

Breakthrough Britain 2015



CLOSING THE DIVIDE

Tackling educational inequality in England

September 2014



THE CENTRE FOR
SOCIAL
JUSTICE

Contents

About the Centre for Social Justice	3
Director's preface	4
Members of the CSJ Working Group	6
Special thanks	12
Breakthrough Britain 2015	14
Executive summary	16
Introduction	30
1 The best start	35
Raising our expectations of those working in the early years	36
Providing the best settings for early years education: expanding the availability of nursery classes attached to primary schools	39
Expanding the role of Sure Start to support parental engagement in pre-school education	41
Redefining 'readiness' in terms of core skills	44
The importance of language development and communication	45
2 Supporting the most disadvantaged children	49
Free School Meals and the Pupil Premium	49
Improving stability for the most vulnerable pupils	51
More Free Schools serving disadvantaged pupils	56
3 Improving schools, teaching and leadership	59
Improving learning between schools	59
A new system for improving poor schools	60
Encouraging collaboration across schools	63
Improving standards in primary schools	64
Improving teaching and leadership	67

4	Spreading success around the country	75
	The uneven spread of success	76
	Tackling underperformance in challenging areas	78
5	Further Education and the journey into work	89
	Introduction	89
	Improving quality	90
	Bridging the gap: improving the links between FE and employment	94
	Conclusion	103
	Conclusion	105

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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.

Director: Christian Guy

Director's preface

Educational failure can have a crushing impact on life chances – too often it prevents children reaching their potential. This constitutes social injustice and an economic threat as we deprive our country of considerable and diverse talent. That is why through several major reports the Centre for Social Justice has made the case for changes to the way our country supports the most disadvantaged children in their school years.

We have shown, including in last year's *Requires Improvement* report, that too many of the poorest children start school a long way behind their better off classmates. We also know that too many children leave school unprepared for work and adult life: last year nearly 40 per cent of children left school without five good GCSEs including English and maths. For some children reality is bleaker still. In 22 English local authorities more than 70 per cent of children on free school meals (a commonly used metric for income poverty) did not achieve these grades.

We must credit the current Government, and leading members of the previous one, for their determination and programmes to change this. Our education system is currently undergoing extensive and widespread reform, the full effects of which will not be felt for some time. The Coalition, to the howls of criticism from many, has driven forward educational reform at extraordinary speed. Although the style and tone taken in Government at times has created unnecessary hostility, the CSJ supports the general direction of much of this reform and welcomes the fact that many of our recommendations have been adopted. This includes the introduction of a Pupil Premium for the most disadvantaged children (which we called for in the form of educational credits), more power and control for head teachers and the establishment of Free Schools.

The proposals in this new CSJ report build on these changes. Formed by experts and inspired by the excellence we have encountered in many schools, we concentrate on what works in lifting the life chances and educational performance of our poorest children. For instance we know that children who fall behind are less likely to ever catch-up. We therefore make proposals on how to improve the quality of early education. This is not about taking responsibility away from parents – we believe that parents' support is critical – it is about working with families to give children the best start in life.

We also consider how we can improve the quality of schools and the people that work there. We look at how we can develop the skills of teachers and improve learning between schools so that the best can help others solve the challenges they face.

Our proposals also, crucially, address the fundamental question of how we can spread success so that it reaches our most deprived communities. Areas like London have seen great improvements, but some areas have been left to coast for too long. Sir Michael Wilshaw recently spoke about a postcode lottery which caused a divide between the 'lucky and unlucky child', where children in some parts of the country were much more likely to access excellent schools and teaching. He was right. And so we have made recommendations which will reinvigorate the system by incentivising the best teachers, heads and academy chains to enter the areas that need them most.

For too long these areas have been left behind and unable to access the inspirational teaching and leadership these children deserve. We know that the quality of teaching is the most important school-factor affecting the attainment of disadvantaged children – and that is why we must ensure that all children can access the most ambitious teaching – regardless of where in the country they live or what background they come from. Finally, we call on an incoming Government to take the action needed to make sure more children leave school ready for the next steps in life, able to enter meaningful employment. To achieve this, we need the whole country on board: schools, parents, businesses and politicians.

In publishing this report I would like to thank the working group's chair, Sir Robin Basher, for his leadership during the review and for the wider work he has undertaken to support children's education in schools, for more than 20 years. Sir Robin has been supported tirelessly by the Education working group and by the report's excellent author Lee Davis at the CSJ. The group was able to build on the enormous expertise of its members, who represent some of the most formidable head teachers and charities in the country. They have seen what works first hand. They have met countless people who have given evidence, hosted visits and offered feedback on the emerging ideas – we are grateful to them all. My thanks also go to Alex Burghart, the CSJ's Policy Director, and our wider team.

We have a great deal to be proud of in our education system. Thousands of outstanding men and women dedicate their entire working lives to investing in our country's next generation. For those professionals education isn't a career, it's a mission. We should celebrate their service and honour their impact. Because of them and the money taxpayers invest, thousands of children leave school each year set for wonderful success and ready to make a contribution to the life of our nation. But we must now work harder to ensure our schools serve the most disadvantaged children more effectively. Every school in this country can be excellent. Inspirational and transformative teaching should be a norm not a privilege. The power of education should now be harnessed in the toughest of our neighbourhoods. We urge those coming to power in 2015 to seize their opportunity.

Christian Guy

Director, the Centre for Social Justice

Members of the CSJ Working Group



Sir Robin Boshier, Director of Primary Education at the Harris Federation of Academies (Chairman)

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 Kilmore 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.



Lee Holly Davis, Researcher, the Centre for Social Justice (author)

Lee is the lead researcher for educational failure, working on areas like the quality of teaching, transitions and regional variation.

Lee graduated with First Class Honours from the London School of Economics, with a degree in Social Policy. She has also completed an MSc looking at social research methods, for which she was awarded Distinction. Before undertaking her masters, she worked in student housing and language provision, and has worked for an education charity abroad. Lee is a governor at a secondary school in London.



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

Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski is CEO of Bright Futures Educational Trust (BFET) and Executive Principal of Altrincham Grammar School for Girls, one of the highest performing schools in the country based in the North West. BFET is dedicated to providing first class education for all. Dame Dana is an educational expert and a board member of Ofqual, the regulatory body for public examinations. Most recently Dame Dana has been asked to chair the review for Head Teachers' Standards in England and be a regional spokesperson for the Academies Programme for the Department for Education.

As a National Leader of Education, her knowledge, skills and experience have frequently been called upon to support and improve schools in challenging circumstances. She is a senior partner of Challenge Partners, a national network of schools committed to school improvement and closing the achievement gap. Dame Dana is the North West Head Teacher lead for the Prince's Teaching Institute; and is a facilitator and trainer on the British Council's Connecting Classrooms programme. Dame Dana is a member of numerous national and international working groups including educational and business organisations such as Future Leaders and the Institute of Directors.



