting headteacher from a strong and successful school.

Although originally seen as a top-down, centrally driven strategy, by 2010 it had become a practitioner-led model based on high accountability, encouraging schools to scrutinise their results. The quality of the London Challenge advisers and consultant headteachers leading the London Leadership Strategy was also key. It emphasised the importance of improving outcomes for all London children, not just those in their school. The sense of pride in being part of a city-wide education initiative was considered a fundamental element within the initiative.<sup>205</sup>

The successes showed early on:<sup>206</sup>

- In 2005, London began to surpass the national average at GCSE;
- By 2007, London out-performed every region. Pupils in London on FSM and living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances out-performed their counter-parts everywhere else;
- The annual improvement rate for London secondary schools between 2003 and 2009 was five per cent compared to a national rate of 2.6 per cent;
- No schools were below the original floor target of 25 per cent compared to 70 in 2003;
- At the end of the policy's life in 2010, Ofsted found that 30 per cent of London secondary schools had been judged outstanding compared to 17.5 per cent in the rest of England. Only 2.4 per cent of secondary schools in London had been judged inadequate compared to 4.1 per cent in the rest of England.

Primary schools were included in the scheme from 2008, using lessons learnt from the secondary programme to identify and support schools.<sup>207</sup> In evidence to the CSJ, Professor Chris Husbands, Director of the Institute of Education, said that London Challenge is 'the best designed, urban education improvement programme in the world.'

204 Ogden V, *Making Sense of Policy in London Secondary Education: What can be learned from the London Challenge?* Thesis: Institute of Education, London

205 Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The London Challenge*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2010

206 Ogden V, *Making Sense of Policy in London Secondary Education: What can be learned from the London Challenge?* Thesis: Institute of Education, London

207 Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The London Challenge*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2010

## 2.13 Conclusion

A great many of the factors that threaten to limit children's chances in education are rooted in the challenges children and their families face. Whilst, at its best, the education system can ameliorate many or all of a child's disadvantages, this task will be considerably easier if pupils have stable and supportive home environments. This serves to show two things. Firstly, any government that wishes to improve educational standards cannot do this solely through schools but must also look to, for example, reduce family breakdown, treat addiction, and help more people into and to progress in work. Secondly, whilst many children who are in poor families suffer from a range of factors which may hold them back, educational failure is more complex than financial poverty.

# chapter three

## Schools, settings and transitions

This chapter considers the state of education and education reform in settings and schools from the early years through to post-16. This Government has embarked on one of the most ambitious programmes of education reform since the 1940s, reviewing the early years, introducing a Pupil Premium to boost the attainment of poorer children, rapidly expanding and extending the Academies programme to give more schools autonomy, enabling Free Schools, seeking to improve teaching and leadership in schools, reforming vocational education, and seeking to improve pedagogy in Further Education. Whilst the full impact of many of these reforms will not be felt for some time, here we look at some of these key policies that are currently reshaping education in England, examine their potential, and start to consider areas in which more could be done to help children fulfill their potential.

### 3.1 School readiness, early years and early intervention

*'The consequences of delay in the early years leads to poor educational attainment, poor literacy skills, poor social interaction, fewer job and career prospects and a continuation of the cycle when they become parents themselves. There are also lots of links to anti-social behaviour.'*

Janet Cooper, Programme Manager at Stoke Speaks Out

The importance of early intervention cannot be overstated. As the CSJ argued in its report *Early Intervention: good parents, great kids, better citizens* in 2008, early intervention not only means problems can be addressed before they have worsened, it provides a recognised way of making-up for the impediments that sadly, some children face early on. Education must be seen as something that starts long before primary school.

Early intervention not only delivers better social outcomes, it is far more cost effective to the taxpayer than reactive, ameliorative approaches. Whilst the latter have dominated the country's response to social problems, they only address issues once already deeply entrenched. Prevention is always better than cure.<sup>208</sup>

208 Allen G and Duncan Smith I, *Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens*, London: Centre for Social Justice and Smith Institute, 2008

A child's development score at only 22 months can serve as an accurate predictor of their education outcomes at 26.<sup>209</sup> There is also evidence that by age three, a child's brain is already 80 per cent developed.<sup>210</sup> When a parent consistently fails to show their child any empathy, the child can drop those emotions from his or her repertoire.<sup>211</sup>

Under the Coalition Government a number of reviews have considered children in the early years, notably the Field Review of Poverty and Life Chances, the Allen Review of Early Intervention and the Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These reports have raised awareness of the importance of the early years. Frank Field MP has called for wider recognition of the Foundation Years (pregnancy to age five) and for a commitment to achieving high levels of 'school readiness' for all children regardless of family income.<sup>212</sup> A mother's interaction with her child, the resources available and the feelings transmitted – in terms of a sense of support and wellbeing, are shown to be important when children start school at age five.<sup>213</sup>

One of the effects of the Field Review in 2010 was greater awareness of the importance of the Foundation Years, from pregnancy to age five. It also led to a promise from both David Cameron and Nick Clegg 'to broaden and lengthen our concept of poverty' and the need 'to look at people's experience of poverty in all its dimensions.'<sup>214</sup>

Graham Allen MP's review emphasised the role of the early years and the importance of parents on children's later outcomes. A positive initiative to have come out of the Allen Review has been the launch of the Early Intervention Foundation.

### The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)

The EIF was launched on 15 April 2013 with cross-party support and set up by a consortium of organisations, including the CSJ. It follows the recommendations of Graham Allen's 2011 Early Intervention report, championing the greater use of early intervention measures to tackle the root causes of social problems amongst children and young people, from 0–18 years old.

*'The EIF wants every baby, child and young person to realise their potential by having the basic social and emotional skills that most take for granted... By addressing a problem's root causes rather than its symptoms, we can pre-empt a problem becoming entrenched, which can lead to better educational attainment, reduced drink and drug abuse, reduced teen pregnancies, better parenting and lower rates of worklessness.'*<sup>215</sup>

209 Allen G, *Early Intervention: the Next Steps*, London: Cabinet Office, 2011

210 Ibid

211 Allen G and Duncan Smith I, *Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens*. London: Centre for Social Justice and Smith Institute, 2008

212 Field F, *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances*. London: Cabinet Office, 2010

213 Hamer C, *NCT Research overview: Parent-child communication is important from birth*, London: NCT, 2012

214 'PM and Deputy PM letter to Frank Field', London: Prime Minister's Office, 3 December 2010

215 Early Intervention Foundation, *Our Vision and Purpose*, London: Early Intervention Foundation [accessed via: <http://www.earlyinterventionfoundation.org.uk/about-us/vision> (10/08/13)]

The Tickell Review has also had an important impact. This sought to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (introduced in 2008 and discussed below), seeking to create a revised framework which is more flexible and more accessible.<sup>216</sup> The influence of this review is reflected in changes to the framework, implemented from September 2012. This seeks to simplify the measures used and to also give parents a new progress check at age two.

Whilst the recommendations from these reviews have huge promise, it is clear that there is still a great deal more left to do. We have consistently heard from professionals working at primary school level about the educational disadvantages that many children continue to face.

## 3.2 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

The earliest official and national measure, the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP), measures children at the end of the academic year in which he or she reaches the age of five.<sup>217</sup>

This reveals that some children have a worrying lack of development in areas like reading, writing and problem solving. Whilst this is highly concerning, these tests only measure children's development after many have already been in that setting for a year. During that time, providers will have worked hard to overcome some of the deficiencies these children arrived with.

The data do not reveal the true extent of disadvantage some children already suffer from when they start school. To understand the scale and extent of this issue, the CSJ has obtained supportive anecdotal evidence which sheds light on the extreme end of disadvantage experienced in the early years. We have heard evidence of children entering Reception or Year 1 classes unable to talk, not answering to their own name and not toilet-trained.

The EYFSP provides the most in-depth and earliest national evaluation of development.<sup>218</sup> It measures development against 13 assessment scales (with nine points within each scale) grouped into six areas of learning.

The worst scores were in 'Communication, Language and Literacy: Writing.' Here, about one in 12 children were not working within the early learning goals. Boys performed worse than girls, with 11 per cent of boys not exceeding three points.<sup>219</sup> The scores reveal other deeply concerning gaps in development:

216 Tickell C, *The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning*. London: Department for Education, 2011

217 In 2008 the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was introduced with the intention of providing a framework to deliver consistent and high quality environments for all children in pre-school settings. It is a statutory assessment for children at the end of the Foundation Stage and is a way of summing up each child's development and learning at the end of the Reception year. Local authorities must collect and report results for all children at the end of the Foundation Stage in their maintained schools and nurseries. Results for children in private, voluntary and independent providers are only required to be reported where the child is still in receipt of Government funding at the end of the foundation stage.

218 Department for Education, *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results in England, 2011/12*. London: Department for Education, 2012. The individual scale point data is currently submitted on a voluntary basis and for 2012 data were submitted for 57 per cent of children. The statistical release notes that while the data have been assessed as representative, they are still based on a sample. There are also no checks that the individual scale points achieved conform to the requirements of the EYFSP for example, that scale points 1–3 are achieved before the others.

219 Ibid

- One in 33 children cannot 'represent some sounds correctly in writing';
- One in 33 children do not 'recognise a few familiar words';
- 12 per cent of children could not write their own name and other words from memory;
- Six per cent of boys do not know that in English, print is read from left to right and top to bottom;
- 19 per cent of children could not link sounds to letters, naming and sounding letters of the alphabet.

A good level of development is defined here as children scoring at least 6 points across the 7 scales in Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy, and achieving at least 78 points across all 13 scales.

Ofsted showed that the proportion of children achieving a 'good level of development' has risen incrementally since 2007.<sup>220</sup> However, nationally, 36 per cent of children are not achieving a 'good level of development.' In some parts of the country, scores were considerably lower.<sup>221</sup>

**Table 4: Ten local authorities with the lowest percentage of children achieving a good level of development, according to the EYFSP**

Local Authority area	Percentage of children achieving a good level of development, 2012
Middlesbrough	51
South Tyneside	52
Blackpool	52
Halton	54
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	55
Liverpool	55
Luton	55
Oldham	55
Telford and Wrekin	55
Tower Hamlets	55

Lack of development is associated with disadvantage. In the 30 per cent most deprived national areas, 56 per cent of children achieved a good level of development, compared with 68 per cent for children in other areas. The gap is especially large in places like Middlesbrough: only 44 per cent of children in the 30 per cent most deprived areas achieved the target, compared to 66 per cent of children in all other areas in Middlesbrough – a gap of 22 percentage points. This means that poorer children here are far more likely to lag behind their better-off peers.<sup>222</sup>

220 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2013

221 Department for Education, *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results in England, 2011/12*, London: Department for Education, 2012. This measure defines children achieving 78 points or more across the scales and at least 6 in each of the scales associated with the Personal, Social and Emotional and Communication, Language and Literacy areas of learning.

222 Department for Education, *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results in England, 2011/12*, London: Department for Education, 2012. Deprived areas refer to the 30 per cent most disadvantaged Super Output Areas in England based on the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation. The number of children in the deprived areas will vary considerably between local authorities.

Whilst some of these children may have for example, SEN or hereditary problems, experts have told the CSJ that this does not by any means account for all children not achieving expected levels of development.

Mary Hartshorne, Director of Outcomes and Information at I CAN, told the CSJ that:

*'We currently underestimate the size of this problem and the Early Years professionals we work with frequently comment on the presence of extreme-level problems amongst many of the children they see...assuming special educational needs [SEN] accounts for all of these children is deeply misguided.'*

### 3.3 Children entering school

These EYFSP scores show that many children are falling far short of expected levels of development and suggest poor educational experience prior to compulsory schooling. What makes them even more worrying is that assessments are only made at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is likely that when the children first arrived – their development and 'readiness for learning' was actually far worse.

The CSJ has gathered heart-breaking evidence of children trapped in some of the most severe disadvantage. These children are starting school drastically behind the levels of development expected of their age. The early years experiences endured by these children have been so abysmal that they begin compulsory schooling absolutely not ready for learning and, potentially, permanently disadvantaged.

Sir Robin Boshier estimates that in a school with over 50 per cent on FSM, about 25 per cent of the reception year will be at this extreme end:

*'In one school, some children at four years old are developmentally nearer to two when they start school and so it is important to ensure the first two terms of education help accelerate their language as well as their social and emotional well-being, this will be the teachers' priority...children enter Reception with very poor language and social skills. The children need immediate support and a bespoke curriculum if they are going to thrive at school and catch-up. An example would be children who need to be taught how to use a knife and fork to eat and how to sit at the table and socialise during the meal time.'*

Staff told the CSJ that they are increasingly expected to deal with basic development issues like potty-training. In some schools, we have heard that it is so common for the pupils to need help going to the toilet that teachers must routinely carry disposable hand gloves. According to a recent survey, 62 per cent of primary school staff in the UK have noticed an increase in the number of children wetting or soiling themselves during the school day over the past five years. This increased to 71 per cent amongst those working specifically with three to five-year olds.<sup>223</sup>

223 ATL, *More children starting school before they have been toilet-trained – ATL/ERIC survey, 6 February 2012* [accessed via: <http://www.atl.org.uk/media-office/media-archive/More-children-starting-school-before-they-have-been-toilet-trained-ATL-ERIC-survey.asp> (06/07/13)]

$$B(x_1, y_1) = y_1 + b \cdot k_2$$

$$B = \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 3 & 0 \\ -1 & 0 \\ 1 & 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{tg } x \cdot \cot \text{g } x &= 1 & 2a^2 - (y^2 + z^2) \\ a^2 &= b^2 + c^2 - 2bc \cos \alpha & x = \frac{a^2 - b^2 - c^2}{2bc} \end{aligned}$$

$$\frac{dx}{dt} / \frac{dy}{dt}$$

$$\text{tg } 2\alpha = \frac{2 \text{tg } \alpha}{1 - \text{tg}^2 \alpha}$$

$$\text{tg } x = \frac{\sin x}{\cos x}$$

lin  
n:

$$\frac{\sqrt{2n+1}}{2n-1}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 2x - y + 2 &= 1 \\ x + 2y + 2 &= 2 \\ x + y + 2 &= 2 \end{aligned}$$



$$\text{tg } \frac{\alpha}{2} = \frac{1 - \cos \alpha}{\sin \alpha} = \frac{\sin \frac{\alpha}{2}}{\cos \frac{\alpha}{2}}$$

$$\frac{a}{\sin \alpha} = \frac{b}{\sin \beta} = \frac{c}{\sin \gamma}$$

$$y = \text{tg } x$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0,1 \\ 1,0 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\begin{aligned} [0,1] \\ u \neq 0 \end{aligned}$$

One head said to the CSJ that:

*'...in the last three years we have had to toilet-train children who came to school in nappies at age five. Parents ask me how we managed to do it. Many of them just can't be bothered, they think it's our responsibility to do it for them.'*

Matt Hannam of the Joshua Project told the CSJ that:

*'The boundaries have definitely been blurred as the understanding of what is a parental responsibility and what is a school one have become less clear.'*

Mark Edwards, Principal of Manston St James Primary Academy in Leeds estimates the prevalence at the extreme end at approximately ten per cent of each class:

*'Sometimes I see children arriving at school aged four or five unable to string a sentence together, almost completely unable to speak...I can easily spot which children have not gone to nursery. They may not have benefitted from strong interactions with adults or with other children. This means many start school much less developed in their abilities to share, cooperate and communicate. These children then get easily frustrated, explaining why some bite or lash-out in the classroom.'*

Sir Robin Boshier also said that:

*'I see about ten per cent in each class who are so unsociable that they hurt others, adults and other young children. You get horrible incidents where those unsociable children have hurt another child. But they're unsociable because they've no practice at being sociable.'*

Another head confirmed that there were problems with identifying these problems as SEN:

*'Whilst some of these children do have special educational needs – this is often used as an excuse for low expectations and under-preparation on the part of parents. Whilst children with SEN are likely to make up some of these figures, this must not be used as an "excuse" for worrying levels of underdevelopment.'*

One headteacher told the CSJ that in her experience it is very common in deprived areas for three- or four-year-olds to start school clearly unable to cope with schooling. She said that when they get the children at age three, they commonly act like 12–18-month-olds:

*'They don't even have the concentration to talk and say an answer in any kind of sentence. We've had children that don't answer to their name. They don't recognise their name...they're not toilet-trained.'*

Another head told us that most primary schools now have Foundation Stage Units, especially those in deprived areas:

*'When these children first arrive at the Unit, it's common for them to babble and to not even know their own names. By the time they're four or five, they're still well below but they're doing much better because of the fantastic work being done in the Foundation Units.'*

'Yesterday, a Year 3 boy was sent to see me by his teacher because he had deliberately urinated on the floor. We know he has lots of problems at home and often desecrates the home to get attention. All he wanted was attention and that is simply his way of communicating. When I told him that he looked "sad" he looked confused and asked me what that meant, because he had heard the word, but didn't really understand its meaning.'

**Anonymous headteacher**

Mary Hartshorne, director of I CAN, told the CSJ that:

*'... often these extreme developmental problems are in areas of deprivation. Those facing deprivation often have multiple stresses to deal with, then combined with a general lack of awareness of the importance of communicating with their children, nor of what to expect – what is "typical development" in the early years.'*

Part of the problem is that many parents are not aware of the key developmental milestones affecting their children. This means they may think it is 'normal' when their children are not reaching levels expected of their age. A survey by the Communication Trust found that only 20 per cent of parents surveyed knew that on average children talk in sentences of three to five words at around three years.<sup>224</sup>

Janet Cooper is Programme Manager at Stoke Speaks Out, a partnership approach to tackling the causes of language delay in the city. She said that:

*'The issue lies with the quality and quantity of the language model from birth and the security of the emotional attachments of the child-parent. I believe most parents love their children but do not have the knowledge and skills to promote their development fully. Parents do not always realise the significance of the first three years when the majority of brain development is taking place and fall foul of marketing of dummies, forward facing buggies, bottles, TV, game stations, iPods etc.. Many parents opt for what they think is an easy life – putting the child in front of the TV – but do not realise that this will cause them more issues in the long-run.'*

Whilst families in poverty are the most at risk, Stoke Speaks Out sees increasing numbers of children with poor listening and attention across all income groups. Janet Cooper feels this is 'partly due to increased time pressures on families, less family conversation taking place and

224 The Communication Trust, Press release, *Computers and TV Wrongly Blamed for Children's Speech Disorders*, 20 January 2011 [accessed via: [http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/1445/communication\\_survey\\_results\\_31\\_jan.pdf](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/1445/communication_survey_results_31_jan.pdf) (08/08/2013)]

over reliance on TV and electronics at home.' Mark Edwards, Principal of Manston St James Primary Academy told the CSJ that:

*'Even though I see this problem in my school, and there are definitely children at this extreme end, we have a relatively small number on FSM. This problem – issues around under-development – should not be seen as just being about parents' income. It goes way beyond this.'*

Teachers are being expected to teach those basic necessities that most children should have mastered before starting school. Starting from this deficit means they are spending less time on what they should be teaching. The cumulative harms of falling behind on transitions, and playing 'catch-up' have been emphasised earlier. Not only is this an unproductive use of teachers' time, it risks fuelling resentment amongst the teaching profession.

As this section has shown, considerably more needs to be done both to help disadvantaged young people before they arrive at primary school and to offer them support once they arrive. A system in which some children are effectively four years behind some of their contemporaries by the age of five will always struggle to help those children reach their full potential. The next phase of our research will closely consider this transition between pre-school and primary school.

### 3.4 Early Years provision

Too many children suffer poor educational outcomes because of the disadvantages they face at home. The CSJ has long called for greater recognition of the monumental impact the early years have on subsequent outcomes and for more to be done to support families and improve the quality of provision offered by the state which can help ameliorate these problems.

This is particularly important for improving outcomes for the most disadvantaged children in society. The difference between attending high and low quality pre-school is greater for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>225</sup> Yet children from low-income families are less likely to attend high quality early education and care programmes.<sup>226</sup>

By December 2012, 74 per cent of providers were judged to be good or better compared to 65 per cent at the end of August 2009.<sup>227</sup> Whilst improvements in early years provision have been made they have not always been spread evenly.

The Government has introduced a welcome increase in provision for three- and four-year-olds. These children are currently entitled to 570 hours of funded early education, usually taken as 15 hours per week over 38 weeks. From September 2013, this will be extended to reach the least advantaged 20 per cent of two-year-olds, aiming to increase this to around 40

225 The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, *Unleashing Aspiration: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*, London: The Cabinet Office, 2009

226 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2013

227 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, the early years, 2012

per cent from September 2014. A statutory duty has also been placed on local authorities to secure early education places for eligible two-year-olds through the Education Act 2011.<sup>228</sup> From September 2013 two-year-old children will be eligible if their family meets the income and benefit criteria for FSM or if they are looked after by their local authority.

However, the CSJ has heard that a lack of awareness of best practice in the early years is a major barrier to improving outcomes and provision for these children. This is an area in which it is to be hoped that the EIF will be able to offer substantial assistance by assessing what programmes work and their value for money translating this into practical, evidence-based advice to local commissioners, service providers and potential investors.<sup>229</sup> There must be greater thought on what is most effective, and how policy can effectively target those parents with most to gain from early years provision.

Some school leaders have told the CSJ that they would welcome the opportunity to play a bigger role in early years provision:

'We do a fantastic job but we only get the children once they're four or five. I would like to see more excellent primary schools getting involved in early years provision.'

**Dame Sally Coates, head of Burlington Danes Academy**

### 3.5 School reform

Whilst families have an enormous impact on a child's educational outcomes, the quality of our schools is paramount. Outstanding schools can overcome so many of the other disadvantages a child may face. The coming sections on schools, teaching and leadership examine the vital role schools play in shaping children's educational outcomes, considers some of the changes already underway in the education system and asks what further steps need to be taken to allow success to reach those groups and parts of the country that it has not yet reached.

Unsurprisingly, it is far more likely that a pupil will perform well if they go to a good or outstanding school, regardless of their background. In particular, all things being equal, the performance of pupils from the most deprived backgrounds can be improved by attending the best schools.<sup>230</sup>

Overall, the quality of schools is improving. In December 2012, 74 per cent of maintained schools were judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness, compared with 66 per cent

228 Department for Education, *Early education for two-year-olds*, London: Department for Education, 2012.

229 National Association for Voluntary and Community Action, *Early Intervention*, National Association for Voluntary and Community Action, 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.navca.org.uk/early-intervention-foundation> (04/07/13)]

230 Deloitte, *Quality Counts, What can the analysis of the national pupil database tell us about educational outcomes?* London: Deloitte, 2012.

in August 2009.<sup>231</sup> Over this period, the percentage of outstanding schools has also risen by five percentage points, to 21 per cent.<sup>232</sup> However, the proportion of good or outstanding schools is 20 percentage points lower in the most deprived areas than in the least deprived areas.<sup>233</sup> Over two million children – 31 per cent – attend schools that fall short of being either good or outstanding.<sup>234</sup>

### 3.6 The Pupil Premium

In recognition of the challenges faced by poorer children, the Coalition Government has introduced a Pupil Premium which attempts to close the attainment gap by directing additional funds to schools for any pupil who has been eligible for FSM at any time in the last six years.

In 2011/12 the Pupil Premium was set at £488 per pupil, rising to £600 in 2012/13, and £900 in 2013/14. Schools are free to spend the allocated funds as they choose, though they are held accountable for the decisions they make through performance tables which show the performance of disadvantaged pupils compared with their peers, and through the Ofsted inspection framework.<sup>235</sup>

*'If the Pupil Premium is to succeed in achieving its ambitious goals, the choices that schools make in allocating the money are of vital importance.'*<sup>236</sup>

Education Endowment Foundation

A recent evaluation of the programme noted that whilst it was too early to measure the impact of the Pupil Premium on attainment, over half of all schools had introduced new support for disadvantaged pupils as a direct result of the Pupil Premium.<sup>237</sup>

However, over 90 per cent of schools had focussed on supporting disadvantaged pupils before the Pupil Premium and over 80 per cent said that the Pupil Premium was not enough to fund the support they offered.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, many schools are not spending the funding as effectively as evidence suggests they could. For example, over two-fifths of school leaders surveyed said they used the money to fund teaching assistants.<sup>239</sup> This is deeply concerning given that teaching assistants are amongst the least effective ways of improving outcomes.<sup>240</sup>

231 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2013

232 Ibid

233 Ibid

234 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, schools, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

235 Department for Education, *Pupil Premium – what you need to know*, 22 May 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/premium/a0076063/pp> (28/07/13)]

236 Education Endowment Foundation, *About the toolkit*, [accessed via: <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/> (07/07/13)]

237 Carpenter C et al, *Evaluation of Pupil Premium: Research Report*, London: Department for Education, 2013

238 Ibid

239 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Pupil Premium: How schools are using the Pupil Premium funding to raise achievement for disadvantaged pupils*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

240 Education Endowment Foundation, *Toolkit* [accessed via: <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/> (07/07/13)]

There are also concerns the Pupil Premium does not represent 'additional' funding, and instead that it is being used to plug gaps left by funding cuts rather than specifically to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils.<sup>241</sup> Although the pressure on budgets would have been worse in the absence of the Pupil Premium, it forms a relatively small proportion of schools' total income – on average, between 3.8 per cent for primary schools with high levels of FSM and only one per cent for secondary schools with low levels of FSM.<sup>242</sup>

*'The pupil premium is excellent use of government funding because it is focussed on closing the gap but because of cuts in other areas it is not entirely new money and may have to be used sometimes just to sustain what is already happening.'*

**Dame Sally Coates, head of Burlington Danes Academy**

Ofsted found that only one in ten school leaders said the Pupil Premium had significantly changed the way they worked.<sup>243</sup> There is broad correspondence between overall levels of Pupil Premium funding and effects produced: ten of the 12 mainstream school leaders who said the allocation made a significant difference were in the highest FSM quintiles, serving pupils from backgrounds with higher than average levels of deprivation and receiving greater funding allocations. Eight of the 11 primary school leaders who said that the Pupil Premium was making no difference were in FSM quintiles 1 or 2: they received lower levels of funding.<sup>244</sup>

Whilst many schools do monitor the impact of support provided, improving accountability is an important next step.<sup>245</sup> Schools must now publish a statement for the previous year confirming their allocation, spend and impact. The new Ofsted inspection framework also focusses on how well gaps are narrowing within the school and in comparison to national trends. Centrally, schools will no longer be rated outstanding unless they close their attainment gaps – and if they fail to improve, a headteacher from a school that has closed the gap will be brought in to advise them.

Another headteacher told the CSJ that they spend their allocation on need – even if this benefits children who did not themselves attract the Pupil Premium. At the end of the year the school is then forced to lie about what their allocation is spent on. In a recent survey, most schools surveyed (91 per cent of pupil referral units, 90 per cent of special schools, 84 per cent of primary schools and 78 per cent of secondary schools) aimed their support at all disadvantaged pupils, according to their definition of disadvantage, of which FSM was just one part.<sup>246</sup>

### 3.6.1 Reforming free school meals and the Pupil Premium

The CSJ strongly supports the principles behind the Pupil Premium. We recognise that it was important for the Government to establish it swiftly and that using FSM provided an easy and

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241 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Pupil Premium: How schools are using the Pupil Premium funding to raise achievement for disadvantaged pupils*, Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

242 Carpenter C. et al, *Evaluation of Pupil Premium: Research Report*, London: Department for Education, 2013

243 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Pupil Premium: How schools are using the Pupil Premium funding to raise achievement for disadvantaged pupils*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

244 Ibid

245 Carpenter C. et al, *Evaluation of Pupil Premium: Research Report*, London: Department for Education, 2013

246 Ibid

simple means of allocating funding directly to schools. However, moving forward it is worth considering whether there are better ways in which the Pupil Premium might be directed.

For a variety of reasons, not all children in poverty are currently being identified by the FSM measure. There are also children who are not eligible despite being desperately disadvantaged and in need. Finally, the roll-out of Universal Credit makes reform essential as it replaces many of the benefits that currently determine eligibility.

Many children who are entitled to FSM do not claim them. These children who are not registered by their parents constitute a 'hidden poor' and neither receive meals nor attract Pupil Premium funding. Whilst estimates suggest around 1.4 million children aged 4–15 in England are entitled to FSM (21 per cent), only 1.2 million are registered (18 per cent).<sup>247</sup> This means 200,000 pupils – 14 per cent of pupils eligible – are not accessing this benefit and their schools are not receiving the Pupil Premium.<sup>248</sup>

Parents registering for FSM must fill out forms which identify the basis for their entitlement, usually coordinated by the local authority and/or the school. Some parents are not aware of the benefit of the meal itself or the premium it attracts, or they may not be aware that they are eligible in the first place. However, there is a separate section of the population who are so desperate to avoid official attention that they avoid filling out the forms which would grant their children access to FSM. These children represent the 'hidden poor.' These pupils are not only not claiming, they are not even known as being eligible.

One headteacher told the CSJ that some parents are reluctant to complete the necessary forms to access the benefit. They want to stay below the radar for whatever reason they have. They do not want to accept official help. The headteacher said some parents in the school have several cash-in-hand jobs and do not want to register in case it attracts 'unwanted attention.' Some families are worried they may be in the country illegally and although most are here legitimately they avoid official forms where possible. This means that many children in need of support are going undetected. These children are not currently entitled to FSM, despite having an obvious need.

Parents may also not register their children because of the stigma attached. Stigma reduces the likelihood parents will register in the first place and it also reduces the likelihood children will then eat the meals. Although the vast majority of secondary schools now use a Smartcard or biometric system to administer school meals, some still use separate tokens, coloured trays or artificial coins. Whilst not the case in all schools in the area, in some schools in Cumbria for example, 'pupils are given a token to make their own selection.'<sup>249</sup>

*The two major factors which I believe still persist are that some families either do not know how to access this support or in the worst of instances do not get round to doing so; the second area is that pupils often do not want their parents to let their school know*

247 Iniesta-Martinez S and Evans H, *Pupils not claiming free school meals*, London: Department for Education, 2012

248 Ibid

249 Cumbria County Council, *Free school meals* [accessed via: <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrenservices/schoolsandlearning/fsm.asp> (16/08/13)]

*that they are eligible for a free school meal. I believe as a society we can be creative in finding a way to ensure those children eligible for a free school meal do so.'*

Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski DBE

As the CSJ has argued, poverty lines form arbitrary cut-off points – which mean that children can be defined as in or not in relative income poverty on the basis of a £1 difference in income.<sup>250</sup> FSM eligibility rules mean children whose family income is just above the threshold of £16,190 are ineligible, even though they may experience many or all of the problems experienced by children on the other side of the line.<sup>251</sup>

*'Around 50 per cent of the pupils are eligible for FSM even though the overwhelming majority of pupils live on one of the nearby council estates. This means there may be two pupils living next door to each other, on the same estate, with the same material surroundings, and yet one is entitled and the other is not.'*

Sir Greg Martin, Executive Head of the Durand Academy

A further complication will present itself because of the roll out of Universal Credit. In our report, *Dynamic Benefits: Towards welfare that works*, we identified severe failings of the existing benefits system, namely that counter to its aims, it disincentivises work, where the swift withdrawal of benefits offsets any earnings from work, punishing the lowest earners trying to earn more.<sup>252</sup>

Universal Credit represents a simplified system where there are greater rewards attached to working under the premise that no one should ever be better-off out of work. All benefits are paid by a single agency based in the Department for Work and Pensions, regardless of whether a person is in work or not. It also aims to ensure that low earners do not face the cliff-edge withdrawal of benefits that occurs under the existing system.

Avoiding cliff-edges is an important aim of an effective welfare system. The introduction of Universal Credit necessitates reform because it means the criteria currently used to determine eligibility must change. This is because it replaces many of the benefits that are currently used to determine eligibility to FSM, such as Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA).

One of the core principles of Universal Credit is that it should be universal in order to ensure that people can move in and out of work without facing sharp withdrawals of benefits. Because, at present FSM still sits outside the benefits that it encompasses, the threat of its withdrawal – at a value of £1,100 a year to a family with three children – may inhibit some people from taking work or earning more. Consequently, it is important to examine how this cliff-edge can be removed whilst retaining a link between income and FSM.

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250 See e.g. Centre for Social Justice, *Rethinking Child Poverty*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2012

251 Iniesta-Martinez S and Evans H, *Pupils not claiming free school meals*, London: Department for Education, 2012

252 Centre for Social Justice, *Dynamic Benefits, Towards welfare that works*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2009



### 3.7 The Academies programme

Given the importance of school quality, and the fact that not all children are attending schools which are good enough, a variety of reforms and initiatives have been introduced to improve standards. The expansion of Academies (and the introduction of Free Schools) is a major part of this. There have also been ongoing attempts to increase collaboration and improve school leadership and governance. This section discusses some of the attempts to improve school quality, including where these have been successful and where they need to do far more.

Increased school autonomy has been a distinctive and recurring feature of English education policy over the past 25 years. Academies – and converter academies in particular – are the most recent and fullest manifestation of this policy first introduced with Grant Maintained Schools in 1988. As we stated in *Breakthrough Britain*, the CSJ strongly agrees with the objectives of the Academy Programme and believes that giving schools freedoms and autonomy will enable them to innovate and flourish.<sup>253</sup>

Academies benefit from a range of freedoms not granted to other schools. For example, they can set their own pay and conditions for staff, enjoy greater flexibility around their curriculum and have greater flexibility on the length of term and school day. These freedoms represent a shift away from centralised decision-making, as ‘one “move” in a more general process of “destatization” – tasks and services previously undertaken by the state are now being done by various “others.”<sup>254</sup> In recognition of their newly adopted responsibilities, academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the local authority as a maintained school, plus additions to cover services no longer provided for them by the local authority.

The first ‘city academy’ opened in 2002 with the programme intended to benefit schools with the lowest performance in geographic areas blighted by disadvantage, many of which had been placed in special measures.

Expansion under the Coalition Government has been marked, forming a pivotal plank of Michael Gove’s education reforms. The Academies Act 2010 enabled an expansion in academies through introducing the Free Schools Programme and by enabling more mainstream schools to convert to academy status.

When we published *Breakthrough Britain* in 2007,<sup>255</sup> there were 47 academies, including 23 in London. By May 2010 this had grown to 203, and as of August 2013, there were 3,086 academies open in England.<sup>256</sup> The Department for Education projects that by March 2015 ‘around one quarter of schools will be Academies or Free Schools if conversion continues at its current rate.’<sup>257</sup>

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253 Centre for Social Justice, *Breakthrough Britain, Ending the costs of social breakdown, Volume 3: Educational Failure*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2007

254 Ball S.J., ‘Academies, Policy Networks and Governance’, in H. Gunter (Ed.), *State and Education Policy*. London: Continuum Books, 2010

255 Centre for Social Justice, *Breakthrough Britain Ending the costs of social breakdown, Volume 3: Educational Failure*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2007

256 Department for Education, *All open academies August 2013* [accessed via: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/xlsx/a/all%20open%20academies%20aug%202013%20v1%2000.xlsx> (07/07/13)]

257 Department for Education, *The Department for Education Review Report*, London: Department for Education, 2012

## Academies

- **Converter academies:** Converter academies are existing schools which have been approved to convert to become an academy. They became academies by choice, and are already outstanding or good;
- **Sponsor-led academies:** Sponsor-led academies have usually (though not always) had their status forced on them because their standards are not good enough. Their governors lose control of the school and governance and oversight is handled by the 'sponsor' – accredited by the Department for Education and who tend to be charities, religious foundations, or businesses;
- **Free Schools:** Free Schools are all-ability state-funded schools set up in response to what local people or groups say they want and need in order to improve education for their community;<sup>258</sup>
- **Studio Schools:** Studio Schools are schools for 14- to 19-year-olds, backed by local businesses and employers. They focus on equipping young people with a wide range of employability skills and a core of academic qualifications;<sup>259</sup>
- **University Technical Colleges:** University Technical Colleges (UTCs) are technical academies for 14- to 19-year-olds. They specialise in subjects that need modern, technical, industry-standard equipment – such as engineering and construction, taught alongside business skills and the use of ICT.<sup>260</sup>

These initiatives will each be discussed in greater detail in the sections to follow.