Amanda Timberg, Executive Director of Programme, Teach First

As the Executive Director of Programme, Amanda leads on Teach First's work to develop and equip leaders in the UK to make an impact towards a vision of educational equity. In this role she has oversight over Graduate Recruitment, Leadership, Community Impact and Research, Evaluation & Impact functions. Amanda joined Teach First in 2006 to lead on the charity's geographic expansion outside of London and then led on the design, development and delivery of the two-year Leadership Development Programme, which is delivered in partnership with schools and universities. As part of her commitment to growing a movement to tackle educational inequality, Amanda sits on the boards of both Future Leaders and Achievement for All.

An alumnus of Teach For America, Amanda taught in a primary school in Compton, California and worked at both Teach For America and the Los Angeles Unified School District in southern California. Amanda holds an MSc in Voluntary Sector Management from the Cass Business School.



**Sam Freedman, Research, Evaluation and Impact Director,
Teach First, and former adviser to Michael Gove**

Sam is Director of Research, Evaluation and Impact at Teach First. He is responsible for ensuring Teach First's programmes are properly evaluated and are subject to a process of continuous improvement. From 2010–2013 he worked as a senior policy adviser in the Department for Education focussing particularly on structural reform; funding and teacher training. Prior to working in Whitehall Sam was the Head of Education at Policy Exchange where he wrote reports on a wide variety of issues. He has two history degrees from Oxford and a Master of Research degree in Public Policy from Birkbeck.



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

Diana is the Chief Executive of the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust and has a wealth of experience working in and supporting different schools. Prior to this role Diana was the headteacher of Huntingdon Academy in St Ann's Nottingham for fourteen years where she led the school from 'Special Measures' through to two consecutive 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgements. Diana has also been an executive headteacher taking responsibility and accountability for more than one school. Diana's previous teaching experience has been in both Nottingham and London. In 2008 Diana became a National Leader of Education which has involved her working with and supporting school leadership teams nationally. As part of this role she has also met with ministers on a number of occasions to help steer government agendas.



**Ros McMullen, Chief Executive Officer, LEAF Academy Trust,
Executive Principal, David Young Community Academy**

Following a successful first headship, Ros McMullen became Principal of David Young Community Academy in 2005 and spent five terms preparing for the opening in September 2006. This was one of the original academies and the first in Yorkshire. The Academy has been highly successful, adding significant value to the achievement of its students. DYCA replaced two of the lowest performing schools in Leeds and has the highest deprivation indices in Leeds. Ros is a Director of the Independent Academies Association and served as Chair from 2007 to 2009. She is also a Board Member of the Anglican Academy and Secondary School Heads Association. Ros received an MBA from Manchester Business School in 2010. She has been a National Leader in Education since 2011.

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.



**Paul Grainger, Co-Director, Centre for Post-14
Research and Innovation at the Institute of Education**

Paul is Co-Director of the Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation, Development Coordinator for FE@IOE, and a Professional Tutor for Initial Teacher Training at the Institute of Education. He undertakes professional development, research and dissemination on formally assessed and post compulsory education. This has involved research in effective teaching strategies and curriculum delivery, and in models of assessment. He has wide knowledge of the responses of institutions and professionals to policy change, and leads on strategic planning, management and governance development, principally in the Further Education sector.

Previously Paul spent thirty years in further education. This includes as the Principal of a college in Liverpool, where he created a new sixth-form campus to replace provision from three failing schools. He was a core member of the Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training.



**Conor Ryan, Director of research and communications,
The Sutton Trust, and former adviser to David Blunkett and Tony Blair**

Conor Ryan is Director of Research and Communications at the Sutton Trust. He was senior education adviser to Prime Minister Tony Blair from 2005–2007 and was David Blunkett's special adviser from 1993–2001, covering both policy and media relations in government and opposition for the Education and Employment Secretary. He is the author and editor of several books and pamphlets on education, and has written extensively for the national and trade press on the issue. He has also advised the leaders of a wide range of national education organisations. He is a Director of a Multi-Academy Trust and has been a school and college governor.



Hazel Slavin, Adviser, 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 Adviser 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 adviser 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.



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

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.



Wendy Lee, Professional Director, The Communication Trust

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.



Dr. Vanessa Ogden, Headteacher, Mulberry School for Girls

Vanessa Ogden is Headteacher of Mulberry School for Girls in Tower Hamlets. She is currently leading the foundation of Mulberry UTC (University Technical College) in the borough. Dr. Ogden's teaching career has spanned two decades of practice in inner-city schools across London and involved work on school turnaround, school effectiveness and education tailored to the needs of gender. 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.

Dr. Ogden 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. Her thesis won the BELMAS Thesis prize in 2013. Dr. Ogden is a trustee of Teach First and Chair of the Impact Committee. She is also a trustee of STEMNET and she has been President of the Association of Maintained Girls Schools.



Nicole Lovett, Corporate Social Responsibility, Deutsche Bank

Nicole joined Deutsche Bank in 2012 where she managed the strategic review of the bank's corporate citizenship programme in the UK to develop a new cohesive framework focussed on a key social issue of youth unemployment. As a result Born to Be was launched as the bank's youth engagement programme and has in place a portfolio of projects and partnerships that help young people realise their potential; with employee engagement at the core. Nicole is now rolling out Born to Be globally across the bank's regions, aligning all youth education initiatives to a common identity – as well as managing the UK CC function on an interim basis. Previously, Nicole spent 15 years at Diageo plc across a number of CSR roles, including the last seven years as Head of CSR for Africa, responsible for the region's community and sustainability agenda.



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. From September, Dame Sally joined United Learning as Director of Academies.

Special thanks

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) would like to thank the many people, schools and organisations across the country who kindly gave 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 to Sir Robin Boshier, the group's Chair, for his incredible leadership and insight. Special thanks also go to Alex Burghart, CSJ Director of Policy, for his invaluable help and guidance. We are extremely grateful to the Kusuma Trust and to Deutsche Bank for their generous support for this paper. We are also grateful to TES Global for undertaking a survey on behalf of the CSJ, and to the 2,000 teachers who responded.



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. The Trust has provided funding to the CSJ for the educational failure volume of Breakthrough Britain 2015. Please contact www.kusumatrust.org for further information.

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BORN TO BE
The Deutsche Bank youth
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Born to Be is part of Deutsche Bank's corporate citizenship strategy focussed on education and enabling talent. In the UK, Born to Be seeks to break the cycle of youth unemployment through early intervention. It targets 11–18 year olds at risk of exclusion with education-led projects that aim to raise aspiration, increase achievement, develop employability skills and access opportunities.