### 3.7.1 Academy results

Whilst converter academies convert on the basis of their already good standards, the opposite is true of sponsor-led academies. Sponsored academy chains have grown rapidly with Department for Education brokers matching underperforming schools with a sponsor that has the capacity to take on the school and turn it around.<sup>261</sup>

There have been extraordinary cases of success with examples of these academies significantly raising attainment levels. In 1994, Mossbourne Academy, then known as Hackney Downs School, had been labelled the worst school in the country.<sup>262</sup> Yet by 2012, nearly 90 per cent of pupils achieved five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, compared with the local authority average of 60 per cent.<sup>263</sup>

In local authority maintained mainstream schools, 59 per cent of pupils achieved five A\* to C GCSEs or equivalent, including English and mathematics last year. In converter academies, attainment was almost ten percentage points higher: 68 per cent.<sup>264</sup>

258 Department for Education, Free Schools [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools> (15/08/13)]

259 Department for Education, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools, [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/technical> (15/08/13)]

260 Ibid

261 National College for School Leadership, *The growth of academy chains: implications for leaders and leadership*, Nottingham: National College for School Leadership, 2012

262 New Statesman, Hackney's education success story, 26 August 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/staggers/2012/08/hackneys-education-success-story> (18/04/13)]

263 Department for Education, School and Local Statistics, Mossbourne Community Academy, 13 Jun 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/cgi-bin/schools/performance/school.pl?um=134693> (27/06/13)]

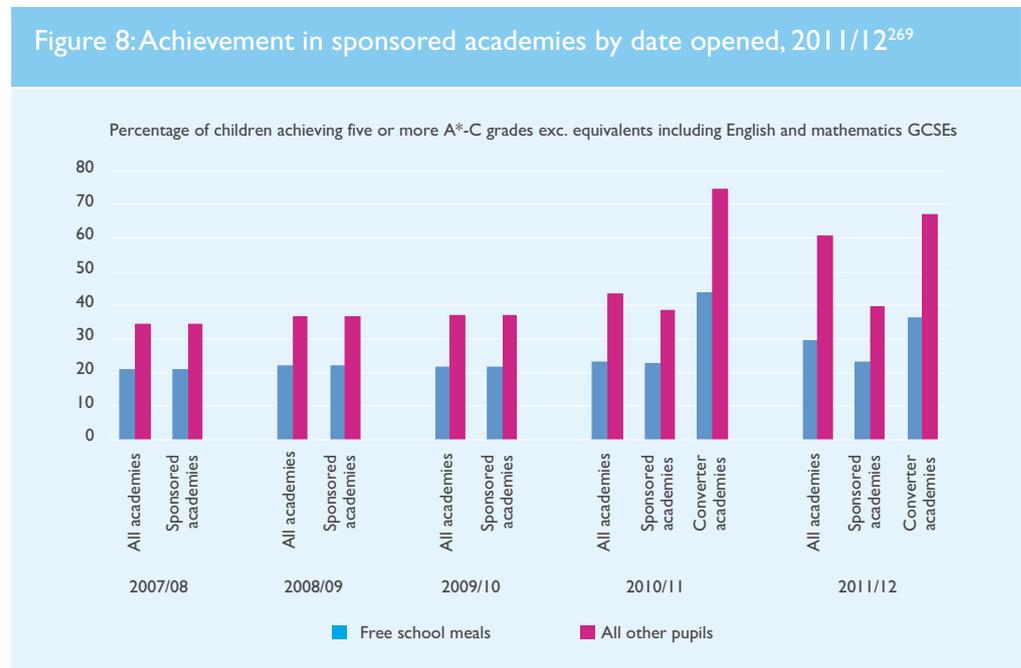
264 Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

Whilst pupils' attainment in sponsored academies is considerably lower than in either local authority maintained schools or converter academies (49 per cent achieving five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics), sponsor-led academies are by definition in the process of 'turn-around' and therefore there are likely to be time-lags before improvements are made.<sup>265</sup> In sponsored academies open for five or more academic years, 54 per cent of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C or equivalent including English and mathematics, 8.2 percentage points higher than for pupils in sponsored academies only open for one year.<sup>266</sup>

It is to be expected that rates of improvement will be much quicker for sponsored academies, given that they have so much room for improvement.

Results in sponsored academies were marginally higher than in a group of similar schools and improved at a faster rate. Amongst the group of comparator sponsored academies, 50 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2012; an increase of 3.2 percentage points since 2011.<sup>267</sup> Amongst the group of similar schools, 49 per cent achieved this last year – an increase of 1.5 percentage points since 2011.<sup>268</sup>

However, whilst some sponsored academies have had outstanding success, there is also evidence of gaming in some parts of the system. As shown earlier, gaming takes place in schools of all types. Some academies have been disproportionately relying on the use of equivalents at KS4 as a means of boosting results. The graph below shows that equivalents



<sup>265</sup> Ibid

<sup>266</sup> Ibid

<sup>267</sup> Department for Education, *Attainment by pupils in academies 2012 Supplementary analysis to the Academies Annual Report 2011/12* June 2013, Infrastructure, Funding and Longitudinal Analysis Division, Department for Education, London: Department for Education

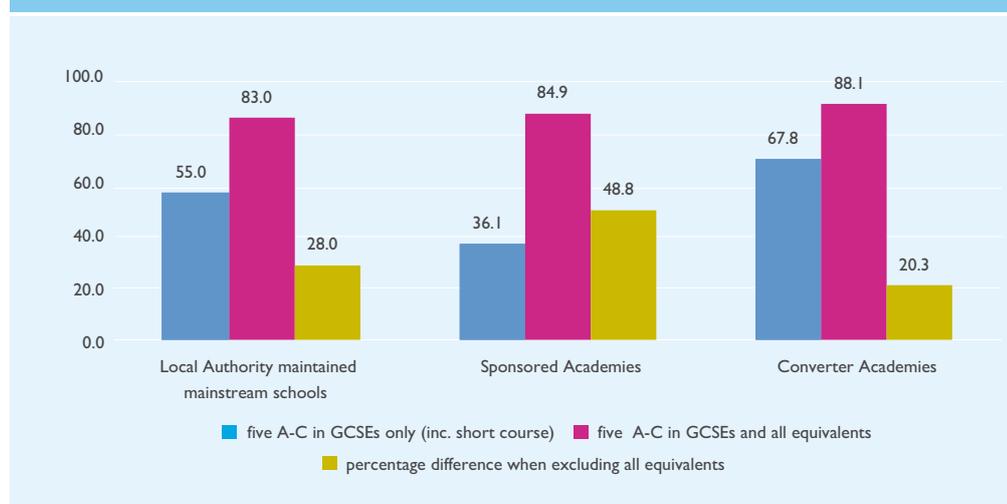
<sup>268</sup> Ibid

<sup>269</sup> Hansard, Written answers and statements, 10 April 2013

made a far greater contribution to benchmarks in sponsored academies. Astonishingly, the percentage achieving five A\* to C grades is almost halved when excluding equivalents.<sup>270</sup>

The Academies Commission found that outcomes are broadly similar when comparing sponsored academies with similar non-academy schools (accounting for intakes). However, when equivalents are excluded – sponsored academies appeared to be doing slightly worse.<sup>272</sup> The Government's changes to equivalents and league tables should have a considerable impact on this problem and focus attention on driving improvement in core subjects.

Figure 9: Percentages achieving five GCSEs at grade A\* to C, including and excluding equivalents, by school type<sup>273</sup>



*'Although it is small, the presence of this gap when excluding equivalents is concerning. Even if there is parity between outcomes this is concerning because given the amount of resources that have gone into sponsored academies, we would expect a clearer beneficial trend in their results overall. Whilst brilliant work is being done in many academies this is not across the board. Best practice exists, but it is not being spread effectively. Some academies are not benefitting from excellent leadership and the strong teams good leaders are able to put in place.'*

Professor Becky Francis, Director of the Academies Commission and Professor of Education and Social Justice at King's College London

### 3.7.2 Collaboration between academies

As the Academies programme has grown and developed so new communities of schools have started to grow up, both as a result of government requirement and federation. The

<sup>270</sup> Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

<sup>271</sup> Ibid

<sup>272</sup> The RSA, *The Report of the Academies Commission, Unleashing greatness, Getting the best from an academised system*, London: The RSA, 2013

<sup>273</sup> Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013

CSJ has heard that there are strong advantages to such communities as they can spread best learning and best practice from school to school.

Every school converting to academy status will have committed to supporting another school, whether through a formal chain or more informal arrangement. There are three main types of collaborative structures for converting:<sup>274</sup>

- Multi-academy trust: the strongest and most formalised type of collaboration, where all schools are governed by one trust and one board of directors;
- Umbrella trust: schools of different categories set up their own individual academy trusts, but where representatives can provide shared governance and collaboration for the schools within the trust;
- Collaborative partnerships: schools convert as single academy trusts, and there is no shared trust or formalised governance structure.

This is a promising initiative. However the Academies Commission has found that not all of the good and outstanding schools that have converted since 2010 as standalone academies are fulfilling their commitment to supporting other schools to improve.<sup>275</sup> The Commission found that amongst some converter academies, efforts to support other schools were not always prioritised.<sup>276</sup>

Chains are partnerships of academies that have made a commitment to supporting each other and raising educational standards.<sup>277</sup> The Commission also said it was wise for chains to expand slowly, in order to ensure they continued to support their current schools where improvement was still needed. This appears to suggest the importance of chains not expanding too quickly.<sup>278</sup>

The degree of integration and reasons for collaboration vary.<sup>279</sup> In some cases, a high-performing school will join a weaker school to help raise standards (a 'performance federation') or they may do so because of a shared ethos, such as religion ('faith federations').<sup>280</sup> Often the prime motivation is financial: a federation can help its member schools save money, particularly from economies of scale in procurement.<sup>281</sup>

Chains are important because, where they are effective, they lead to better collaboration between schools and, ultimately, are more likely to lead to better outcomes for pupils. Academies in chains perform better than standalone, sponsored academies. Of the sponsor-

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274 Department for Education, *Academy Chains FAQs*, 20 July 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/secondary/faqs/a00204883/academy-chains-faqs#faq2> (10/08/13)]

275 The RSA, *Report of the Academies Commission, Unleashing greatness, Getting the best from an academised system*, London: The RSA, 2013

276 Ibid

277 Department for Education, *Academy Chains FAQs*, 20 July 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/secondary/faqs/a00204883/academy-chains-faqs#faq2> (10/08/13)]

278 Ibid

279 School Enterprise, *Safety in numbers*, [accessed via: <http://www.school-enterprise.com/strategic/legal/federation.html> (17/07/13)]

280 Ibid

281 Ibid

led academies inspected by 31 August 2012, 25 per cent of those in chains were judged outstanding, compared with only 8 per cent not in chains.<sup>282</sup>

Sam Freedman, a director at Teach First and former adviser to Michael Gove, told the CSJ that chains can usually turn around weaker schools as, once they have a model that works, they can quickly use it to turn another school around.

This in part reflects the greater resources and expertise chains have to invest in leadership as well as their greater opportunities for collaboration which can drive improvement and support the dissemination of best practice. As a continuation of this, the Coalition Government has called for a shift towards new localism, where family clusters of schools are part of a self-improving system.<sup>283</sup> This reflects a situation where schools work together and collaborate, moving away from greater local authority control and centralised decision making.

However, the CSJ has heard concerns that academy chains are still reluctant to reach out to some of the most deprived and disadvantaged communities. Whilst the number of academies has flourished in London, this has not been the case in other parts of the country. This is important because in London, the Academies programme is considered to have had a profound effect on results. The most successful academy chain providers, run by the Harris Federation and Ark schools, are concentrated in the capital.

There is clearly further scope and need to extend best practice and learning into parts of the country experiencing acute educational disadvantage. Of the 25 authorities that do not have an academy in a chain, ten score worse than the national average for five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. Of these ten, three – Knowsley, Blackpool and Hartlepool – are in the ten worst performing local authority areas in the country.<sup>284</sup>

As one source told the CSJ:

*'Federation is better in London...There are a number of reasons, partly it's because they don't have the level of turnover they have in London, but also because of an attitude and a mindset on their part. They're just not as dynamic.'*

This is a missed opportunity. It is imperative that government does more to encourage and incentivise successful chains to take their skills and expertise into more areas of great disadvantage.

The Academies reforms show great promise; giving schools the autonomy to flourish and excel is a positive step. However, far more remains to be done. It is important to ensure that perverse incentives do not creep into the system, meaning that schools can deliver good

282 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, schools, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

283 Hadfield M and Jopling M, School-led networking and collaboration: Problems and possibilities, University of Wolverhampton, [accessed via: [http://www.wlv.ac.uk/default.aspx?page=31171\\_09/08/13](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/default.aspx?page=31171_09/08/13)]

284 Hansard, Deposited paper [accessed via: [http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2012-1883/Chains\\_Data\\_121102forPQ.xls](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2012-1883/Chains_Data_121102forPQ.xls) (20/08/13) [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/219338/sfr04-2013ntla.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219338/sfr04-2013ntla.xls)]

results and valued outcomes for all pupils. Greater thought must also be given to how more of the best chains and sponsors can be drawn to disadvantaged parts of the country, and how the Academies programme can support the large number of primary academies in need of support.

### 3.7.3 New types of academy

The Coalition has extended the Academies programme in a number of ways. It has allowed primary and special schools to acquire academy status as well as allowing new, community inspired schools – Free Schools – to be set up. This section looks at the progress, potential and remaining barriers to success of these schools.

#### 3.7.3.1 Primary academies

In 2010, the academy scheme was applied to primary schools. By January 2013, there were a total of 1,006 primary academies – only around six per cent of England's 16,784 state-funded primary schools.<sup>285</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, the CEOs of larger sponsored chains (ten or more academies) see most of their growth over the next three years being in the primary sector.<sup>286</sup>

One reason why academisation has so far had a greater impact on secondary schools is because secondary education tends to attract far greater attention. As one head said to the CSJ:

*'Secondary schools politically always have so many more brownie points, because of 16-year-olds and GCSEs. It's much more measurable.'*

The CSJ has also been told that Church of England control of a large number of primary schools has inhibited greater primary academisation. Approximately one million children attend Church of England schools and 25 per cent of all primary and middle schools are controlled by the Church of England.<sup>287</sup> One source said that:

*'Some dioceses are very resistant to change – as bad as the worst local authorities. It's something that politicians find very difficult to talk about because they don't want to have a row with the Church... it's a real issue.'*

There remains an urgent need for greater focus on improving primary education. Not enough children have access to high quality primary education. Given the importance of transitions, this is a worrying trend. 1,300,703 pupils are attending primary schools rated satisfactory or inadequate.<sup>288</sup>

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285 Department for Education, *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2013*, London: Department for Education, 2013

286 National College for School Leadership, *The growth of academy chains: implications for leaders and leadership*, Nottingham: National College for School Leadership, 2012

287 The Church of England, *The Church School of the Future Review*, a Bishops' Council Education Division, 2012 [accessed via <http://www.churchofengland.org/education/church-schools-academies.aspx> and via: <http://www.churchofengland.org/education/church-schools-academies.aspx> (07/07/13)]

288 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, schools, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012



Access to high quality primary education is not evenly spread across the country. Ofsted found that over 80 per cent of children in Dorset attend primary schools that are good or outstanding compared to only 56 per cent in North East Lincolnshire. This inequality is also more likely to affect disadvantaged communities: only seven per cent of schools in the primary phase serving the most disadvantaged communities were judged outstanding.<sup>289</sup>

It is positive if good secondary schools support improvements in their local primary schools. However, this cannot form the solution in its entirety. As primary schools tend to be much smaller, there are not enough outstanding secondary schools to support the large number of primaries in need of support.

It is also misguided to assume that what works in secondary schools can be easily transferred to primary schools. Failing primary schools require specific expertise and leadership on what works in primary education. This includes delivering high quality teaching in a primary setting and expertise in curriculum design and pedagogy. Sir Robin Bosher, Director of Primary Education at the Harris Federation of Academies, told the CSJ that until recently even successful chains neglected the importance of this. Exploring ways in which primary schools can be better included in the family of academies is a major challenge for the next five years.

### 3.7.3.2 Free Schools

The CSJ supports the ethos of the Free Schools programme, having recommended the initiative in our 2007 paper, *Breakthrough Britain: Educational Failure*.<sup>290</sup> We called for Pioneer Schools to offer free education on a non-selective basis within the state system, but not subject to local authority sanction or control. These schools were to be free to recruit and remunerate employees and teachers would be free to employ imaginative methods. We strongly hoped that they would offer an opportunity to parental and third sector groups to find innovative solutions to deeply entrenched educational failure by setting up new schools.<sup>291</sup>

Technically, Free Schools are academies created in direct response to local demand. They can be primary or secondary schools and can be established by a wide range of proposers including charities, universities, parent groups, businesses, educational groups and teachers. Similar to converter academies, they have a large degree of autonomy and in some cases, even more. They are expected to be open to all pupils of all abilities in a given area.<sup>292</sup>

The first group of 24 Free Schools opened in September 2011 with the number operating slowly increasing. By the 2012/13 school year, there were approximately 10,170 pupils in Free Schools.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid

<sup>290</sup> Centre for Social Justice, *Breakthrough Britain: Ending the costs of social breakdown, Volume 3: Educational Failure*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2007

<sup>291</sup> Ibid

<sup>292</sup> Deloitte, *Quality Counts, What can the analysis of the national pupil database tell us about educational outcomes?* London: Deloitte, 2012

<sup>293</sup> Department for Education, *Schools, pupils and their characteristics January 2013*, London, Department for Education, 2013

92 Free Schools are set to open in September 2013.<sup>294</sup> Michael Gove has also approved 102 new Free School applications to open in 2014 and beyond – delivering approximately 50,000 new school places.<sup>295</sup> In his recent spending review the Chancellor announced funding for 180 new Free Schools in 2015–16.<sup>296</sup> However, there are no official government estimates on the number projected to open long-term. This reflects the ethos of the programme as something designed to meet local demand – rather than something driven from within central government.

The initiative is so new that the success of the programme is, as yet, unclear. However, the first 24 Free Schools have all had their Ofsted inspection results recently published, with three quarters of these rated good or outstanding.<sup>297</sup>

This is positive, but there is a sense that the programme has stalled and not made as great an impact as it could have. One of the most substantial barriers has been the lack of appropriate or available buildings. This not only makes the programme expensive, but can present real challenges to those wanting to set up schools in areas where appropriate buildings are either not available, or where there are delays to them being used. This is especially problematic in places like London.

The CSJ has been told that the main limiting factor on the size of the programme has been the quality of applications: with better applications there could have been around 150 to 200 Free Schools a year. Setting up a Free School requires a lot of time and expertise. The organisations best placed to do this are therefore charities – yet at present a surprisingly small proportion of Free Schools are set up by charities.

Of the Free Schools which opened in September 2012: 12 were set up by teachers, 19 by parent or community groups, and 13 by existing education providers. However, only nine were set up by charities.<sup>298</sup> Of the 102 opening in 2014, 70 of these are being set up by teachers, existing schools, and educational organisations, whilst only 32 are being set up by parents, community, charity and other groups. 46 of these new schools will also be in London.<sup>299</sup> This is deeply disappointing. The CSJ had hoped that more charities would come forward to set-up Free Schools in disadvantaged areas across the country.

We have been told by a number of charities that they may be interested in being involved in the creation of Free Schools once the programme is more established. Few charities were eager to be trailblazers and face the subsequent risk to reputation and future fundraising.

294 Department for Education, *Information for free schools in the pre-opening stage*, 15 July 2013 (accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools/b00222077/pre-opening> (19/08/13))

295 Department for Education, Press Release, *More than 100 free schools applications approved*, 22 May 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-100-free-schools-applications-approved> (19/08/13)]

296 HM Treasury, *Spending Round*, London: The Stationery Office, 2013

297 Department for Education, Press Release, *Three-quarters of free schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted at first inspection*, 1 August 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/three-quarters-of-free-schools-rated-good-or-outstanding-by-ofsted-at-first-inspection> (05/08/13)]

298 Data supplied by the Department for Education

299 Department for Education, Press Release, *More than 100 free schools applications approved*, 22 May 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-100-free-schools-applications-approved> (19/08/13)]

*'I'm not surprised that there are so few. This is partly due to the application forms that need to be completed which do not make it easy at the start of the process. Those who are not educationalists may need to buy in additional support in the completion of such a form.... in the process of forming a Free School there are many hurdles to get over to do with land, perhaps build or refurbishment and the monies for this is tight with accommodation developed to a formula rather than need. Staffing also needs to be done in phases and in secondary schools this is difficult in attracting good staff if you can only in the first few years offer a small part-time growing to full-time over several years. Your good teachers who have mortgages and other financial pressure cannot just take part-time for two or three years until the school fills up to its full capacity.'*

**Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski DBE**

Because Free Schools are set up in response to local demand, applications may not be approved in those areas of greatest educational need, where parents are disengaged from education, or where the shortage of school-places is most acute. There have been more than three times as many applications per 1,000 16-year-olds in Greater London than in the North East.<sup>300</sup> This is significant given that, as shown, London already has some of the best schools in the country, even within disadvantaged areas.

The initiative is also not serving the poorest and most disadvantaged pupils as equitably as it might. In January 2012, the vast majority of existing Free Schools had lower than the local average number of pupils on FSM. Of 18 primary Free Schools, only five had above the national average number of children eligible for FSM. Of the six secondary schools, only two did.<sup>301</sup> Clearly more needs to be done in order to ensure that Free Schools benefit the neediest – rather than just the most demanding – communities.

### *3.7.3.3 Alternative Provision (AP) and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)*

There has long been a demand for fresh practice within this part of the education system. Approximately 5,000 pupils are permanently excluded every year,<sup>302</sup> but considerably more are given fixed-period exclusions. Last year 304,370 children were temporarily excluded (what is known as a fixed-period exclusion), and 162,400 pupils received one or more fixed-period exclusions.<sup>303</sup> They represent one of the most disadvantaged groups in the education system. Last year, only 1.3 per cent of pupils in AP (including PRUs) attained five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics, compared with 58.8 per cent of pupils in state-funded schools.<sup>304</sup>

As already discussed, the catastrophic outcomes experienced by many often reflect a combination of low expectations, low quality provision and a harmful environment at home.

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300 Financial Times, *Free school applications higher in London*, 24 February 2013

301 Hansard, *Written Answers and statements*, 13 May 2013

302 Department for Education, *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals in England, 2011/12*, London: Department for Education, 2013

303 *Ibid*

304 Department for Education, *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2011 to 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2013 (see table P1). Pupils also registered at an institution included within the Secondary School Performance Tables are excluded. As set out by the data, common reasons for a young person receiving alternative provision include exclusion from mainstream schools, medical needs or school refusal.

*'We work with these children to build positive relationships. Often they grow up with an expectation that they won't amount to much. They've experienced low expectations at home and negative relationships with adults. Many of the children here have been let down by an adult at some point in their life.'*

Seamus Oates, Executive Head of the TBAP Multi-Academy Trust and The Bridge Alternative Provision Academy

Negative outcomes are also evident when these children reach adulthood. A survey of young people in custody found that 86 per cent of young men and 82 per cent of young women said they had been excluded from school.<sup>305</sup>

## Alternative Provision

The Department for Education defines AP as education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.<sup>305</sup> Provision available varies, from therapeutic independent schools for children with severe behavioural emotional and social difficulties (BESD) to very small local providers offering training in car maintenance. PRUs are also a form of AP: in January 2013 there were 12,950 pupils in PRUs.<sup>307</sup>

High quality AP is seen as that where, for example, there is a specific focus on literacy and numeracy at an appropriate level. Other features identified include good arrangements in working with other relevant services such as social care, and a goal of reintegrating pupils into mainstream education when they are ready.<sup>308</sup>

Seamus Oates, Executive Head of the Bridge Alternative Provision Academy, rated outstanding by Ofsted, told the CSJ that their success is rooted in excellent leadership, teachers and a relentless dual focus on both academics and the development of positive relationships. It is important that academic attainment is on par with mainstream schools – particularly in English and mathematics. Retaining an academic focus also means others see the provider as a school, making it less stigmatising for the children who attend.

Unfortunately, inspirational examples of good practice like this do not constitute the norm. Too much of the provision available is poor quality.<sup>309</sup> Indeed, children can be placed in a PRU for a great variety of reasons.

Children may go to a PRU if they have been excluded from school, are not attending school for other reasons because they are disengaged at mainstream school or because they are not gaining qualifications at school. Many of the children attending PRUs have SEN and many also have statements of SEN – which are usually for emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some of these children may be gradually introduced back into mainstream schools or into special schools.<sup>310</sup>

305 Summerfield A, *Children and Young People in Custody 2010–11*, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons and Youth Justice Board, 2011

306 Taylor C, *Improving Alternative Provision*, London: Department for Education, 2012

307 Department for Education, *Schools, pupils and their characteristics January 2013*, London: Department for Education, 2013

308 Ibid

309 Ibid

310 Kent City Councils, *Pupil referral units*, Online, Kent City Council, 2013 [accessed via: [http://www.kent.gov.uk/education\\_and\\_learning/school\\_attendance\\_\\_behaviour/exclusion\\_or\\_suspension/alternatives\\_to\\_school/pupil\\_referral\\_units\\_prus.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/education_and_learning/school_attendance__behaviour/exclusion_or_suspension/alternatives_to_school/pupil_referral_units_prus.aspx) (07/08/13)]

Recognition of poor outcomes has led the Government to introduce a number of reforms that seek to improve provision in the sector. Whilst these are welcome, they are at such an early stage that their effects remain to be seen.

In 2011, Charlie Taylor, the Government's behaviour expert, was asked to conduct a review of existing AP and to make recommendations that would improve outcomes for these children. The premise of the review was that 'the focus of pupil referral units and alternative provision, just as it is in schools, should be about getting high quality education for all pupils and the best value for public money.'<sup>311</sup>

In keeping with the wider drives to increase autonomy in the education system, the Government believes that greater autonomy is a key way of raising standards for these children. PRUs are being offered the opportunity to take control of their budgets, staffing decisions and other freedoms offered by academy status.<sup>312</sup>

Since February 2012, PRUs have been able to register an interest in converting to Academy status with the first PRU opening as an AP Academy on November 2012.<sup>313</sup> There are already 14 PRUs with Academy status<sup>314</sup> and a further 15 applications have been approved.<sup>315</sup> The Secretary of State may also make an Academy Order for a PRU issued with a notice by Ofsted that it requires special measures or significant improvement (i.e. a failing PRU).<sup>316</sup> Charlie Taylor has recommended that:

*'By 2018, the only PRUs remaining would be those where maintenance by the LA [local authority] added value to the operation of the PRU.'*<sup>317</sup>

Since 1 April 2013, the way funding is allocated to PRUs has also changed: PRU management committees now have delegated budgets, as well as responsibility for all other financial decisions necessary to manage and spend budgets effectively. This puts them on par with mainstream schools. Direct state-funded AP institutions receive base funding of £8,000 per place, topped up by funding from the commissioning local authority or school for each pupil admitted.<sup>318</sup> Primary responsibility for the recruitment and management of staff now also rests with the PRU management committee.

John d'Abbro OBE, head of the New Rush Hall School, is positive about these changes, but is concerned that:

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311 Taylor C, *Improving Alternative Provision*, London: Department for Education, 2012

312 Ibid

313 Department for Education, *Academies Annual Report, Academic Year: 2011/12*, London: The Stationery Office, 2013

314 Department for Education, *All open academies August 2013* [accessed via: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/xlsx/a/all%20open%20academies%20aug%202013%20v1%2000.xlsx> (07/07/13)]

315 Department for Education, *Publication list for converter academies*, 05 August 2013 [accessed via: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/xlsx/p/publication%20list%20for%20converter%20academies%20aug%202013%20v2%2000.xlsx> (18/08/13)]

316 Department for Education, *Consultation on the Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) (Amendment) Regulations*, London: Department for Education, 2012

317 Taylor C, *Improving Alternative Provision*, London: Department for Education, 2012

318 Department for Education, *Funding Alternative Provision – Frequently Asked Questions*, London: Department for Education [accessed via: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/ff/faqs%20-%20funding%20alternative%20provision.pdf> (18/08/13)] The amount of the top-up is a local decision based on services provided to meet the needs of the individual child and any additional overheads not covered by the base funding

*'in the short term some schools will think they can provide it [AP] cheaper themselves and then they'll realise they can't and come back to us.'*

If schools seek to cater for pupils who need AP 'on-site' they may also fail to provide sufficient physical separation for those pupils where gang membership and negative peer influences are part of the problem and may risk creating a 'sin-bin' mentality among schools.

The headteacher of one PRU told the CSJ that only giving PRUs the top-up when pupils are on-site is unreasonable – as they have to plan ahead and pay teachers. If policy-makers want provision to be high-quality, providers need to be able to plan ahead. There are concerns that the value of the top-up is ambiguous, failing to reflect that in London there are higher costs, higher salaries and according to the headteacher, more complex needs.

Robert Loach, deputy headteacher of Harrogate PRU points to another concerning issue. Special schools receive £2,000 more per-place than PRUs, even though a large proportion of pupils in PRUs have SEN. He told the CSJ that even though special schools are often not able to manage these children on more money, local authorities are sending pupils with statements of SEN to PRUs because it is cheaper.

It will be important that these reforms avoid the risk of schools avoiding exclusions wherever possible even when children with complex needs would be better served in a specialist setting. When these children stay in the system too long their needs increase and the education of everyone around them suffers. Amanda Spielman, Chair of Ofqual and Education Adviser for ARK Schools, told the CSJ that:

*'these are often the most vulnerable children, but that doesn't mean that it is only their needs that should be considered to the exclusion of other children's.'*

John d'Abbro told the CSJ that 'we should not see AP as a dirty word and stigmatise those for whom actually, a period away can be a good thing.' Author and teacher, Tom Bennett has referred to the 'idiot sentiment' that children must be retained in school no matter what – under a climate where exclusion translates as a school's failure.<sup>319</sup>

To avoid this, providers will need the knowledge and expertise to deal adequately with their new responsibilities and budgetary autonomy. The Bridge AP Academy is one of the first providers to gain Academy status. Whilst outstanding providers like this have been able to take advantage of overall changes in the sector, its head, Seamus Oates, is concerned that:

*'other PRUs may not have the leadership and expertise to break away from the local authority – which have historically acted as providers' "line managers." Issues around having your own budget are complex and new, even for us. In theory – it's good, but in practice, it can be very challenging.'*

319 TES Connect, *Better out than in: why exclusions are often the answer*, 3 March, 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storyCode=6322545> (07/05/13)]



### 3.7.3.4 Improving AP accountability

Another important reform has been an attempt to improve accountability for excluded children. One reason for poor outcomes has been the lack of clarity over who is accountable for these children's outcomes. Parents must currently supervise their child for the first five days of exclusion. On the sixth day, the local authority assumes responsibility for providing full-time education for the pupil. Charlie Taylor's review noted evidence of a lack of care in the commissioning of AP, where one-third of schools did not visit the provider before they placed a pupil. He also noted that some schools or local authorities were drawn to cheap provision, with price not quality as the primary magnet.<sup>320</sup>

To address this, in 2011 the Department for Education announced a three-year school exclusion trial where schools are responsible for finding and funding AP themselves. They may for example, buy places from the local authority, the voluntary sector or local colleges, or collaborate with other schools to provide suitable places themselves. Critically, schools will remain accountable for those pupils they exclude – whose academic performance will still count on the school's performance tables. It is hoped that this will also incentivise schools to avoid exclusion where possible.

The trial aims to improve pupil outcomes by boosting accountability and testing new approaches for an evidence-based exclusions policy for the future. Schools involved in the trial take statutory responsibility for commissioning the most appropriate placement and local authorities devolve a proportionate amount of Dedicated Schools Grant for individual schools to fund their new responsibilities. Around 300 schools in 11 local authorities are taking part.<sup>321</sup>

Chris Whitfield from Wiltshire Council told the CSJ that:

*'the trial has enabled Schools, Alternative Providers and the local authority to work in partnership for the benefit of vulnerable young people in our care. There is improved shared accountability and schools are working together to develop a more preventative approach.'*

This is positive given the best schools tend to focus on early intervention.<sup>322</sup>

Cambridgeshire devolved funding for out-of-school provision well in advance of the trial. Howard Gilbert, head of St Ivo School, said that doing this has meant schools are now more closely connected to those referred, receiving reports on attainment, behaviour and attendance.

Good Quality Assurance is essential to the success of this approach as commissioners will need access to the right information in order to be able to decide which provision is right for individual pupils and their needs.

<sup>320</sup> Taylor C, *Improving Alternative Provision*, London: Department for Education, 2012

<sup>321</sup> Department for Education, *school exclusion trial 2011–14*, 25 June 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/exclusion/b00200074/exclusion-trial> (02/07/13)]

<sup>322</sup> Taylor C, *Improving Alternative Provision*, London: Department for Education, 2012

*'Good Quality Assurance must look at indicators like how many [pupils] become NEETs, or how many end up in prison. If placements don't end with reintegration into mainstream school – the school should still record information on destinations. If someone's predicted to get ten GCSEs and gets two – this is a disaster. But if they're predicted to commit suicide or be drug dependent – and they get two – that's a massive achievement.'*

**John d'Abbro, head of the New Rush Hall School**

Children in AP and those excluded from school are amongst the most vulnerable in the education system – they are also amongst those most likely to suffer poor outcomes later in life. Getting provision for them right is absolutely essential if we are to break the cycles of disadvantage that many of them face. The Government's reforms in this area are extremely promising, however it is essential that commissioners are equipped to find the most appropriate settings for children and are monitored to ensure that they are fulfilling this duty.

### 3.8 Teaching and teacher quality

The quality of teaching is the most important school-based factor affecting pupils' educational outcomes; as supported by international evidence.<sup>323</sup> In polling carried out by the CSJ/YouGov, 59 per cent of people said they had had at least one teacher whose contribution to their education has had a lasting, positive impression on their life.<sup>324</sup>

The effects of high quality teaching are especially great for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds: over the course of one year a good teacher can add 18 months of learning to a student from a disadvantaged background, compared with six months for a less able teacher.<sup>325</sup> Over the same period, pupils with a very effective mathematics teacher gain 40 per cent more learning than those with a poorly performing one.<sup>326</sup>

*'There is a general trend in our education system, where those children that need the best teachers seem to get the worst. This happens in PRUs, FE and in mainstream schools. It's shocking.'*

**Seamus Oates, Executive Head of the TBAP Multi-Academy Trust and The Bridge Alternative Provision Academy**

The impact is particularly great for those for whom school is the only place where they have a supportive learning environment. For them, school represents the only place where their disadvantages can be offset.

There is evidence that the quality of teaching is improving. Between the end of 2008 and 2012, the proportion of schools judged to have good or outstanding teaching at their latest

<sup>323</sup> Department for Education, *The Importance of Teaching The Schools White Paper*, London: Department for Education, 2010

<sup>324</sup> CSJ/YouGov polling, 2012

<sup>325</sup> Sutton Trust, *Improving the impact of teachers on pupil achievement in the UK – interim findings*, London: Sutton Trust, 2011

<sup>326</sup> Ibid

inspection increased from 65 to 71 per cent.<sup>327</sup> However, there are still too many schools where the quality of teaching is not good enough. Of the maintained schools inspected by Ofsted in 2011/12, more than one-third required improvement.<sup>328</sup>

The greater focus on the quality of teaching now in Ofsted's inspection framework means a higher proportion of schools have been judged inadequate: 548 schools (three per cent of all schools) were judged inadequate at 31 August 2012, compared with 455 a year earlier.<sup>329</sup> A focus on teaching, and recognition of the role it plays in school quality, is welcome.