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.



TES Global exists to drive up standards of education by putting the right teachers in the right jobs and giving them the tools to be the very best that they can be. TES Global is home to the world's largest online community of teachers, with 6.2 million registered users. Our platforms, including www.tesconnect.com, www.sharemylesson.com and www.wikispaces.com, provide access to more than 800,000 individually crafted resources – now downloaded over 450 million times – developed by teachers, for teachers.

Breakthrough Britain 2015

The Centre for Social Justice shone a light on the shocking levels of deprivation that blight communities across the UK in 2007 in our report Breakthrough Britain. The project transformed the British political landscape, reinvigorated a tired debate on how to tackle poverty and was hailed as a definitive research paper on social problems in modern Britain.

This unprecedented diagnosis of deprivation led us to identify five interlinked 'pathways to poverty'. These were:

- Family breakdown;
- Economic dependency and worklessness;
- Educational failure;
- Drug and alcohol addiction; and
- Serious personal debt.

Alongside this, we made recommendations about unlocking the potential of the voluntary sector to reverse social breakdown.

These reports revealed how, despite the longest period of continuous economic growth in modern history – more than 60 quarters – and unparalleled levels of government spending, a large proportion of British society remained cut off from the mainstream. We argued that what was trapping people was not necessarily the economy but their exposure to long-term worklessness, family breakdown, poor education, addiction and serious debt, and that too often government intervention was focussed on trying to alleviate the symptoms of poverty, rather than these causes.

Seven years on, the UK is in a radically different political and economic position – but the need to give a voice to the most disadvantaged people could not be greater. For this reason we have spent the past two years researching Breakthrough Britain 2015 – a fresh assessment of how the five pathways are continuing to hold people, families and communities back.

Following on from our six 'state of the nation' reports last year, we are publishing recommendations to all political parties, again showing how people can be helped back to

work, families kept together, educational achievement improved, addiction and personal debt relieved. The work will amount to an exciting and radical programme for any Government in 2015.

These six policy reports are the culmination of an extraordinary process. Our team has travelled tens of thousands of miles around the country, visiting our most deprived communities – from Rhyl to Ramsgate, from Margate to parts of Manchester, from Great Yarmouth to Glasgow – to discover first-hand what is fuelling poverty. We have carried out extensive public polling, conducted several thousand meetings with charities, frontline workers and policy experts, and heard from huge numbers of people struggling to get their lives back on track. For further inspiration we have looked abroad, taking evidence from successful projects around the world including those in Australia, the Netherlands, various parts of the USA, Ireland, and Singapore.

As well as our own committed staff, the CSJ has recruited well-known specialists in each of the six areas to be on working groups who have met regularly to take evidence from those who understand the problems best. These dedicated individuals have used their extensive knowledge and contacts to ensure our research is relevant, focussed and influential.

Throughout this process we have constantly been given heart by the remarkable work people are doing to help rebuild the lives of those who have become trapped in poverty. The practical solutions presented in these reports are grounded in their experiences and they are a call to politicians to ensure that the next government continues the fight against poverty by tackling it at its roots.

Executive summary

Introduction

Educational failure can have a shattering impact on a child's life chances and opportunities, and prevent them from reaching their potential. This represents both a social injustice and an economic cost as we deprive our country of the best workforce it can have.

- **Educational failure perpetuates cycles of disadvantage:** parents who did not achieve in school are more likely to have children who suffer the same.¹ This may be because they are less able to support the learning of their own children. Given the considerable impact of parental engagement and parental education on children's outcomes – we must 'get education right' for this generation. At the most extreme end, educational failure can lead to social breakdown: nearly half of prisoners say they have no qualifications;²
- **Educational failure represents a strain on our economy:** 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.³ Children leaving school with few or no meaningful qualifications are less likely to enter into and progress in work.⁴

Today's school pupils are the citizens, parents and workers of tomorrow, it is therefore in everyone's interest that urgent action is taken to tackle underperformance.

The scale of the problem

Whilst exam results have for the most part been rising, we must not be complacent. Not only are there concerns that this in part reflects years of grade inflation, there are still too many children leaving school without the basics.⁵

1 OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD indicators*, Paris: OECD, 2013
2 Ministry of Justice, *The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly sentenced prisoners*, London: Ministry of Justice, 2012
3 Confederation of British Industry, *Learning to grow: what employers need from education and skills*, London: CBI, 2012
4 OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD indicators*, Paris: OECD, 2013
5 OECD, *Economic Surveys United Kingdom*, Paris: OECD, 2011, p10

Last year, almost 40 per cent of children left school without five good GCSEs including English and maths.⁶ However when looking at the attainment of particular children, and in particular parts of the country – the situation becomes even bleaker. Last year, only the following proportions of children achieved this benchmark:⁷

- 38 per cent of children on free school meals (FSM);
- 28 per cent of white British boys eligible for FSM;
- 15 per cent of looked after children;
- 44 per cent of children in Knowsley;
- 22 per cent of children on FSM in Barnsley.

Whilst there have been some long-term improvements in standards it is clear that there is still an extremely long way to go. The challenge we must set ourselves is to ensure all children leave school ready for the next steps in life. To make this crucial transition, schools must equip young people with both the hard skills and soft skills they need.

By improving the quality of schools, the reforms we propose will benefit everyone in the education system for years to come. However, our focus in this report is on supporting the country's most disadvantaged children, and those communities which for years, have been left to fail. These are the areas that struggle to attract inspirational leadership and teaching, and which have so far, not benefited from the dynamism that the most effective academy chains have brought to areas like London. Indeed, during the London Challenge, London moved from being one of the worst, to one of the highest performing regions at Key Stage 4 (KS4).⁸ This shows just what is possible – and it is now time to build on this success and spread it across the country.

The context

England's education system is currently undergoing extensive and widespread reform, the full effects of which will not be felt for some time. Indeed the Coalition Government has driven forward educational reform at unprecedented speed.

We are highly supportive of the direction of much of this reform. Indeed we welcome the fact that since our last report, many of our concerns have been acted on. For example, reformed league tables now look at the attainment gap between poorer pupils and their better-off peers, so that schools can no longer hide behind the attainment of some children at the expense of others.⁹ We welcome the Pupil Premium – the per-pupil funding which supports

6 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014, See for example pp7, 8; good GCSEs refer to A*-C grades

7 Ibid

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

9 Department for Education, Press release, *Pupil premium evaluation paves way for new raft of measures so schools help disadvantaged pupils*, 2 July 2013 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/news/pupil-premium-evaluation-paves-way-for-new-raft-of-measures-so-schools-help-disadvantaged-pupils (18/08/14)]

the education of disadvantaged children – having ourselves called for the introduction of educational credits to support the needs of these pupils.¹⁰

Moreover, by increasing the autonomy and flexibility of schools, the Academies programme has offered schools considerable opportunity to improve education for their pupils. In particular, academy chains which can share experience and expertise are delivering considerable improvement to schools which have long suffered disadvantage. Likewise, Free Schools, which we called for in the form of Pioneer Schools, are also bringing greater innovation in the sector.