The quality of teaching varies substantially across the regions. In London, pupils benefited from good or better teaching in over three-quarters of schools located in the 'most deprived' areas. By contrast, in the North East, under a third of schools in the most deprived areas were considered good or better for teaching.<sup>330</sup>

Improving teaching in primary schools is particularly important. In secondary school, pupils have a different teacher for most subjects studied and, therefore, some of the impact of having one poor quality teacher can be offset by excellent teaching elsewhere. However, in primary school, pupils have only one teacher for the entire academic year. This means the negative consequences of having one poor quality teacher are far greater for these children. According to Ofsted, the quality of teaching is good or outstanding in over 80 per cent of primary schools serving the least deprived areas but at only 69 per cent of those serving the most deprived communities.<sup>331</sup>

Attracting good applicants is also harder in schools where pupils face greater challenges. Disturbingly, schools and areas in greatest need of high quality teachers are often less able to attract the best.

*'Attracting good teachers to Manchester or to other major cities in the UK isn't usually a problem. In Manchester it's more the issue of the school. There's still some stigma attached to certain (usually underperforming) schools where issues of behaviour or pupils' engagement in their lessons may be a deciding factor. It's also true that certain subject specialisms are difficult to fill such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and modern foreign languages. As these specialisms are hard to fill for most schools, persons able to fill these posts can be very selective as to where they may wish to work.'*

**Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski DBE, Executive Head, Altrincham Grammar School for Girls and CEO of Bright Futures Educational Trust**

Substandard teaching not only constitutes a social injustice, it also carries a serious cost to Britain's international competitiveness. Bringing the lowest-performing ten per cent of teachers in the UK up to the average would greatly boost attainment and lead to a sharp improvement

327 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, schools, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

328 Ibid

329 Ibid

330 Ibid

331 Ibid

in the UK's international ranking. This would, for example, increase the UK's OECD ranking in reading from 21<sup>st</sup> to seventh.<sup>332</sup>

Countries with the most successful education systems recruit teachers from the highest performing and academically able graduates.<sup>333</sup> East Asian countries differ in the quality of their teachers and over the status bestowed upon them, where teachers must often combine teaching with academic research. They also receive high earnings relative to teachers internationally and relative to other professions. Korea obtains its annual teacher intake from the top five per cent of graduating students, using high levels of pay to compensate for large class sizes and to reflect the profession's esteemed status.<sup>334</sup> Yet in England, almost a quarter of secondary school mathematics teachers, and one in five English teachers do not hold a relevant post-A level qualification.<sup>335</sup>

The CSJ has heard that it is important to look at the mind-set or 'moral imperative' of teachers in order to recruit those who are resilient and will hold high aspirations for pupils, rather than those purely motivated by money. One head told the CSJ that:

*'You need to sell the challenge that teaching is the most demanding and intellectually stimulating job out there – if you can sell this image of teaching, you will attract the best.'*

### 3.8.1 Teacher quality and the 'dance of the lemons'

Last year, Michael Gove vowed to crack-down on what he called the 'dance of the lemons,' where poor teachers turn up at a new school and get a job by presenting well at an interview.<sup>336</sup> Whilst this may not be as widespread as the well-documented problem in the United States,<sup>337</sup> the CSJ has heard that the rotation of substandard teachers remains a problem in England.

In 1995, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead claimed there were around 15,000 incompetent teachers working in schools – approximately five per cent of the teacher workforce.<sup>338</sup>

The General Teaching Council (GTC) was established by the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998, to help improve standards of teaching and standards of teachers' professional conduct.<sup>339</sup>

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332 Sutton Trust, *Improving the impact of teachers on pupil achievement in the UK – interim findings*, London: Sutton Trust, 2011

333 McKinsey&Company, *How the world's best-performing schools come out on top, 2007* [accessed via: [http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Worlds\\_School\\_Systems\\_Final.pdf](http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Worlds_School_Systems_Final.pdf) (07/02/13)]

334 Economist Intelligence Unit, Pearson, *The Learning Curve, Lessons in Country Performance in Education*, London: Pearson Plc, 2012

335 Department for Education, *School workforce in England: November 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2012

336 Daily Mail, *Poor teachers to face sack under new 'zero tolerance' powers as well as children reading to Ofsted inspectors*, 2 September 2012

337 Chilcott L and Guggenheim D, *Waiting for Superman* [Motion picture], United States: Paramount, 2010

338 NASUWT, *Teacher capability/competence, A review of the evidence*, Birmingham: NASUWT, 2010

339 Department for Education, *General Teaching Council*, [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/vocabularies/educationtermsandtags/5543> (18/08/13)]

However, serious concerns were raised about its effectiveness. Across the 11 years of the GTC only 6,657 teachers were identified for bad conduct and incompetence by the GTC<sup>340</sup> – considerably fewer than Woodhead's snapshot of 15,000 in 1995.

Over the past decade, relatively few teachers have been struck off for incompetence. Between 2001 and 2011, only 17 teachers were prevented from applying for another job after being judged incompetent by the GTC,<sup>341</sup> suggesting that poor teachers are rarely evicted from the profession.

In 2012, the Government reformed the system, and from 1st April 2012, the GTC was replaced by the Teaching Agency. The Teaching Agency took on the regulatory role with regards to misconduct cases, with cases referred at the discretion of headteachers, and cases of teacher competence to be handled in individual schools by the headteacher.<sup>342</sup> On 2 April 2013, the National College for Teaching and Leadership was formed through a merger of the National College for School Leadership and the Teaching Agency.

The National College for Teaching and Leadership now deals with cases of serious misconduct, which can lead to teachers being banned from the profession. Since the introduction of the new system, the number of teachers banned has increased from 68 in 2011/12 (the last year of the GTC) to 98 in 2012/13.<sup>343</sup>

Since 1 September 2012, new arrangements for teacher appraisal and capability have been in place giving schools more freedom over managing their teachers through less prescriptive appraisal regulations. They also removed regulation that prevented headteachers from observing teachers in the classroom for more than three hours a year, allowing schools greater freedom to monitor teacher quality.<sup>344</sup>

Michael Gove told the House of Commons that the new appraisal and capability arrangements 'should make it easier for governing bodies and headteachers to tackle underperformance.'<sup>345</sup> There is now no informal stage in the capability procedure and the suggested length of the monitoring and review period following a first warning has been significantly reduced from 20 weeks to between four and ten, allowing headteachers to move faster against incompetence.

The changes also require teachers to be assessed yearly against the new Teachers' Standards. These set the standard to which all trainees should aspire and to which all qualified teachers should work towards. Schools are expected to make arrangements for teachers to improve

340 ChronicleLive, *Teaching union says figures reflect hard-working professionals*, 30 December 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/teaching-union-says-figures-reflect-1376908> (25/02/13)]

341 Daily Mail, *Poor teachers to face sack under new 'zero tolerance' powers as well as children reading to Ofsted inspectors*, 2 September 2012 [accessed via <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2197197/Poor-teachers-face-sack-new-zero-tolerance-powers-children-reading-Ofsted-inspectors.html> (05/06/13)]

342 ATL the education union, *GTCE: the verdict*, 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.atl.org.uk/publications-and-resources/report/2012/march-school-trips.asp> (07/08/13)]

343 TES Magazine, *Teacher bans soar under more 'rigorous' system*, 31 May 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6337126> (27/07/13)]

344 Department for Education, *Schools get more freedom to manage teacher performance*, 13 January 2012 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-get-more-freedom-to-manage-teacher-performance> (17/07/13)]

345 Hansard, Oral Answers to Questions, 22 Apr 2013

their practice and ultimately, can take action via capability procedures, potentially leading to dismissal.<sup>346</sup>

These reforms mark a substantial step forward, however; major problems in the system persist. The CSJ has been told that substandard teachers are still being passed on to different schools, often before heads have even followed competency proceedings.

Sir Robin Boshier said that the use of 'agreed references' or 'compromise agreements' is a significant factor behind why poor quality teachers are able to get jobs in new schools. Agreed references are references that have had the content agreed by the referee and the subject, often standardised and brief. A compromise agreement refers to the arrangements then made in exchange for the subject agreeing to take no further action against their employer. Often it will be cost effective for headteachers to pay compensation under a compromise agreement rather than fight a claim in the employment tribunal – a process that can cost a school tens of thousands of pounds and more.

Poor quality teachers are regularly not dealt with adequately because unions advise their members to resign before procedures are filed. One head told the CSJ that union deals are the cause of this problem:

*'Unions will talk to heads and strike a deal...and because the process is so long – they make the deal just to get rid of that person as quickly as possible.'*

Headteachers have anonymously told the CSJ that this is often the best option for the school as well, saving cost, work and further damage.

*'We still find it very difficult to remove a member of staff on competency grounds because most the time when you raise their underperformance with them they go on sick leave. Sometimes they then raise a grievance, claim bullying, involve the unions and then threaten tribunals and unfair dismissal claims – if this hits the press there is the risk of brand damage [and] this is why a compromise agreement is often brokered!'*

Headteacher

Many headteachers who spoke to the CSJ acknowledged that agreed references are being used to get rid of underperforming teachers. As one put it:

*'I know this is illegal and that it means I am contributing to the problem by passing bad teachers on, but good schools and good heads should be able to spot a bad teacher. If they can't – it means the school has bigger problems anyway. I've got to be selfish and think about what's best for my school and my children.'*

However, a number of professionals told us that this problem extended beyond agreed references. As one put it:

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346 The standards apply to all of those who are assessed for QTS on or after 1 September 2012

*'It's happened a few times over the past few years that a teacher has been really poor and everyone starts talking about it. The pupils tell us, and we can just tell. But as soon as they realise it's been noticed, they go on sick leave, because they're worried about capability procedures. But we all know they're not sick because I know the doctor who writes their notes – he sells them for £20! Anyone can get one! There have also been cases where a teacher has been given, not just an agreed reference – but an OUTSTANDING reference, just so the head can get rid of them as quickly as possible. It's extremely frustrating for everyone else in the school.'*

Teacher in London, anonymous

The CSJ has also been told that where unions manage to negotiate a compromise agreement, it is possible to write a reference that would mean that teacher could not go on to get another job.

*'My experience of "negotiated references" is that it is absolutely clear it is a negotiated reference. When someone resigns without a post to go to and has a short reference, we all know what has happened! We then pick up the phone and talk to the head!'*

Ros McMullen, CEO of LEAF Academy Trust and Principal of the David Young Community Academy

However, some heads have less choice. Some heads have told us that teachers working in subjects where there are shortages can have their pick of schools – often regardless of their ability or the quality of their reference. One head told the CSJ that a lack of good supply in their area prompted them to hire what they suspected was a 'dodgy' teacher, only for these suspicions to soon be confirmed:

*'English teachers are like gold dust and he isn't all bad so I expect he'll circulate around for a few more years yet.'*

One union official we spoke to conceded that agreed references were an issue, but felt that more needed to be done to improve teacher quality in school without having to move these teachers on:

*'Agreed references do occasionally take place, but the recycling of poor quality teachers is not in anyone's interests. Instead, we need to improve the support we make available to these teachers.'*

The need to improve the quality of the existing workforce is an extremely important point, one that we return to below.

Improving the avenues for dealing with underperforming teachers is important, but so too is addressing the current mismatch in teacher supply and demand which forces some schools to hire these teachers, therefore enabling them to permeate. Schools in special measures, for example, are prevented from hiring newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and therefore are sometimes forced to rely on supply teachers, often the poorest quality and least committed. Ros McMullen told the CSJ:

*'I NEVER use supply teachers and, in my opinion schools who use recruitment agencies are bonkers. Interestingly there are more and more who do. Crazy!'*

According to some heads who have spoken to the CSJ, too many supply teachers are substandard. Some heads also raised concerns about teachers who were just above the competency threshold but ultimately not as strong as pupils and parents would like. Dame Sally Coates said that 'we need to be able to address this issue adequately, dealing with those teachers who are "OK" but not quite good enough. These teachers may not be bad enough to warrant competency procedures, but they are not good enough to teach in our schools.'

The solution to these problems is likely to lie in a combination of adjusted regulation and on school leaders. Sam Freedman told the CSJ Working Group that 'the dance of the lemons' is indeed a problem but one that will subside as the quality of leadership and initial teaching improves. Focussing solely on competency procedures misses the bigger picture: there is a need to develop the quality of leadership in schools so that headteachers can protect children against poor teaching by hiring competent teachers, helping to raise the professional standards of their staff and by removing teachers who are incapable of improving.

### **3.8.2 Initial Teacher Training**

The CSJ has heard concerns raised by numerous sources about Initial Teacher Training (ITT). There are hundreds of different ITT courses available: universities, colleges and schools all display varying characteristics, strengths and entry requirements, not to mention course content and structures. Some can be completed alongside a degree, straight after a degree or as a full-time course, including employment-based routes.

Some have raised concerns that too many teachers still pass their initial teacher training when they are not suited to, or good enough for the profession. Sir Greg Martin, Executive Head of the Durand Academy told the CSJ that:

*'In their induction year there are termly reviews and if a teacher is not satisfactory they can move on to another school, where they will often pass. We need to promote higher standards across the system – we wouldn't tolerate pilots who can't fly planes or doctors who can't treat patients; nor must we accept teachers who can't teach.'*

Vivienne Porritt, Executive Director at the London Centre for Leadership in Learning, Institute of Education, told the CSJ that 'whilst NQTs are now the best trained we have ever had, continuing teacher education would still benefit from more personalisation and opportunities to take account of the individual learning needs of teachers and their context – "one size can't ever fit everybody:"

This makes it inflexible and insufficiently tailored to the individual needs of both pupils and teachers. This is worrying given the varied circumstances teachers face, for example, in rural and urban schools, or in schools with higher percentages of SEN, FSM or English as an Additional Language.

Teachers have told the CSJ that they currently receive insufficient training on the emotional and social needs of children. Interventions which target social and emotional learning (SEL) seek to improve attainment by improving the social and emotional dimensions of learning, as opposed to focussing directly on the academic or cognitive elements. They have a significant impact on outcomes (on average around three to four months additional progress), at a very low cost (according to the EEF toolkit). SEL programmes benefit disadvantaged or low-attaining pupils more than other pupils and are effective from nursery through to secondary school.<sup>347</sup>

### Case study: Family Links

Family Links is part of the CSJ Alliance. It is a charity that helps create a calm, respectful school community thereby improving behaviour and encouraging positive relationships. Family Links is a recognised form of professional development, available for teachers.

One school which used the programme said that the lack of training on emotional health leads to poorer outcomes for children and high stress situations for teachers – ultimately leading to higher staff-turnover:

*'No matter how chaotic the family, they cannot be used as an excuse for educational failure, it's still the schools' responsibility to deliver learning.'*

The headteacher believes that where problems in the home are manifest in children's behaviour at school – it is the school's responsibility to use services like Family Links so that they can manage the additional challenges arising from different pupil intakes.

In one school which had benefitted from Family Links, a large proportion of the class were on FSM. There were also children with autism, and a large proportion had come to the attention of social services at some point. The headteacher said that mental health problems among parents are rife and many have experienced family breakdown.

The headteacher was adamant that the training Family Links provided to the form tutor was absolutely pivotal to her ability to manage the class and get them to trust her. Annette Mountford, CEO and co-founder of Family Links, said

*'Ideally the training we provide for teachers would be compulsory. Emotional wellbeing is as important as it gets. It benefits the students but also the workforce – it's a genuine need.'*

A major spur to the recruitment of high quality teachers in the past decade has been Teach First which trains high attaining graduates to become inspirational teachers in schools in low-income communities and which was commended in *Breakthrough Britain*. Where significant, partnering with Teach First explains 20–40 per cent of the between-school variance in pupil performance at GCSE level. This equates to approximately one-third of a GCSE per pupil per subject.

Applicants must have a 2:1 degree or above and a Grade C or above in GCSE mathematics and English (and science for primary schools). Each year, a new group of trainees joins the

<sup>347</sup> Education Endowment Foundation, *Social and emotional learning* [accessed via: <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/approaches/social-and-emotional-aspects-of-learning/> (08/07/13)]

organisation and its university partners for six weeks of intensive training before teaching in one of the partner schools for at least two years, after which they achieve a PGCE. Teach First is now the UK's third largest graduate recruiter and in 2012, six per cent of all Russell Group finalists applied to the programme.<sup>348</sup>

Teach First aims to get up to 2,000 teachers in a cohort. Whilst this represents only around seven to eight per cent of teachers in each year, the scheme's impact is likely to grow as more and more Teach First graduates enter leadership and headship positions, thereby spreading the programme's wider influence throughout the education system.

For a school to be eligible for partnership with Teach First, at least 50 per cent of pupils must come from the lowest 30 per cent of the IDACI – also prioritising those schools which have higher levels of deprivation.<sup>349</sup> The number of schools partnering with Teach First and appointing Teach First teachers to their staff has increased from 45 in 2003/04 to 374 in 2011/12, including 67 primary and all-through schools. In 2012, Teach First recruited its tenth cohort of 996 graduates, and planned to place approximately one-fifth of this cohort in primary, and four-fifths in secondary schools in low income communities<sup>350</sup>

Sam Freedman, a director at Teach First, told the CSJ Working Group that a major area of future growth for the scheme will be in primary schools and from September 2013 it will also be extended to those working with early years children aged three and four. The extension of the Teach First Leadership Development Programme into the early years will hopefully attract more talented people into this sector.