Our ambitions: aspirational education for all

These bold reforms are creating a new educational landscape which has enormous potential to transform lives and opportunities. However, there is much further still to go. In this report we set out how the next phase of reform can make further improvements for the benefit of all children, particularly the most disadvantaged:

- **Achieving readiness for school:** how we can make sure disadvantaged children get the best start in life;
- **Supporting the most disadvantaged pupils:** how we can make sure that the Pupil Premium reaches those who need it most, and how school can do more to support the most vulnerable children with unstable family lives;
- **Improving schools and teaching:** how we can get schools working together in more effective partnerships and drive up standards in teaching;
- **Spreading success:** how we can get our best headteachers, our best teachers and our best academy chains to go into the most disadvantaged areas and support genuine transformation for these schools;
- **Further Education and the journey to work:** how we can ratchet up the quality of provision and its accountability to learners and improve transitions between education and work by brokering closer relationships between education providers and employers.

Chapter 1: The best start in life

As our last report showed, at present too many children – particularly those in deprived areas – are starting compulsory schooling behind their peers. A staggering 50 per cent of children in some areas of social disadvantage start school with poor language¹¹ and there is a 19-month gap at the start of school between the most and least advantaged children.¹²

The early years have a major impact on subsequent educational development, particularly for the most disadvantaged children. It is therefore essential that more is done to help these children before they start formal school. The Government's extension of free early education

¹⁰ Centre for Social Justice, *Breakthrough Britain Ending the costs of social breakdown Volume 3: Educational Failure*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2007

¹¹ Ainscow et al, *An Evaluation of The Communication Trust's 'Talk of the Town' Project*, Manchester: Centre for Equity in Education, 2012

¹² Department for Education, *Early Years Pupil Premium and funding for two-year-olds*, London: Department for Education, 2014, p3

is positive, but we must ensure more provision is high quality and delivered in a way that improves parental engagement.

Raising our aspirations for those working in the early years

Staff qualification levels have a major impact on outcomes in the early years. Better qualified staff offer higher quality support for children age 30 months to five years in developing communication, language, literacy, reasoning, thinking and mathematical skills.¹³ However we still expect too little of those working with our youngest children.¹⁴

- To raise our expectations of those working with our youngest children, we call for all early years staff to hold at least Level 3 Early Years Educator qualifications. We also call for all staff to hold a minimum grade C in English and maths GCSE or equivalent. This will ensure staff can support the development of children's key skills, particularly around vocabulary development.
- To reflect the importance of transitions from the early years to primary, and the rapid change that takes place at age two, we call for early years Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) to be redefined to start at age two. To help raise standards, every setting, including Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings, should work towards having at least one person with QTS within five years. This will ensure staff have strong knowledge of development at age two, as well as knowing what to expect in the early years of primary.

Expanding nursery classes in primary schools

The CSJ has heard that a major opportunity to further improve quality in pre-school provision lies in having nursery classes attached to primary schools.

- Evidence shows that nursery classes attached to primary schools produce strong outcomes for the most disadvantaged children. One of the most important reasons for this is because it gives these children access to better-qualified staff. To expand access, we call for all Good and Outstanding (grade 1s and 2s) primary schools to be given the support to offer nursery provision, starting with those schools serving disadvantaged communities which have the capacity and desire to do so.
- To enable these children to make a smooth transition into reception, disadvantaged children attending these classes should be given preference in admissions to the same primary school. This will allow staff to maintain and build on the crucial links they have formed with parents.

¹³ Department for Education, *Evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund Final report*, London: Department for Education, 2011

¹⁴ House of Commons Education Committee, *Foundation Years: Sure Start children's Centres, Volume I*, London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2013

Improving the impact of children's centres

Improving engagement with hard-to-reach families is essential given the important role parental involvement has in improving children's educational outcomes. Having more children's centres attached to schools would enable families to readily access services as part of a 'Family Hub' model and allow schools to intervene earlier in children's education.

- Good and Outstanding local primary schools should be able to set up their own early years settings or take over failing provision. This will enable more families to access a range of services on-site, and create greater opportunities for parental engagement;
- To improve outreach, we suggest Government places a duty on health professionals and local authorities to ensure all children's centres are given local birth data. This will help ensure centres have improved knowledge on where families live so they can improve outreach by supporting parental engagement with education and care, and encourage those with the greatest needs to access services.

School readiness and the importance of language

If we want to ensure that children 'get the basics' we need to be clearer on what the basics are. We must also ensure this information is passed on to parents in a way that is easily understood. As part of this, there must be greater awareness of the importance of communication skills upon which future literacy and learning depend. In areas of poverty over 50 per cent of children are thought to be starting school with delayed communication skills.¹⁵ Our reforms can, therefore, help ensure these children do not fall further behind.

- To help parents and teachers better understand young children's needs, we suggest the first assessment that is made of children on entering reception (the EYFSP) is simplified and focussed primarily on the core skills of literacy, numeracy, communication and social development;
- Those who do not reach the levels expected at the end of the foundation stage should be given additional, specialist help to bring their language skills up to speed. To support parental involvement, parents should all be given information on 'developmental milestones on communication' as part of transition plans into school. Parents should continue to be given information on their child's communication development throughout school.

¹⁵ Communication Trust, *Communication difficulties – Facts and Stats*, [accessed via: www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/2612/communication_difficulties_-_facts_and_stats.pdf (17/08/14)]

Chapter 2: Supporting the most disadvantaged children

It is extremely important that closing the attainment gap between rich and poor remains a high priority for government. In this chapter we ask how government can do more to help provide additional support to those who need it most.

Improving the reach of the Pupil Premium

The introduction of the Pupil Premium is very positive, as this reflects consensus on the importance of closing the attainment gap between rich and poor. However, the current mechanism used to allocate it, free school meals (FSM) uses arbitrary income cut-off points and means-tested benefits to decide eligibility. As the CSJ has argued, these cut-off points can mean that children can be defined as in or not in relative income poverty on the basis of a £1 difference in income.¹⁶ Therefore 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 even more of the problems experienced by children on the other side of the line.¹⁷ In addition, because FSM is pinned to existing benefits, as Universal Credit is rolled out there will be a need to use a different means of calculating eligibility.