### 3.8.3 Teaching assistants

Teaching assistants (TAs) now form a staple of many classrooms across the country – supporting the work of teachers in the classroom. Their primary tasks include working with small groups of children who need extra support in an area of the curriculum such as literacy or numeracy. They are also often responsible for hearing children read and helping teachers undertake administrative tasks.<sup>351</sup> TAs can therefore provide support and relief for teachers, especially where working with challenging intakes. They are less qualified than teachers and paid approximately half of teachers' salaries. TAs have been found to have a positive effect on teachers' workloads, job satisfaction and stress. Consequently, teachers like having TA support and feel that TAs have a positive impact on pupils' academic progress.<sup>352</sup>

There has been an unprecedented expansion in the number of TAs:<sup>353</sup>

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348 Hill R. *Teach First: Ten Years of Impact*, London: Teach First, 2012

349 TeachFirst, About TeachFirst, [accessed via: <http://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/about/schools-pupils.html>] (18/08/13)]

350 Hill R. *Teach First: Ten Years of Impact*, London: Teach First, 2012

351 Education Endowment Foundation, Teaching assistants [accessed via: <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/approaches/teaching-assistants> (08/07/13)]

352 Oxford School Improvement, *The Pupil Premium: making it work in your school*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012 in reference to: *Case study on the impact of IOE research The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project*, DISS study IOE, 2010

353 Department for Education, *School workforce in England: November 2012*, London: Department for Education, 2012

- Between 2011 and 2012, the number of TAs employed in schools in England on a full-time basis rose by 12,500 to over 232,000;
- Between Spring 2000 and November 2012, the number of full-time TAs increased by 194 per cent;
- Schools now employ more than one TA for every two full-time teachers.

The sharp rise in the use of TAs is deeply concerning given that they are associated with very small or even no effect on pupils' attainment.<sup>354</sup> It is also worrying that paying for TAs is the most common use of the Pupil Premium<sup>355</sup> and that every year schools spend over £2 billion pounds on TAs.<sup>356</sup>

The Institute of Education has shown that the more TA support a child received, the less progress they made.<sup>357</sup> The effects were large, present even after controlling for prior attainment, SEN, FSM and EAL, applied for all ages and to English, mathematics and science. The study also found that TAs are more likely to prompt pupils, mainly geared around ensuring children completed tasks set by teachers.

TAs are often deployed to support children with SEN. Disturbingly, this means those children who can find learning most challenging, spend their time with the least qualified adults.<sup>358</sup> On the other hand, the study also found that TAs can boost teachers' productivity, reduce their stress levels and improve classroom progress. This suggests that the most important issue here is how TAs are used and deployed. Although too often not the case, TAs can be effective when used in a well-planned and evidence-based manner.<sup>359</sup>

Whilst TAs can have a positive impact where used effectively, the primary focus should always be on improving the quality of teaching experienced by all pupils in a class. As one headteacher told the CSJ, 'Schools need better leadership and teaching, not more TAs as a default response.'

### 3.8.4 Professional standards and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

*'CPD is there to help pupils and in doing so, it helps teachers. Many schools haven't grasped this explicitly yet. They know how important teacher quality is for student outcomes – and yet not all schools recognise how important CPD is for teacher quality. How can we ask children to learn when the adults are not able to or refuse to?'*

**Vivienne Porritt, Executive Director at the London Centre for Leadership in Learning**

354 Education Endowment Foundation, Teaching assistants [accessed via: <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/approaches/teaching-assistants> (08/07/13)] (where staff are not used or deployed effectively)

355 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Pupil Premium: how schools are using the Pupil Premium funding to raise achievement for disadvantaged pupils*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

356 Oxford School Improvement, *The Pupil Premium: making it work in your school*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012

357 Blatchford P et al, *Deployment and Impact of Support Staff Project*, Institute of Education and the Department for children, schools and families, 2009

358 Institute of Education, *Case study on the impact of IOE research The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project*, DISS study IOE, 2010. see also Oxford School Improvement, *The Pupil Premium: making it work in your school*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012

359 Ibid

Whilst there is general agreement that today's NQTs are the best that have ever been, they account for only a small proportion of the teaching workforce. There is consequently a huge need to drive up the standards of professionals already in post.

The benefits of effective professional development are especially great for disadvantaged students. In a New Zealand study, classes where teachers had taken part in high quality professional development improved twice as fast as those in other classes. This was particularly true of the least able pupils. The 20 per cent of pupils deemed 'least able' made improvements four to six times as fast as their peers.<sup>360</sup>

Countries like Finland and Singapore have been praised for their education systems and both use CPD to a greater extent than does England. In Singapore, teachers are valued as a resource in need of continual nurture – reflected in the strong initial training and ongoing development they receive. For example, teachers are entitled to complete 100 hours of professional development per year and the Teacher Growth Model has been launched to establish a holistic, student-centred approach to teaching.<sup>361</sup>

However, in England, CPD is not used as effectively as it should be. An OECD report found that the quality and nature of continuing training available in the UK is extremely varied.<sup>362</sup> According to David Weston, Chief Executive of the Teacher Development Trust (TDT), schools in England spend only 0.25 per cent of their budget on developing the classroom skills of their teachers – meaning they spend just £8 on average per student.<sup>363</sup>

Brigitte Clay, also from the TDT, told the CSJ that schools' use of CPD is often too focussed on 'what the teacher needs' rather than being 'pupil-focussed' and thinking more strategically about what would deliver the greatest benefits to pupils in that class. Many schools also use CPD to react to external drivers, instead of using it to proactively develop their workforce. Providers report that the only courses and conferences guaranteed to sell out relate to changes in Ofsted inspections or to changes in government regulations. Worryingly, the CSJ has been told, the most common training also involves merely watching PowerPoint presentations.

CPD is not only under-used, it is insufficiently evaluated. David Weston also told the CSJ that barely one per cent of training was effectively transforming classroom practice and only seven per cent of schools even evaluate whether training has any effect on attainment.

According to David Weston:

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360 Teacher Development Trust, *Why focus on professional development?* [accessed via: <http://www.teacherdevelopmenttrust.org/evidence/07/07/13>] see also Parr J et al, Literacy Professional Development Project: Identifying Effective Teaching and Professional Development Practices for Enhanced Student Learning, Report to the Ministry of Education, New Zealand: Ministry of Education, 2007

361 Teacher Development Trust, Author Archives: Carole Haynes, 08 August 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.teacherdevelopmenttrust.org/author/carole-haynes/> (06/04/13)]

362 Musset P, *Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Training Policies in a Comparative Perspective: Current Practices in OECD Countries and a Literature Review on Potential Effects*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 48, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2010

363 Teacher Development Trust, launch, May 13, 2012, [accessed via: <http://www.teacherdevelopmenttrust.org/teacher-development-trust-launch/> (11/08/13)]

*'There is a culture in many schools where CPD is seen as a tool to "fix" teachers and help leadership teams respond to accountability pressures. This is compounded by a history of observation being used to judge how teachers are behaving and performing in the classroom rather than focussing on whether learners are making progress. If we want to engage teachers as drivers of school improvement rather than as merely passive recipients of techniques and delivery mechanisms for lessons then we need to empower them to take control of their own self-improvement. We must move away from CPD being seen as merely courses and lectures and toward a professional continuous learning culture which is sustained over a long period of time, collaborative, focussed on improving learner outcomes, evidence-informed and carefully evaluated.'*

Bridget Clay said that 'CPD is often very "top-down" – seen by some teachers as something that has been imposed or 'forced' on them. This sends a negative signal about the system-wide benefits professional development brings. More schools need to see CPD as a valued part of the whole-school culture, driven by demand from teachers but also facilitated by heads and leaders.'

Poor CPD is also draining the profession of new recruits. Only 73 per cent of NQTs in the maintained sector were still teaching in the maintained sector five years later.<sup>364</sup> Effective professional development can not only strengthen standards but enhance teacher morale and thereby improve retention.

### 3.9 Leadership

Leadership plays a pivotal role in delivering excellence within schools. Good leaders are more effective in attracting good teachers to schools, ensuring effective professional development for staff and are better able to ensure good governance.<sup>365</sup> Improving leadership, and ensuring excellent leaders are operating in those schools where they are most needed is essential if we are to improve outcomes for children. The CSJ is therefore deeply concerned that effective leadership is not well distributed across the system.

*'Exceptional leaders and teachers transform schools and the lives of the pupils who attend them...but there is too much variation across the country and between schools serving the least and most deprived communities.'*<sup>366</sup>

**Ofsted**

For every 100 schools with good leadership and management, 93 will have good standards of student achievement. Yet for every 100 schools that do not have good leadership and management, only one does.<sup>367</sup> A report from Ofsted stressed there was 'no denying the

364 Hansard, Written evidence submitted by the Department for Education, 2010 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmeduc/1515/1515we02.htm> (19/08/13)]

365 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Twenty outstanding primary schools – Excelling against the odds*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2009

366 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2013

367 Barber M, Whelan F and Clark M, *Capturing the leadership premium, How the world's top school systems are building leadership capacity for the future*, London: McKinsey & Company, 2010

pivotal role of the Headteacher in creating the ethos for the school and exercising strong pedagogical leadership.<sup>368</sup>

In England, the quality of leadership and management has improved markedly over the past five years, the proportion of schools judged outstanding for leadership and management having increased by eight percentage points since 2008.<sup>369</sup>

Excellent leadership is not spread evenly across the country, and is not reaching enough of the most disadvantaged areas. As at 31 December 2012, 74 per cent of primary schools in the most deprived areas of England were judged good or outstanding for leadership and management, compared with 88 per cent of primary schools in the least deprived areas. The gaps are even bigger elsewhere in the country. For example, only 64 per cent of primary schools in the most deprived areas in the East Midlands were judged good or outstanding for leadership and management, compared with an impressive 88 per cent of primary schools in the least deprived parts of this region.<sup>370</sup>

Dr. Vanessa Ogden is head of Mulberry School for Girls, where she says that 76 per cent of the students are on FSM, 94 per cent are British Bengali and 98 per cent have English as an Additional Language. She told us that to deliver good leadership, school leaders need to really understand their communities. She believes that strong leadership comes through knowing your students, knowing your local context and knowing local employment needs. Good leaders ensure learning is deeply embedded within the school, involving not only the pupils but parents as well.

Cllr Paul Bell, a school governor and Councillor told the CSJ that heads and governors need to understand the parents they are working with:

*'the head is like the Prime Minister – the first among equals. They need to be leaders but also need to have strong relationships with teachers and with parents alike. Instead of blaming teachers, we need to look at leadership: the headteacher, the governing body and the association behind that school, whether it is a federation or the local authority.'*

There are increasing numbers of system leaders giving focussed school-to-school support in the roles of National Leaders of Education, Local Leaders of Education, Specialist Leaders of Education and National Leaders of Governance.

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368 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Twenty outstanding primary schools – Excelling against the odds*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2009

369 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2013

370 Ibid

- *National Leaders of Education*: recruits 'outstanding' headteachers or principals as National Leaders of Education (NLEs) and deploys them to support schools in challenging circumstances. The objective is to increase leadership capacity of other schools to help raise standards. It has a target to designate 1,000 NLEs by 2014–2015.<sup>371</sup>
- *Local Leaders of Education*: a partnership working between schools and academies. These are successful headteachers with three or more years experience whose role is to work with other heads in challenging circumstances to encourage improvements and build capacity to ensure improvements can be sustained. It met its target of 2,000 LLEs and now recruits only on the basis of maintaining numbers and guaranteeing national support.<sup>372</sup>
- *Specialist Leaders of Education*: these are 'outstanding' senior and middle leaders who support individuals or teams in similar positions in other schools to help establish outstanding leadership practice in their area. The scheme recognises the importance of senior and middle leaders in achieving successful outcomes. Over 2,500 SLEs have been appointed since 2011, with 5,000 the target for 2014–15, and 10,000 as a longer term target for national coverage.<sup>373</sup>
- *The Future Leaders Trust*: a charitable organisation whose mission is to address educational disadvantage by transforming outstanding current or former teachers into effective school leaders for challenging schools.
- *National Leaders of Governance*: National Leaders of Governance are effective chairs of governors who use their skills and expertise to support Chairs in other schools. This aims to increase leadership capacity to raise standards and maintain improvements.<sup>374</sup>

However, where there are fewer outstanding schools, there are typically fewer NLEs and more schools in need of support. London, the North East and the North West have a better ratio of NLEs to schools than for example, the East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber.<sup>375</sup> Dr Vanessa Ogden warns that NLEs (of which she is one) are not being deployed systematically at the present time since there is little central co-ordination of their work or quality assurance of it. She said that 'it is not enough for government to rely on the moral purpose of individuals in this way. There needs to be a better strategy for deployment, better funding for their work and the incentive of recognition for the work they do.'

Teaching Schools are another recent initiative designed to improve leadership and quality. Established in 2011, Teaching Schools are outstanding schools that have been given a lead role in the training and professional development of teachers, support staff and headteachers, as well as contributing to the raising of standards through school-to-school support.<sup>376</sup> There are currently 363 Teaching Schools in England.<sup>377</sup> It is hoped that they will take greater

371 Department for Education, National leaders of education and national support schools [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/support-for-schools/national-leaders-of-education.htm> (18/08/13) <http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/docinfo?id=157129&filename=nle-fact-sheet-2.pdf>]

372 Department for Education, Local Leaders of Education Programme [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/support-for-schools/lle.htm> (16/08/13)]

373 Department for Education, Specialist leaders of education [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/support-for-schools/specialist-leaders-of-education-programme.htm> (16/08/13)]

374 Department for Education, National leaders of governance [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/support-for-schools/national-leaders-of-governance.htm> (16/08/13)]

375 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2013

376 Department for Education, National Teaching Schools [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/teachingschools.htm> (16/08/13)]

377 Department for Education, Press Release, 'Teaching schools get £10 million to boost quality of teacher training', 21 March 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teaching-schools-get-10-million-to-boost-quality-of-teacher-training> (08/08/13)]

responsibility for school improvement, empowering the best schools to lead the system and creating networks of schools which can work together.<sup>378</sup>

Evaluating the impact of Teaching Schools will be an extremely important step going forward. However, some feel that their potential has not been capitalised as effectively as it might have been:

*'The Teaching Schools development was in principle a good proposal...but the new emerging Teaching Schools have been very much left to develop on their own too soon. At such an early phase of development there should be more structure and leadership coming centrally. Some Teaching Schools have been very creative and are in their own communities making some difference. Unfortunately, too many are struggling and worrying more about competition from other nearby Teaching Schools or other organisations which is having an adverse effect on their contribution as Teaching Schools and for some it has become an albatross. Those same schools without a structure and support are feeling strain both financial and in their capacity to support others.'*

Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski DBE, Executive Head, Altrincham Grammar School for Girls and CEO of Bright Futures Educational Trust

### 3.9.1 Governors

Good governance is an essential component of excellence in schools, and often linked to good leadership. Governors have a responsibility to keep the school in check and should hold the headteacher to account on outcomes. Poor governance is not only related to weaknesses in leadership, but has an important effect on overall school quality.

The role and remit of governors is significant. Ofsted look at the extent to which governing bodies for example: ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction; provide challenge and hold the headteacher and other senior leaders to account for improving the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and pupils' behaviour and safety; support and strengthen school leadership and use the Pupil Premium and other resources effectively.

However, good governance is lacking in a huge number of schools. Ofsted states that the 6,000 schools rated less than good usually have weaknesses in their leadership and governance.<sup>379</sup>

Weak governance occurs where:

- Governors have not challenged leaders or held them to account;
- Governors have neglected students' achievement;
- The board has not focussed enough on ensuring the school's allocated Pupil Premium is spent effectively; and where
- Members of the governing body have been too accepting of the school's view of its performance.

378 Department for Education, *Teaching Schools* [accessed via: [http://www.egfl.org.uk/export/sites/egfl/categories/improvement/docs/lesley.html/Teaching\\_Schools\\_Information.pdf](http://www.egfl.org.uk/export/sites/egfl/categories/improvement/docs/lesley.html/Teaching_Schools_Information.pdf) (20/08/13)]

379 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Press Release, *Chief inspector raises the stakes for school governance*, 27 Feb 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/news/chief-inspector-raises-stakes-for-school-governance> (26/04/13)]



The Government has made attempts to strengthen the functioning of governors. In addition to a stronger focus on governance in Ofsted inspections, from September 2013 new regulations come into effect creating a simpler framework for the roles, procedures and allowances of maintained school governing bodies.<sup>380</sup>

Good governance requires that those sitting on the governing board 'know their school'.<sup>381</sup> However, to do this governors must have access to transparent data and readily understand what it means. Raiseonline is an online tool, to help enable schools to analyse performance data, covering the attainment and progress of pupils in Key Stages 1–4. Whilst it is a thorough and in-depth instrument, there is evidence that it is too complex for many governors.<sup>382</sup>

To assist with this, Ofsted's new Data Dashboard provides a snapshot of school performance at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4. It covers pupils' attainment and progress in core subjects, their attendance and how well the school does for its disadvantaged pupils. It also shows how well schools are performing compared with national averages and compared with similar schools; whose pupils had similar attainment when they entered the school. Sir Michael Wilshaw, Chief Inspector of Schools In England and head of Ofsted, said this meant there were no more excuses for governors who did not know their school well enough.

However, the CSJ has heard concerns that the Data Dashboard is too simple, for example, giving no context and with the categories of comparison between children too wide to be useful. It also omits information on several key indicators, such as the Value Added Best 8 measure (a pupil's performance in their best eight qualifications, plus the English and mathematics bonus, is expressed as a point score). Data is also of little use or value if governors are not able to identify or respond appropriately to trends in the data.