We would strongly recommend that the Government review the eligibility criteria for the Pupil Premium considering the following criteria and how each of these factors could be weighted to ensure a new measure supports the most disadvantaged children:

- Parental education;
- Family breakdown;
- Long-term unemployment;
- Parental addiction;
- Parental mental health;
- Whether the child is a young carer;
- Whether the child is looked after.

Extending access to state boarding schools

As good as some schools are, given the limited scope of the school day and term they will not be enough to overcome the disadvantages some children face at home. There is strong evidence to suggest that boarding schools can act as a preventative intervention for disadvantaged children who may otherwise have gone into care.¹⁸ However, the number of places is limited and furthermore, not enough children who would benefit are currently accessing those places which are available. Consequently we call on the Government to:

¹⁶ See Centre for Social Justice, *Rethinking Child Poverty*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2012

¹⁷ Iniesta-Martinez S and Evans H, *Pupils not claiming free school meals*, London: Department for Education, 2012

¹⁸ RNCf, *Research*, [accessed via: www.rncf.org.uk/research.php (17/08/14)]

- Commission a review into the number of disadvantaged children that would benefit from attending a state boarding school; the number of additional places needed and an evaluation of the socio-economic profile of current intakes. Following this they should establish a plan for expanding the availability of places – with funded, year on year increases. The aim should be to have a funded place available for every child that would benefit;
- Actively encourage all local authorities to make greater use of state boarding schools as a form of early intervention. Parents whose children are ‘children in need’ should also be able to self-refer their children for a place, as should long-term foster carers, rather than having to go through social services.

More Free Schools serving disadvantaged pupils

The CSJ supports the principles behind the Free Schools programme, having recommended the initiative in *Breakthrough Britain*.¹⁹ However, so far, too few effective grassroots, poverty fighting charities have set up these schools in the poorest areas. We therefore ask for increased support for such charities making applications. In particular the Department for Education and the New Schools Network could broker relationships between individual charities interested in setting up a school and people or organisations with educational expertise. More could also be done by organisations such as the New Schools Network to help charities navigate their way through the process of setting up a Free School.

Chapter 3: Improving schools, teaching and leadership

Whilst there have been some notable improvements in the quality of many schools in recent years there is far more to be done.

Helping schools to learn from each other

School-to-school support is at the heart of the current school improvement agenda. However, there is currently not enough coherent brokerage in the system, and not enough support for a school before it gets to crisis point.

To help poor schools improve, Regional Schools Commissioner Boards could be charged with supporting school improvement and brokering support across all schools. Regional Schools Commissioner Boards would for example:

- Broker connections between weak schools and high performing schools who have successfully dealt with similar challenges;
- Support the strategic deployment of National Leaders of Education and National Leaders of Governance, which represent excellent leaders and chairs of governors, to those schools that need them most;

¹⁹ Centre for Social Justice, *Breakthrough Britain Ending the costs of social breakdown Volume 3: Educational Failure*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2007

- Have a list of external experts who can be offered, but not forced, on governing boards preparing to recruit a new headteacher:

There also need to be greater incentives built into the inspections system so that Outstanding schools that support improvements in other schools can be recognised. The creation of a fifth category within Ofsted inspection grades – ‘Exceptional’ – could be awarded to Outstanding schools that give intensive and extensive support to other struggling schools.

Driving up standards in primary schools

Having thousands of primary schools working on their own is no longer viable. Many of these schools are too small to operate in isolation and are not working as effectively as they could. There are 16,788 primary schools in the country, out of which just 11 per cent are academies.²⁰ Many would benefit from the shared resources and leadership that come with collaboration, whether as part of an effective chain or a more informal arrangement.

The CSJ has heard that some primary schools can find the process of joining a multi-academy trust (MAT) too great a step to take to begin with. Therefore to ensure these primary schools can benefit from the collaboration that these arrangements bring, this should be incentivised through giving good primary schools £25,000 in seed funding when they join a Hard Federation, as is currently available to those joining MATs.²¹ Encouraging federation in this way incentivises collaboration between primary schools and simultaneously overcomes the initial resistance to MATs felt by some primaries.

Improving and maintaining the quality of teaching and leadership

Greater collaboration is a crucial ingredient to a school's success. However we must also cultivate the great teaching and leadership which schools need to transform lives.

- Developing aspirational teaching: the quality of teaching is the most important school-based influence on the educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. We have heard repeatedly that ongoing and effective continued professional development (CPD) is underused and under-evaluated. To address this, we call for a future Royal College of Teaching to establish a framework of what a teacher can expect in terms of CPD throughout their career; and call on Government to commission an evaluation of CPD, giving a clearer picture on its current use.
- Rewarding our best headteachers: there is no doubt that being an effective leader in a tough school is a challenging job. We must therefore reward and incentivise our best headteachers to stay in the profession. Headteachers working in challenging schools rated Good and Outstanding should be entitled to a sabbatical every five years, lasting for a maximum of seven weeks.

20 Department for Education, *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2014*, London: Department for Education, 2014

21 Or, the level of funding made available to academies

Chapter 4: Spreading success around the country

Whilst the quality of education has improved in many parts of the country, success has by no means been spread equally. Again and again, it is the most disadvantaged children and communities which often get left behind. We have seen how some areas and schools have struggled to attract the great headteachers and teachers they need. To get talent to those areas which have been left behind, we call for Government to embark upon a National Improvement Programme to improve standards in the most poorly performing disadvantaged schools.

- Last year, just 44 per cent of children in Knowsley achieved five good GCSEs including English and maths, compared to the national average of 61 per cent;²²
- In a staggering 22 local authorities, more than 70 per cent of children on FSM did not achieve five good GCSEs including English and maths;²³
- A mere 14 per cent of pupils in the Isle of Wight attend a secondary school graded Good or better, compared to 100 per cent of pupils in London's Islington and Tower Hamlets;²⁴
- In the most deprived secondary schools in regions like the North East and Yorkshire and Humber; leadership is good or better in below 60 per cent of schools. Yet by contrast, in the most deprived schools in London, an impressive 87 per cent of schools have leadership which is good or better.²⁵

Injecting dynamism into underperforming areas

The CSJ has heard that academy chains are still reluctant to expand into some of the most disadvantaged areas. Some of the most effective chains have told us that a key part of their success has been the ability to work in 'geographic clusters' where support can be offered to schools easily, and flexibly.