Worryingly, many schools struggle to recruit good governors. According to a submission from the National Governors Association, in some areas, often those with less social capital and in primary schools, it can be particularly hard to find good parent governors prepared to stand for election. Yet in other areas, parent governors can be those driving school improvements.<sup>383</sup> Matching supply and demand is harder in areas where there is less industry and fewer employees to recruit from, such as in more rural areas. According to the School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS), an online governor recruitment service, around 33,000 governor positions are vacant at any one time.<sup>384</sup>

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380 Department for Education, *Governors' Handbook For governors in maintained schools, academies and free schools*, London: Department for Education, 2013

381 The National Governors' Association, *Submission from the National Governors' Association on the Role of Governing*, Birmingham: The National Governors' Association, 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.nga.org.uk/getattachment/Resources/Consultation/NGA-Evidence-to-the-Select-Committee-Inquiry-on-Go/Submission-from-NGA-to-Select-Committee.pdf.aspx> (15/03/13)]

382 LKMco, *Wilshaw, data dashboards and governors: Why it matters*, 26/02/2013 [accessed via: <http://www.lkmco.org/article/wilshaw-data-dashboards-and-governors-why-it-matters-26022013> (20/02/13)]

383 The National Governors' Association, *Submission from the National Governors' Association on the Role of Governing*, Birmingham: The National Governors' Association, 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.nga.org.uk/getattachment/Resources/Consultation/NGA-Evidence-to-the-Select-Committee-Inquiry-on-Go/Submission-from-NGA-to-Select-Committee.pdf.aspx> (15/03/13)]

384 SGOSS, *Governors for Schools* [accessed via: <http://www.sgoss.org.uk/newsletters/251-sgoss-newsletter-september-2012.html?showall=&start=18> (15/08/13)]

There have been suggestions (including from Sir Michael Wilshaw) that paying governors might be an option in the future, especially for under-performing schools. However, remuneration risks attracting those who are purely financially motivated. The sheer number of governors also means remuneration would be extremely costly and somewhat unrealistic. Liz McSheehy, Chief Executive of SGOSS, told us money is not the answer:

*'recruiting volunteers is effective because it means that those who join are genuinely committed. Governors need to be better valued by society, not in terms of money, but through greater appreciation of the social contribution they make.'*

There are also concerns that attempts to professionalise the governance model is somewhat misguided. Amanda Spielman told the CSJ that:

*'there is an unrealistic expectation that governors will become more like professional inspectors, able to interpret and manage what is in reality, highly complex data. There are tensions growing between the rising expectations of governors, and the limitations of non-executive lay participation in schools.'*

A major challenge for government is how it can increase the number of governors whilst requiring more of them. It is also important to consider whether the system is currently making reasonable demands of a group of volunteers who may not have any first-hand experience of school management.

### 3.10 Further Education (FE) and Vocational Education

England's vocational education has come under heavy criticism, both domestically and in comparison to international standards.<sup>385</sup> Yet high quality FE provision is more important than ever. We are now enduring the effects of a 'skills-mismatch'.<sup>386</sup>

This mismatch is present at both the higher and lower ends of the labour market, harming not only a young person's job prospects, but the country's wider economic competitiveness. Lord Baker has said that British industry faces a shortfall of around 40,000 scientists, engineers and technicians each year, forcing employers to recruit highly-skilled workers from abroad.<sup>387</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, the CBI found that 35 per cent of businesses are dissatisfied with the basic literacy of school and college leavers, and 30 per cent are dissatisfied with their basic numeracy.<sup>388</sup>

FE colleges have the potential to address both ends of the spectrum: offering vocational routes but simultaneously offering a second chance to those who slipped through the net. There have been many reviews of the sector; yet it is only relatively recently, for example, with

385 SKOPE, *Developing Vocational Excellence: Learning Environments within Work Environments*, Oxford: SKOPE, 2012

386 Think Young, Skills mismatch [accessed via: <http://thinkyoung.eu/overcoming-the-skills-mismatch/> (20/08/13)]

387 The Telegraph, *Rise in arts degrees 'has left UK with major skills crisis'*, 02 May 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10031303/Rise-in-arts-degrees-has-left-UK-with-major-skills-crisis.html> (04/05/13)]

388 Confederation of British Industry, *Learning to grow: what employers need from education and skills*, London: CBI, 2012

the Wolf and Lingfield Reviews, that the needs of the sector have been reviewed with some understanding of their context, and, in the case of Wolf in particular, have been followed by decisive government action.

This section considers the shape of FE in England and asks what more can be done to help it support more young people into work.

### 3.10.1 FE: the sector and its students

FE refers to education provided outside of school, from the age of 14 onwards. At its higher levels it merges with higher education, but is more vocationally focussed than the majority of provision in Universities. Many students progress from FE to higher education. The sector is characterised by its considerable heterogeneity, encapsulating a wide spectrum of activity, from basic skills to apprenticeships, professional training and foundation and honours degrees.<sup>389</sup> These are delivered by a range of providers, such as general FE colleges, and other work-based, adult and community learning providers.<sup>390</sup>

Ofsted inspect a total of 1,375 providers, including independent learning providers, colleges and providers working in prisons.<sup>391</sup> The size of individual independent learning providers inspected varies considerably: the smallest has fewer than five learners<sup>392</sup> whereas Newcastle College is among the largest FE Colleges in the UK, and has 44,000 students.<sup>393</sup>

It is of little surprise that FE is sometimes characterised as the 'everything else' sector.<sup>394</sup>

#### Courses offered are graded according to their level of difficulty:

**Entry Level:** Entry Level 1, 2 & 3/Skills for Life/ESOL;

**Level 1:** These courses provide essential skills necessary to find employment and progress into further qualifications as part of the national framework. For example, NVQ Level 1/ BTEC and National Literacy & Numeracy Test Level 1;

**Level 2:** These courses are suitable for those with some prior qualifications or relevant work experience. For example, five GCSE A\* to C/NVQ Level 2/BTEC First Diploma;

**Level 3:** These courses are suitable for more demanding levels of work or for entry into higher education. For example, AS and A2 Levels/NVQ Level 3/ BTEC National Diploma; and

**Level 4:** These are delivered flexibly and are equivalent to the programmes that Universities and other Higher Education Institutions offer.

389 SKOPE, *Developing Vocational Excellence: Learning Environments within Work Environments*, Oxford: SKOPE, 2012

390 Learning Consultancy Partnership, Press release, What's the difference between higher education and further education? 6 March 2012 [accessed via: <http://lcp.org.uk/index.php/2012/03/whats-difference-between-higher-education-further-education/> (06/07/13)]

391 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Learning and skills*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

392 Ibid

393 English UK North, Newcastle College [accessed via: [http://www.englishuknorth.com/members/newcastle-college/\(16/08/13\)](http://www.englishuknorth.com/members/newcastle-college/(16/08/13))]

394 Institute for Government, *Choice and competition in further education*, London: Institute for Government, 2012

FE colleges cater to a large number of students. In 2011/12 almost 4.2 million learners engaged in some form of government-funded education or training in the learning and skills sector.<sup>395</sup> Almost a third of 16–18 year-olds at the end of 2012 were in General FE, tertiary and specialist colleges. This compares to 22 per cent in state-funded schools and only eight per cent in sixth form colleges.<sup>396</sup>

The number of students catered for is likely to increase even further. From 2013, all young people must continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17, rising to 18 from 2015. This means many of those students who would have otherwise left school are likely to be drawn to FE.<sup>397</sup> Another reason is the expected demographic upturn in the 16–18 population after 2017/18.<sup>398</sup>

Responsibility for funding post-16 learning in England is shared between the Department for Education (16–18-year-olds) and the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (19-year-olds and over). According to Paul Grainger, Co-Director of the Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation at the Institute of Education, 'this leads to very complex funding arrangements for FE, heavily bureaucratic, and frequently unpredictable.' Despite its key role, FE is also not funded at the same level as school Sixth Forms. As highlighted by the Schools White Paper, 'Post-16 funding, although distributed on a more transparent basis, is also inherently unfair, with school sixth forms being funded on average £280 more per student than general FE colleges and sixth form colleges.'<sup>399</sup>

The Government has pledged to end this funding gap by 2015.<sup>400</sup> However, colleges face other financial disadvantages. Whereas 11–18 schools can cross-subsidise by moving resources between age ranges, colleges cannot, leading to considerable differences between the median funding per learner in schools and colleges.<sup>401</sup> Colleges are also obliged to pay VAT on goods and services (unlike schools and academies who can claim it back).<sup>402</sup> Moreover, pupils in college are still not entitled to FSM, unlike those in school sixth forms, academies, Free Schools and University Technical Colleges.<sup>403</sup>

Colleges often serve the most disadvantaged young people yet, at present, their students are unlikely to be as well-supported as pupils who have stayed in school.

### 3.10.2 Supporting disadvantaged students

As David Blunkett MP told the CSJ:

395 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, Learning and skills, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

396 Department for Education, *Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16–18 year olds in England*, London: Department for Education, 2013

397 Norton S, *Potential Realised or Same Old Cinderella? Future Options for England's Further Education Sector*, SKOPE Research Paper No. 109, Cardiff: SKOPE, 2012

398 Ibid

399 Department for Education, *The Importance of Teaching, The Schools White Paper*, London: The Stationery Office, 2010

400 Ibid

401 Kewin, J, *Sixth Form Colleges and funding: for stakeholders*, London: Local Government House, 2012

402 Ibid

403 Hubble S, *Free school meals for students in post-16 education*, London: House of Commons, 2013

*'FE has always been the Cinderella story. They pick-up the pieces for what failed before. We as a nation need to take that very seriously.'*

Professor Keep, an expert in vocational education, refers to FE as 'educational warehousing' and says that many people see vocational routes as something for 'other people's children.' He suspects that if FE were not catering to 'lesser children', poor provision would not have been allowed to persist.<sup>404</sup>

Alongside its wider academic and vocational role, FE tends to accept responsibility for highly disadvantaged learners, many of whom have severe barriers to learning. Post-16 and adult learners interviewed by Ofsted in 2011 commented on their negative experiences of school, and how these led to continued barriers to learning, such as a fear of 'feeling thick' and the stigma of attending a literacy class.<sup>405</sup>

More than half (56 per cent) of 17-year-olds in full-time education in FE colleges are from the bottom three socio-economic groups. This compares with only 22 per cent in maintained school sixth forms.<sup>406</sup>

There are three times as many students eligible for FSM at colleges than at maintained school sixth-forms,<sup>407</sup> yet students at FE are not eligible for FSM and there is no Pupil Premium within the sector. It is imperative to ensure that the important work, and resources targeted at disadvantaged pupils in schools, is then not diluted post 16.

FE is also the main provider of post-16 provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Often, providers will need to engage actively with these learners, for example, through extensive pastoral work or good outreach. In the market town of Malton, South Ryedale, the outreach team of one college delivers learning within a sheltered housing complex for NEETs, turning the common room into a classroom during lessons.

FE is often less formal. Ade Brownlow, Head of Student Services at Askham-bryan College, told the CSJ that FE providers treat learners differently to how they were treated in school:

*'We try to make the relationship more like the one between a boss and an employee, rather than a teacher and their pupil. The relationship is more informal, but the discipline can then be far more genuine. When one of our learners behaves inappropriately, we try to discuss it with them, in a cognitive way, just as an employer would, rather than just enforcing our rules, as tended to happen in school.'*

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404 Keep E, 'Where next for vocational education?', Extended Review Essay, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, pp315–322.

405 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *Removing barriers to literacy*, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2011

406 2020 Public Service HUB, *The further education and skills sector in 2020: a social productivity approach*, London: 2020 Public Service HUB, 26 May 2011

407 The Association of Colleges, *No Free Lunch? Key Statistics*, [accessed via: <http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/parliament-and-campaigns/campaigns/no-free-lunch/key-statistics.cfm> (11/08/13)] (According to the Association of Colleges, this is based on: 103,000 16–18 year olds in 2009/10 who claimed free school meals at age 15, with the average cost of a lunch estimated at £1.95 and assuming the average student is at College for 190 days each year. This estimate does not include administration and capital costs.)

Many FE students will not only need to gain hard-skills, but those 'soft' skills which are essential in the workplace. Skills like turning up to work on time, dressing appropriately and dealing with criticism should not be dismissed. There is little long-term benefit of getting someone into a job if this employment cannot be sustained.

The FE sector also enables adults to update their existing skills, or offers a second chance to those who left school with few or no qualifications. There are approximately 3 million adult learners participating in FE in one form or another, and 90,100 offenders aged 18 or over in the prison system participated in learning during 2011/12.<sup>408</sup>

### 3.10.3 Remedial education

In many cases students at FE are not studying at a higher level than they were during compulsory schooling. In 2012, of learners aged 16–18, 89,000 studied at Level 1 as their highest qualification aim and 179,100 at Level 2 – the equivalent to GCSE level.<sup>409</sup> This lack of progression is concerning, however a more serious concern is to be found in the fact that many FE settings have to provide remedial training for those who have left compulsory schooling without basic skills.

In addition, FE is often effectively required to offer remedial education in literacy and numeracy.<sup>410</sup> However, the attempts to provide this remedial support are often not successful; in 2012, Ofsted inspectors found that the management of functional English and mathematics was generally weak in colleges, with little effective staff development.<sup>411</sup> These problems, unaddressed, continue into the workplace. The CBI has found that around one in five employers are providing remedial training in one or more of English, mathematics and IT for those young people joining them lacking acceptable levels in these basic skills.<sup>412</sup>

*'The FE and skills sector is being asked to deal with a lack of success in English and mathematics at school. What schools failed to achieve in five years, FE colleges are expected to achieve in one to two. That's a big ask and an enormous challenge for the sector...learners come to FE to develop their vocational skills in practical environments, often seeing English and mathematics as something that happens in school, a phase of their education they are often pleased to have left behind.'*

FE provider in the North of England, anonymous

408 The Skills Funding Agency and the Department for Business Innovation & Skills, *Quarterly Statistical First Release, Further Education & Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2013

409 Department for Education, *Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16–18 year olds in England*, London: Department for Education, 2013

410 Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, *Professionalism in Further Education, Final Report of the Independent Review Panel*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012

411 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, Learning and skills, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

412 Confederation of British Industry, *Learning to grow: what employers need from education and skills*, London: CBI, 2012

This was recently identified as a major concern in Lord Lingfield's review of FE which drew attention to the fact that providers were being distracted from their core purpose.<sup>413</sup>

*'FE providers are undergoing "mission drift" opposite to that normally observed and rightly criticised, but equally damaging to the country' prospects, downwards into the proper territory of secondary schooling. That drift is the result of both the remedial task inherited by FE from weak schools...'*

*Lord Lingfield, Professionalism in Further Education*<sup>414</sup>

Ideally, secondary school education should be providing pupils with literacy and numeracy – ensuring this would free up FE providers to offer students the practical learning which leads to the availability of a technically-skilled workforce to power high economic performance.

### 3.10.4 Improving pedagogy – the quality of teaching in FE

Teaching in the FE sector has also been criticised. In Ofsted's 2012 inspections, only 56 per cent of providers were judged good or outstanding for teaching and learning.<sup>415</sup> Weaknesses identified included teacher/trainers' lack of updated expertise in specialist vocational and subject areas, and that lessons did not focus enough on developing learners' skills for employment.<sup>416</sup>

One source told the CSJ that 'improving the quality of FE teachers recruited is essential, although challenging, given that most people prefer to teach their subject academically. The fact Ofsted have now put teaching and learning into the framework properly is the main reason why some providers have dropped a grade, and why so few are being found outstanding.'

FE teachers generally have direct experience of working in their field. This can make them better equipped to offer learners practical advice on access to work and give them good knowledge of local labour market needs. But they can also sometimes lack the same pedagogical skills as teachers in mainstream education.

The Institute for Learning (IfL) was established in 2002 to provide a professional body for FE staff. Whilst membership became compulsory for a period, as a result of the Lingfield Review's recommendations, the IfL has returned to being a voluntary professional body.<sup>417</sup> The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills has established a new professionalism and standards organisation, the Education and Training Foundation, launched on 1 August 2013, briefly known as the FE Guild.<sup>418</sup> Responsibility for professional qualifications has transferred from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service to the Education and Training Foundation. A new Chartered Status scheme will also recognise the best-performing providers. As with other reforms, the effects of this remain to be seen.

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413 Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, *Professionalism in Further Education, Final Report of the Independent Review Panel*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012

414 Ibid

415 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, Learning and skills, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

416 Ibid

417 NIACE, *Lingfield: the future of professionalism in FE*, Winter 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/adults-learning/AL-December-Vol23-V15-pg13-17.pdf> (05/08/13)]

418 FE Week, New FE professionalism body launched, Aug 1, 2013 [accessed via: <http://feweek.co.uk/2013/08/01/new-fe-professionalism-body-set-for-launch/> (27/07/13)]

The Lingfield Review highlighted that the in-service teaching qualifications are over-complicated. It also criticised FE ITT programmes, saying for example, that Programmes appear largely generic and theoretical, rather than related to the professional and occupational expertise of college lecturers. It also said that the commitment of FE employers to support their staff to attain excellence in pedagogy appears uneven.<sup>419</sup> The Review suggested that a number of changes are required, for example that teachers of English and maths as well as those working with students with learning difficulties or disabilities should have specialist qualifications.

Recognising these challenges, the Government has brought forward a raft of reforms affecting the FE sector. An FE Commissioner will be the single point of contact acting on behalf of the government and reporting to ministers. The FE Commissioner will consult with and act on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, the Department for Education, the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency.<sup>420</sup> Failing provision will be identified through three measures of performance: an inadequate rating by Ofsted; learner success rates below minimum standards; and a rating of inadequate by the Skills Funding Agency in either financial health or financial control.<sup>421</sup>

### 3.10.5 The transition to work

The primary purpose of FE should be to provide a transition from education into work, giving students the skills useful for both the national and local economy.

The country's best FE is excellent, providing an effective means of educating and training participants – benefitting both employees and employers. Level 3 courses and apprenticeships are particularly good, as identified by Professor Wolf. However, this contrasts with low-level vocational qualifications and short courses. Professor Wolf condemned these as one factor behind the 'churning' of many young people between education and short-term employment.<sup>422</sup> Around one-third of all 16–19 year olds in England are following vocational courses with qualifications that are more or less valueless in the labour market, and which do not support progression within learning.<sup>423</sup>

Paul Grainger, Co-Director of the Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation at the Institute of Education, told the CSJ that 'there is vocational as license to practice, and vocational as motivational. Wolf favours the former, but that leaves a gap.'

The transition to work is an extremely important one, yet it has too often been neglected. The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills has researched the impact FE has on learners' opportunities in the labour market and reported that:<sup>424</sup>

419 Department for Business, *Innovation & Skills, Professionalism in Further Education*, Interim Report of the Independent Review Panel, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012.

420 Department for Education and Department for Business Innovation & Skills, *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2013.

421 Department for Business Innovation & Skills, *New Challenges, New Chances, Further Education and Skills, System Reform Plan: Building a World Class Skills System*, London: Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2011.