The most effective academy chains are able to inject dynamism and aspiration into their schools. The Sutton Trust found that in nine of the 31 chains they looked at, in 2013, disadvantaged students in sponsored academies outperformed the average for disadvantaged children in mainstream schools. In the top five, the proportion of disadvantaged students achieving five good GCSEs in the sponsored academies in these chains is at least 15 percentage points higher than the average for disadvantaged students in mainstream schools.²⁶

We therefore call on Government to:

- Offer the most effective academy chains groups of failing schools. They should be given funding to set up a local headquarters to help them mirror their operations elsewhere and to build the infrastructure of these schools;

22 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014

23 Ibid

24 Ofsted, *The Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Schools, 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p35, 36

25 Figures extracted from <http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk/>

26 Sutton Trust, *Chain Effects, The impact of academy chains on low income students*, London: Sutton Trust, 2014

- The Government should also pilot a payment-by-results scheme which would reward chains for improvements in results in their first few years with a heavy weighting towards the results of the most disadvantaged.

Getting the best leaders to struggling schools

Some schools struggle to attract the best leaders, who are able to drive sustainable improvement in that school.

Headteachers have told us that a major disincentive for them to take on failing schools is the current Ofsted regime. Heads worry that they will lose their hard-earned reputation or their job if they do not evidence very rapid improvement – even though effecting meaningful change often takes time. 78 per cent of members of the Association of School and College Leaders said that they are less likely now than a year ago to seek posts in challenging schools, and that this was in part because of the accountability system which sees schools dropping Ofsted categories on the basis of one year's results and unrealistic expectations of the time it takes to improve.²⁷ We should therefore encourage effective headteachers to take up posts in challenging schools, especially in areas where applications are low, by offering them a two-year grace from a formal inspection.

To help inform which schools would be targeted for this help, the Department for Education should also monitor shortlisted applications per vacancy rates for heads (and teachers) via the school workforce census.

Better deployment of our most ambitious teachers

Some schools, particularly in deprived communities, struggle to attract the best teaching. In some regions up to 70 per cent of the most deprived secondary schools have teaching which is less than Good.²⁸ This may be because of subject shortages, or because these children go to schools in areas which are seen as undesirable places to live and work. To combat this problem, the Government should commission a National Teacher Service Scheme to recruit the best teachers to the schools which need them most. Teachers who could demonstrate their ability to achieve positive results for children in challenging circumstances would be offered two-year contracts and deployed strategically by the scheme to areas that struggle to attract high quality teaching. This would help teachers to strengthen their CVs, broaden their experiences and, if the project was tied to the Talented Leaders Programme, learn from an excellent headteacher. We have found that there is a good appetite for this initiative: a survey of 2,000 teachers conducted for the CSJ by TES, found that almost 80 per cent of teachers said that they would consider relocating to a different town or village to work in a new school. It is well established that the quality of teaching is the most important school factor impacting on attainment – and so we must give these children the kind of teachers they deserve.

²⁷ Speech by the General Secretary of the ASCL, Brian Lightman, General Secretary's address to annual conference, 22 March 2014

²⁸ For example the North East; data extracted from <http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Chapter 5: Further Education and the journey into work

Further Education (FE) has traditionally catered to some of our most disadvantaged learners. These are often children who slipped through the gaps at school – many of whom left with few meaningful qualifications.

- There are three times as many students eligible for FSM at colleges than at maintained school sixth forms;²⁹
- Post-16 and adult learners interviewed by Ofsted in 2011 said negative experiences of school led to continued barriers to learning, such as a fear of ‘feeling thick’ and the stigma of attending a literacy class.³⁰

Where it is high quality FE offers these learners a crucial opportunity to acquire the skills they need to enter employment. Yet it is unacceptable that one-quarter of learners are in provision which is less than Good.³¹ There have been positive reforms made in the sector; particularly following Professor Alison Wolf’s influential review and our recommendations build on these, so that provision is more transparent and so that it more often acts as a route into long-term employment.

Quality of the sector

Improving how we inspect colleges: to improve transparency, we call for Ofsted to inspect all departments in FE colleges, rather than only a proportion as they currently do. Given the spread of many colleges and their diverse functions, this would make inspections more accurate and give prospective students a clearer picture of the quality of courses before they sign up.

Improving teaching: To be an excellent teacher in FE, staff must be skilled in their trade as well as in teaching. Pedagogy is also especially important given the high levels of need and disengagement amongst some learners. ‘Teach Too’ was launched this year, looking into the best ways of enabling industry professionals to combine their day-job with teaching. Given the importance of quality teaching, Teach Too should be developed, and subject to evaluation, expanded.

Fairer funding

Funding disparities not only affect the status of the sector, but its ability to deliver high quality provision. Since 2009 there has been a growing gap between how learners of different ages are funded.³² We support the Government’s emphasis on supporting the most disadvantaged school children through initiatives like the Pupil Premium; however, we must not forget our most disadvantaged learners once they leave school.

29 The Association of Colleges, *No Free Lunch? Key Statistics*, [accessed via: www.aoc.co.uk/en/parliament-and-campaigns/campaigns/no-free-lunch/key-statistics.cfm (11/08/13)] (Figures sent to the CS) by the AoC

30 Ofsted, *Children’s Services and Skills, Removing barriers to literacy*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2011

31 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills, Further education and skills 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013

32 Association of Colleges, *College Funding and Finance*, London: Association of Colleges, 2014, p4

- Recent funding cuts affecting 18-year-olds in full time education are deeply concerning. From September 2014, these learners will be funded at a rate 17.5 per cent lower than 16- and 17-year-olds.³³ This will affect the most disadvantaged learners hardest as many will be going to FE to take remedial courses, taking three years to complete. We therefore call on Government to urgently reconsider the cut affecting 18-year-olds;
- As an extension of this, Government should consider addressing all irregularities in how different education institutions are funded, such as the disparity which means whereas schools can reclaim VAT, sixth form colleges and FE colleges cannot;
- Funding can be very complex, coming from among various sources, often cutting across two Government departments – the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS). To address this we call on Government to examine the possibility of bringing FE into the Department for Education. Colleges should also be given greater stability through funding arrangements, through the introduction of three-year funding plans.

Improving the links between FE and employment

Too little FE provision is geared towards the needs of local and national labour markets.³⁴ It is unfair to encourage learners to take courses which are unlikely to lead to positive job outcomes. If we want to support transitions to work, learners need to be clearer on the likely outcomes of taking a particular course at particular institutions.

Both the Department for Education and BIS have begun trial publishing data on the destinations of learners, following KS4 (GCSE level), KS5 (A Level equivalent) and post 19. This has huge potential to encourage young people to take courses which lead to employment, and to drive providers to offer those courses. We call on Government to take urgent steps to improve the robustness of the data so that it can be used for this purpose. Once the quality of this data has been improved schools and colleges, should be encouraged to track trends over time, so that they can ensure their provision is more responsive to outcomes, and so that prospective learners can see the potential impact of their studies.

When the robustness of this data is improved, Ofsted should give this data greater weighting in their assessments, again, to ensure providers make sure they consider employability outcomes for their learners. As BIS develops the measures they should chart destinations for individual subject areas or qualifications, to show the impact taking particular courses has on outcomes.

³³ Following a new announcement from the Education Funding Authority, from September schools and colleges in England will see the grant they are given to fund each pupil's place cut by 17.5 per cent for all students who are already over the age of 18 at the beginning of the academic year. See: House of Commons Library, *Cuts in funding for 18 and 19 year olds*, 23 January 2013

³⁴ Ofsted, *Further education and skills 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p5

Improving engagement with employers

We are now enduring the effects of a 'skills-mismatch'. At one end of the spectrum the country faces shortages in high-skill industries like engineering, and yet at the other end, many employers complain that too many applicants lack the most basic skills.³⁵ Our reforms can help to ensure that education providers help young people to get the skills that local employers need.

Improving planning: the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs): if we want more young people to leave education with the soft and hard skills employers need, we must improve the strategic planning between education providers and local employers. LEPs are locally-owned partnerships between local authorities and businesses – and their role should be extended to incorporate strategic planning, with responsibility for working with employers to map the employment needs of an area.

Better brokerage: extending the role of local Chambers of Commerce: the role of the British Chambers of Commerce should be extended so that local chambers act as brokers of employer engagement between employers, schools and colleges.³⁶ All schools and colleges should be expected to engage with local employers, with local chambers facilitating this if needed. Local chambers of commerce should be given extended responsibility for brokering these relationships.

University Technical Colleges (UTCs): the CSJ has heard that UTCs are an excellent means of involving industry in education because they engage young people and meet the needs of modern business. We welcome this initiative, but there are not enough UTCs to reach all those children who would benefit. To extend the reach of this innovative initiative, we propose that the following takes place:

- Outstanding FE colleges should be able to sponsor UTCs.³⁷ Some areas are served by their local college and therefore allowing them to act as sponsor would increase the initiative's geographic reach to more learners;
- Subject to evaluation, Government should aim to have at least one UTC in every town. New institutions should arrive when there is a proven skills gap that cannot be met with sufficiently high quality by existing local providers, supported by LEPs.

Meaningful apprenticeships: apprenticeships have to be part of the solution for disadvantaged young people: they can offer excellent on-the-job training and improve how we prepare more people for industry. However, not enough apprenticeships are at a higher level. The Government should therefore ensure a radical expansion of Level 3 apprenticeships, with 150–250,000 extra places established each year, so as to make these the norm, offering a genuine alternative to Higher Education.

³⁵ CBI: *gateway to growth CBI/Pearson education and skills survey 2014*, London: CBI

³⁶ The British Chambers of Commerce is a national umbrella body owned by, and acting for, 52 local chambers of commerce across the UK

³⁷ It was originally intended for only universities to do this -UTCs all have a university as a lead sponsor. FE colleges, charitable organisations and the private sector may co-sponsor a UTC; but they must also be led by a university.

Conclusion

The education system must help every child fulfil their potential, regardless of where in the country they live or the family they come from. It is unacceptable that for so many children, education does not act as gateway to success. Whilst we support much of the reform that has taken place, there is clearly far more to be done.

Our ambitious proposals set out how we can ensure more children start school ready for learning. Getting the early years right is crucial because children who fall behind at this young age are less likely to ever catch up. We also set out how we can improve schools and improve incentives for collaboration – so that our best schools can use their expertise to drive the same success amongst their colleagues. Likewise, the important effect of excellent teaching means we must value those who teach our children – and give them the professional development they need so that they too may reach their potential.

Driving success requires efforts across all phases of our system, across all parts of our country and from all members of our society – children, parents, schools, businesses and politicians – everyone has a role to play. We must take urgent action to ensure this takes place.

Introduction

'We can't change our intake but we can change our school. We try to get the basic teaching experience right – so if they come to school every day – they'll do well, regardless of other factors in their life.'

Ashley Harrold, Deputy Head, Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College, in evidence to the CSJ

A good education is one of the surest routes out of poverty. Education opens minds to new possibilities and opens doors to work. Those who leave school with better qualifications are more likely to find employment and the stability that accompanies it.³⁸ Those who do not can bear the costs of failure for a lifetime. Poor qualifications dramatically increase the chance of worklessness, low pay or, in the most extreme cases, prison.³⁹

Education is a social justice issue not just because poorer children often do worse at school, but because children who do poorly at school are more likely to become poorer adults.⁴⁰ For these reasons this report considers both how more can be done to support the most disadvantaged pupils and how standards can be raised across the board to ensure that more and more young people leave school with the skills they need to enter work and thrive.

Context

Despite considerable national investment in education over the past 20 years, a noticeable minority of children, a disproportionate number of them from poorer backgrounds, are not achieving success. Education spending, as a proportion of GDP, has risen by around 20 per cent since the early 1990s, taking total government spend to £98 billion, making education the third largest area of government spending after welfare and health.⁴¹

However, educational standards for many children remain much lower than politicians would accept for their own children. Every year more than 220,000, or about two in five, leave school without a grade C or better in English and maths GCSE.⁴² Only 18 per cent of pupils on free school meals (FSM) are entered for the EBacc (which shows how many

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

39 Ministry of Justice, *The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly sentenced prisoners*, London: Ministry of Justice, 2012. Nearly half of prisoners surveyed said they had no qualifications.

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

41 HM Treasury, *Budget 2014*, London: HM Treasury, 2014

42 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014, See table 1

pupils attain a C grade or above across a core of academic subjects at GCSE), and only nine per cent achieve it.⁴³ Many businesses are not satisfied with the skills of school leavers in important areas such as attitudes to work (33 per cent), basic numeracy (38 per cent) and communication skills (52 per cent).⁴⁴

These concerning national figures themselves hide areas and groups where performance is even lower. Some areas have been left behind:

- In areas like Blackpool, Knowsley and the Isle of Wight – more than 50 per cent of all children did not achieve five good GCSEs including English and maths last year;⁴⁵
- There were 22 local authorities where last year, more than 70 per cent of children on FSM did not achieve five good GCSEs including English and maths;⁴⁶
- In Knowsley, just 44 per cent of all children, and 26 per cent of children on FSM, achieved this benchmark.⁴⁷

Some groups are particularly disadvantaged:

- The attainment gap between poorer pupils and their better-off peers is 27 percentage points (38 per cent compared to 65 per cent);⁴⁸
- Only 28 per cent of white British boys eligible for FSM achieved five good GCSEs including English and maths – compared to the national average of 61 per cent.⁴⁹ White children on FSM are the lowest attaining ethnic group in the country;
- Just 15 per cent of looked after children achieved five good GCSEs including English and maths, compared to 58 per cent of non-looked after children;⁵⁰
- A staggering 50 per cent of children in some areas of social disadvantage start school with poor language.⁵¹