422 Wolf A, *Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report*, London: Department for Education, 2011.

423 Ibid.

424 Department for Business Innovation & Skills, *The Impact of Further Education Learning, BIS*, London: Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2013.

- 35 per cent of men and 29 per cent of women who participated in FE got a better job as a result;
- 18 per cent of men and 12 per cent of women got promoted;
- There was a 2.75 per cent increase in salary following course completion by participants.

These figures raise considerable questions about the effectiveness of the sector if, for example, 65 per cent of men and 71 per cent of women have not improved their employment opportunities as a result of their participation in FE.

In an attempt to get a stronger grip on the effectiveness of individual settings, the Government has started to release statistics on the destinations of 16–18-year-old KS4 and KS5 students leaving FE.<sup>425</sup> This is a step in the right direction, adding transparency and accountability on learners' outcomes. However, as yet, national data do not show the destinations of the most disadvantaged students aged 16–18, those studying at Levels 1 and 2. It will only be by including and refining this data that government will be able to hold FE providers to account on a national basis, as to whether they are successfully assisting students into sustained employment.

Alison Morris, Deputy Director at the UK Commission for Employment & Skills, told the CSJ that:

*'for most people, education and qualifications are about being able to get a good job. That's why it's so important to measure outcomes as well as outputs. Achieving a qualification is great. Knowing the qualification leads to good, sustainable employment is even better. Traditionally, we haven't been good at doing this, so shifting our focus and ensuring we measure what matters is important.'*

### 3.10.6 Improving relationships with employers

One way of improving the transitions made into work is through improving the relationships between providers and employers. Employers and leaders from the business sector should arguably have a greater role in shaping provision.

The Government is currently attempting to increase links with employers by investing £340 million over four years into the Employer Ownership Pilot, which enables employers to shape training provision.<sup>426</sup> £4.5 million has also been invested in 25 colleges to trial innovative approaches to work experience for 16- to 19-year-olds, with specific aims of encouraging improved partnerships between the FE sector and employers.<sup>427</sup>

<sup>425</sup> Department for Education, *Destinations of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 Pupils, 2010/11 (experimental statistics)*, London: Department for Education, 2013

<sup>426</sup> Department for Education and Department for Business Innovation & Skills, *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2013

<sup>427</sup> Department for Education, *Work experience and non-qualification activity: Work experience pilot*, 21 June 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/b00223495/post-16-work-exp-enterprise-educ/work-experience-pilot> (07/07/13)]

In addition to engaging with larger employers, it is essential that FE is plugged into the local economy. FE must improve how it works with local businesses and ensure there is greater understanding of what the local labour market needs from its future employees.

A recent report from the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning highlighted the need to re-balance a nationally specified core with a more tailored element to meet local demand.<sup>428</sup> It emphasised the importance of a 'two-way street' where there is genuine collaboration between colleges and training providers and employers.

Alison Morris also said that:

*'there are many examples of colleges that are engaging effectively with employers. Where these relationships are strongest they are strategic, initiated at a senior level and embedded in practices across the whole college. Where it works well employers can influence the curriculum and ensure that training is relevant and will meet their business needs. Colleges and employers need to challenge themselves and consider whether their current practice could be improved.'*

### Case study: Askham-bryan College

Ade Brownlow is Head of Student Services at Askham-bryan College. The College works across many local authorities, covering the large and diverse regions of North and West Yorkshire, Cumbria and the North East. The College is focussed on land-based subjects, such as agriculture, horticulture, animal care/management and equine care. The College engages in outreach and is focussed on outcomes for their learners.

Ofsted praised the College's relationships with local employers – such as the nearby wildlife parks and charities like the RSPCA – as outstanding at their last inspection. Because they are focussed on the land-based sector, the college cannot simply rely on a few large corporate employers. Instead, the employers most suitable for many of their learners' needs are SMEs and micro-size businesses, such as feed and pet supplies, livery yards, local agricultural / horticultural firms and farmers; employers which are more likely to employ four people, rather than 50.

Ade told the CSJ that whilst larger companies may integrate active recruitment of those most in need of employment into their CSR policy, many smaller businesses may not be comfortable with the risk of taking on lower-skilled learners. However, apprenticeships and specifically, traineeships (which cater to lower-skilled learners), will need employers prepared to take that risk. If apprenticeships only pick-up the already engaged and motivated students – the system will continue to leave behind those already failed by the education system.

428 Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning, *It's all about work. Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning*, Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2013

## University Technical Colleges<sup>429</sup>

UTCs offer 14–18-year-olds the opportunity to take a highly regarded, full-time, technically-oriented course of study. They are sponsored by a university and aim to offer clear progression routes into higher education or further learning in work.

Learning is often practical, integrating national curriculum requirements with the technical and vocational elements. The UTC ethos and curriculum is heavily influenced by local and national employers who also provide support and work experience for students.

They are sub-regional, taking students from a wide geographical area. This reduces negative impact for any one local school in terms of student roll.

UTCs specialise in subjects that require technical and modern equipment, for example, engineering, product design, health sciences, construction, and land and environmental services. However they all teach business skills and the use of ICT. The chosen specialism reflects the university's areas of excellence and the needs of local employers.

They are aimed at recruiting the most able students, for whom a vocational route is more suitable. However, schools sometimes prevent UTCs from coming in to talk to pupils, to prevent them from 'stealing' their highest achieving pupils. One headteacher told the CSJ that whilst schools will try to stop UTCs recruiting their brightest pupils (and therefore harming that school's own league tables), they are more than happy to pass-on their lowest achieving pupils.

Dr Vanessa Ogden told us that UTCs are critical, because of the current gap between education and the labour market:

*'UTCs are a great way of persuading employers to become involved directly in the education system. It's a great way of getting schools and employers to learn what each wants from the other and then developing a curriculum that gives pupils the right skills. There is an employability skills gap for many young people. It's not just about KS4 and then "that's it", it's about these transitions and access to jobs.'*

## Studio Schools

13 new Studio Schools are set to open from September 2014, joining the 15 already preparing to open and the 16 currently open.<sup>430</sup> Studio Schools are designed for 14–19 year olds of all abilities, where pupils study core GCSEs alongside vocational qualifications.

They are fairly small (300 students), operating longer days and terms, mirroring the workplace and aiming to ensure students' learning is rooted in the real world. Students can also take part in work activity, and for those aged 16 or over this is up to two days and usually paid. As part of this, Studio Schools are backed by a large number of national and local employers.

<sup>429</sup> University Technical Colleges, *About University Technical Colleges* [accessed via: <http://www.utcolleges.org/about/about> (18/07/13)]

<sup>430</sup> Department for Education, Press Release, *New wave of approved studio schools will take total to more than 40*, 10 April 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-wave-of-approved-studio-schools-will-take-total-to-more-than-40--2> (08/07/13)]

Summarising the ethos of this initiative, Michael Gove said:

*'Studio schools benefit both business and young people – they are a brilliant way for employers to become involved in helping give young people what they need to get good jobs. They are aimed at children who learn in more practical ways and offer good qualifications alongside the kind of skills employers want.'*<sup>431</sup>

Studio Schools are at an early stage in their development and therefore their full impact remains to be seen. However, one early evaluation suggests the signs look positive. Staff and students at the schools they looked at were responding positively and that where there had been exam results, these had been very good.<sup>432</sup>

### 3.10.7 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships can offer excellent on-the-job training and improve how we prepare more people for industry. The 2012 Richard Review of Apprenticeships stressed that we must attempt to imitate the high esteem in which apprenticeships are held in countries like Germany.<sup>433</sup>

The Government has committed itself to expanding and improving apprenticeships and stressed the importance of Level 3 apprenticeships in particular.<sup>434</sup> Positively, there were 520,600 apprenticeship starts in 2011/12, 63,400 more than the number of starts in the 2010/11 academic year, and 240,900 more than in the 2009/10 academic year.<sup>435</sup>

However, Ofsted has found that too many apprentices did not have appropriate and sustained employment during and after their apprenticeship.<sup>436</sup> Ofsted has found examples of poor practice where apprentices were only given low-level work or where they became unemployed as soon as they had finished their training.<sup>437</sup>

The Richard Review highlights that the relationship between employer and apprentice is no longer as central as it once was. Instead, apprenticeships have become akin to a government-led training programme, shaped by training professionals not employers.<sup>438</sup> The review has therefore recommended that 'The relationship between an employer and an apprentice must once again rise to the fore.'<sup>439</sup>

431 Department for Education, Press Release, *Big business backs new studio schools*, 18 July 2012 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/big-business-backs-new-studio-schools> (16/07/13)]

432 Hendry E and Sharpe T, *An evaluation of the Studio Schools Trust and its role in raising the status of practical & vocational learning*, London: Edge Foundation, 2013 [accessed via: [http://www.edge.co.uk/media/107740/evaluation\\_of\\_studio\\_schools\\_trust\\_-\\_feb13-1.pdf](http://www.edge.co.uk/media/107740/evaluation_of_studio_schools_trust_-_feb13-1.pdf) (19/08/13)]

433 Richard D, *The Richard Review of Apprenticeships*, Copyright 2012: Doug Richard, CEO and Founder; School for Startups, 2012

434 SKOPE, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back? Skills Policy in England under the Coalition Government*, SKOPE Research Paper No. 102, Cardiff: SKOPE, 2011

435 Hansard, Economic Policy and Statistics, 8 February 2013

436 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, Learning and skills, Manchester: *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, Learning and skills 2012

437 Ibid

438 Richard D, *The Richard Review of Apprenticeships*, Copyright 2012: Doug Richard, CEO and Founder; School for Startups, 2012

439 Ibid

Another problem concerns the length and level of many of these apprenticeships. Two-thirds of apprenticeships are only at Level 2 and most programmes last only one to two years.<sup>440</sup> In Germany, by comparison, nearly all apprenticeships are at Level 3 and most programmes take three years to complete.

According to Sam Freedman, one of the main barriers we face is the fact there is no longer a pre-18 labour market. This means it is extremely difficult to get companies to take on younger people. In the UK the proportion of employers recruiting young people leaving the education system at any level (school, college or university) has reduced, partly reflecting the declining size of the youth labour market.<sup>441</sup>

Providing apprenticeships for younger learners will be especially challenging. Growth in apprenticeships has been fastest amongst those aged 25 and over.<sup>442</sup> In 2011/12, 44 per cent of apprenticeship starters were over 25, compared with only 18 per cent in 2009/10.<sup>443</sup>

### 3.10.8 Reforms and challenges facing the sector

The overall effectiveness of learning and skills providers has improved slightly over the past three years; the proportion of outstanding providers is greater now than in 2010, but so is the proportion of inadequate providers.<sup>444</sup> In 2011/12, one in every three learners in the sector – around 1.5 million people – attended providers judged inadequate or satisfactory at their last inspection.<sup>445</sup> Therefore further change is needed. FE has not been adequately looked at until recently and it is only starting to have its needs addressed. Therefore it will take time to see what effect changes will have.

Ofsted's proportionate approach to inspection means the sample of providers selected are not representative of all providers. This is because they will contain a greater percentage of previously satisfactory or inadequate providers, and a greater percentage of good / outstanding providers believed to be at risk of declining. This means those providers inspected are not fully representative of providers as a whole and therefore the judgments actually reflect relatively little about the sector.<sup>446</sup>

A more transparent funding system is being introduced to support for example, the raising of the participation age.<sup>447</sup> Institutions will attract a standard rate of funding for each student weighted for necessary course costs, retention and with additional funding for those at a

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440 Steedman H, A Report for the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network, Apprenticeship Ambassador's Network, *the State of Apprenticeship in 2010 International Comparisons Australia Austria England France Germany Ireland Sweden Switzerland*, London: Centre for Economic Performance, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2010

441 SKOPE (Keep E), *Youth Transitions, the Labour Market and Entry into Employment: Some Reflections and Questions*, Cardiff: SKOPE, May 2012

442 Department for Business Innovation & Skills, *Further Education and Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held in England*, London: Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2013

443 Hansard, Economic Policy and Statistics, 8 February 2013

444 Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, Learning and skills, Manchester: Office for Standards of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012

445 Ibid

446 Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, *Professionalism in Further Education, Final Report of the Independent Review Panel*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012

447 Department for Education, 16 to 19 funding formula review 02 July 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/executiveagencies/efaf/a00210682/funding-formula-review> (20/08/13)]

disadvantage, all adjusted for area costs. Providers will be able to deliver innovative and flexible programmes, including work experience, and success rates will be removed from formulas so as to remove perverse incentives preventing providers from encouraging students to take challenging courses.

From September 2013, 24+ Advanced Learning Loans will also be available for study at Level 3 and 4.<sup>448</sup> There is a risk that this will add another barrier for adult learners. This is on top of already challenging obstacles like low income, stigma and lack of motivation. There is also inadequate transparency given that not all college websites display course prices and students can face price variations of several hundred pounds.<sup>449</sup>

However, a study from the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills found that whilst respondents were initially concerned about the idea of a loan, perceptions tended to change when respondents understood the arrangements surrounding the loan, for example, over the low rate of repayment.<sup>450</sup> Repayments only start from April 2016 and are only applicable when learners earn more than £21,000 a year.<sup>451</sup>

From September 2013, schools, colleges and other providers are also expected to introduce Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds. These consist of a minimum of 540 learning hours per learner, per academic year, and all students must take or work towards GCSE A\* to C in English and/or mathematics as part of this. Performance tables and data will also be reformed, for example, on those achieving English and mathematics GCSE having failed to do so at KS4. This, while still complex, will go some way to reducing the disparity in funding between college and school.

To improve the status and rigour of vocational education the Government is introducing the Technical Baccalaureate Standard for courses beginning in September 2014 and reported in league tables in January 2017.<sup>452</sup> This is a performance measure seeking to provide an alternative to the A-level study route for post-16 education, marking achievement by those aged 16–19 across three elements – a high-quality level 3 vocational qualification, a Level 3 'core mathematics' qualification, including AS level mathematics and finally, the extended project – testing students' skills in for example, extended writing and communication.<sup>453</sup>

From September 2013, some FE colleges will be able to enroll, on a full time basis, 14–16-year-olds.<sup>454</sup> New '14 to 16 centres' will offer a combination of high quality vocational as well as

448 The National Careers Service, 24+ Advanced Learning Loan, [accessed via: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/courses/funding/Pages/24AdvancedLearningLoans.aspx> (07/07/13)]

449 TES FE Focus, *Journey into the unknown – navigating the new landscape of FE loans proves challenging*, 02 April 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storyCode=6326193> (28/05/2013)]

450 Department for Business Innovation & Skills, *Attitudes to Further Education Loans*, BIS Research Paper number 73, London: Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2012

451 Benefits & credits, 24+ Advanced Learning Loans 12 July 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learning-loans/overview> (18/08/13)]

452 Department for Education, Press Release, *New TechBacc will give vocational education the high status it deserves*, 22 April 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-techbacc-will-give-vocational-education-the-high-status-it-deserves> (07/06/2013)]

453 Ibid

454 Only some colleges will be able to do this, for example, those rated good or above at their last Ofsted inspection and those with a dedicated space for students to go to for advice, tuition and some teaching. The '14 to 16 centre' will be inspected under Ofsted's schools framework rather than the post-16 framework.

academic subjects. This aims to, for example, attract students of all abilities who want early access to more practical forms of learning and/or wish to train for a technical profession.<sup>455</sup> It follows Wolf's findings that some young people also do better in core academic subjects if following a vocational route at 14.

Giving students a vocational choice early on can be very positive but a focus on English and mathematics must be retained. Pathways must be flexible and ensure younger learners still have the option of following an alternative route later-on if they wish to.

Seamus Oates is worried that FE providers will not be able to deal with the 14–16 year-olds most likely to go down this route:

*'FE teachers are paid less than teachers. They've usually come from another background and they expect to teach adults. They won't be able to deal with younger pupils, especially ones with complex needs.'*

### 3.11 Conclusion

The importance of high quality vocational and skills training must not be underestimated. A huge number of young people depend on being able to move from FE into work, just as businesses require vocational training to supply high quality employees. The Government's reforms promise to do much to improve the quality of teaching in FE settings and to reduce, over time, the amount of remedial education that the sector needs to undertake.

These are welcome steps; currently, it appears that for many students, FE has no significant impact on their opportunities in the labour market. This is unacceptable and makes the decision to try and track students' destinations so as to improve accountability all the more important. However, it is essential that these figures ultimately include those studying at all levels so that potential students, parents and government can see, nationally, whether those who may be most disadvantaged are actually being helped into work. More generally, it is essential that disadvantaged students in FE and vocational education do not find themselves less supported than their contemporaries who stayed in mainstream school.

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<sup>455</sup> Department for Education, *14- to 16-year-olds in further education* 12 June 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/qandlearning/f00225819/full-time-enrol-14-16-fe> (16/07/13)]



# Conclusion

The education system needs always to be relentlessly ambitious for every child. In order to do this we need schools that are well-led, have excellent teachers and have the autonomy necessary to adapt their work to the particular needs of their children. It is also important that education remains accountable to the taxpayer and that the system can be swift to react when children are being failed.

Whilst there is significant political commitment to the reform of the education system, far too many children are still being failed by their education.

The CSJ welcomes the Government's determination to set high standards for all children and to provide additional funding to support the most disadvantaged pupils. However, this can only be the first phase of reform. The next must ask how success can be spread to those pupils and parts of the system which have yet to experience it. In particular, we will ask:

- How the Pupil Premium can be fine-tuned to ensure that it helps more of those in need;
- How greater support can be given to disadvantaged children and their families prior to their arriving at school;
- How educational reform can be successfully further extended into primary schools;
- What more can be done to encourage effective chains and federations of academies to move into areas of greatest need;
- How the quality of teaching and leadership can be improved amongst the existing school workforce;
- What the new administrative architecture of the education system should look like as the role of local authorities continues to recede;
- How improvements can be made to the provision of Further Education so as to provide an effective transition between education and employment.

Answering these questions will help to ensure that the education system does even more to help the next generation of children overcome their disadvantages and fulfil their full potential.

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