This Parliament has, however, witnessed one of the most extensive periods of education reform in living memory, the full effects of which will not be felt for some time. Central to these changes has been the Coalition Government's rapid expansion of the academies programme which gives schools and their headteachers more freedom to make the best decisions for their pupils. There are now over 4,000 schools which are academies, approximately 20 per cent, up from just one per cent in 2010.⁵² This programme has also been extended to encompass primary and special schools for the first time. Alongside this expansion, the Government has overseen the opening of 174 new Free Schools in areas where parents and communities wanted new provision.⁵³

43 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014, See table 1

44 CBI: *gateway to growth CBI/Pearson education and skills survey 2014*, London: CBI, p44

45 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014

46 Ibid

47 Ibid

48 Ibid

49 Ibid

50 Department for Education, *Outcomes for Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England, as at 31 March 2013*, London: Department for Education, 2013, p1

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

52 Department for Education, *Open academies and academy projects in development* [www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-academies-and-academy-projects-in-development (18/08/14)]

53 Department for Education, *Free schools: successful applications and open schools – 2014*, [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-successful-applications-and-open-schools-2014 (18/08/14)]

A new educational landscape is developing in which schools are no longer bound to their local authority but instead are often part of chains or federations of academies that share experience and best practice. With more schools enjoying greater autonomy, the Government has sought to encourage them to make positive decisions for their pupils through a number of assessment and funding mechanisms. The introduction of a Pupil Premium has seen additional resources channelled to children on FSM, asking schools to invest more in the development of their disadvantaged pupils and inspecting their success.⁵⁴ League tables have been reformed to take account of all pupils' performances so that schools do not simply focus on pushing children over the C/D grade line.⁵⁵ The Government has also introduced the EBacc performance measure to encourage schools to focus on more academic subjects, with the proportion taking the EBacc increasing by 12 percentage points since last year.⁵⁶ Likewise there has been close scrutiny of the relevance of many vocational qualifications.⁵⁷

Scope of the report

The CSJ strongly supports the direction of these reforms which accord with many of our ideas as presented in our education report in *Breakthrough Britain* in 2008.⁵⁸ In this, the final report of the Education Working Group, we set out what the next phase of reform should look like and how success can be spread to those who need it most.

In our report last year, *Requires Improvement*, we drew attention to the fact that too many children were starting school far behind their peers. There is a 19-month gap at the start of school between the most and least advantaged children⁵⁹ and last year, we highlighted data showing that at the end of reception, 19 per cent of children could not link sounds to letters, naming and sounding letters of the alphabet.⁶⁰ Here we ask how more can be done to reach out to those families who need additional support in the early years either through nursery classes or children's centres, and what role schools can play in driving up the standards of early years settings.

A central concern has been how the most disadvantaged children can be better supported. It is quite right that the Government has, through the Pupil Premium, diverted additional funds to schools to help poorer children – and understandable that it used FSM eligibility as a quick and easy means to do so. However, it is obvious that financial poverty is not the only force at play. Whilst young people on FSM, on average, get lower grades than their peers, 76 per cent of all those who did not achieve five A* to Cs at GCSE including English and maths last year were not eligible for FSM.⁶¹ For this reason we have looked again at how eligibility for the Pupil Premium could be assessed.

54 Department for Education, *Raising the achievement of disadvantaged children*, 2014 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/policies/raising-the-achievement-of-disadvantaged-children/supporting-pages/pupil-premium (20/08/14)]

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

56 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent results in England 2012/13*, London: Department for Education, 2014, p3

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

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

59 Department for Education, *Early Years Pupil Premium and funding for two-year-olds*, London: Department for Education, 2014, p3

60 Department for Education, *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results in England*, 2011/12, London: Department for Education, 2012

61 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014, see table 1

Many teachers and headteachers raised concerns with us about children who endure particularly unstable family lives – many of whom are in or on the edge of care. A number of those same leaders have told us that they feel that schools could do more to support such young people and take the pressure off families needing space to resolve difficult issues, such as addiction, or even to share care with foster carers. Consequently, we have looked at extending boarding provision for pupils in need.

Whilst many of the disadvantages children face stem from the home, many failings are still rooted in our school system. Fundamental to the quality of education that children receive is the quality of teaching. For this reason we have looked at how the quality of teaching and leadership can be driven up across the board, particularly through improved CPD.

A major issue for this report is how more young people in certain areas can enjoy the success currently being enjoyed by others. As we studied in *Requires Improvement*, it is possible for schools and regions to be energised – the London Challenge has notably driven a considerable improvement in educational standards in the capital.⁶² Our research has shown that the best leadership and the best teaching are often not found in the areas of greatest deprivation. For this



reason we have looked at the development of a National Improvement Programme which would incentivise the best groups of academy chains to move into the areas where they are most needed. As part of this we have also looked at how a National Teacher Service programme could be instituted to encourage good teachers to spend part of their careers in schools and regions which would particularly benefit from their help.

Because schools facing similar acute challenges can be far away from each other we have looked at how learning between schools can be facilitated and improved. Our research has shown that there are, for example, a number of schools which have helped white children on free school meals to perform better than the national average for all pupils – yet other schools which might benefit from their insight do not know that they exist. We suggest how the role of the new Regional Schools Commissioners could be extended so that they can help spread and encourage best practice wherever it is found.

Lastly, because one of the essential purposes of education is to help young people find work and achieve independence, we have looked at the quality of Further Education (FE) colleges. More than half of 17-year-olds in full-time education in FE colleges are from the bottom three socio-economic groups; it is essential that they are given the skills and support they

62 Ogden V, *Making Sense of Policy in London Secondary Education: What can be learned from the London Challenge?* London: Institute of Education, thesis; Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, *The London Challenge*, Manchester: Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2010

need to move into work.⁶³ For this reason we have looked at measures that could drive improvements in the quality and usefulness of courses at FE colleges.

The reforms we set out in this report build on the reforms and initiatives of recent years and ask how their success and potential can be spread to the children, families and communities they have yet to reach. By continuing along this path, we have the opportunity to offer more young people – and, ultimately, their children – more and better routes out of poverty.

⁶³ 2020 Public Service HUB, *The further education and skills sector in 2020: a social productivity approach*, London: 2020 Public Service HUB, 26 May 2011

chapter one

The best start

'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, Principal of Burlington Danes Academy

At present too many children – particularly those in deprived areas – are starting compulsory schooling behind their peers. The early years have a major impact on subsequent educational development and therefore it is essential that more is done to help these children before they start formal school.

- There is a 19-month gap at the start of school between the most and least advantaged children;⁶⁴
- By age three poorer children are estimated to be, on average, nine months behind those children from wealthier backgrounds;⁶⁵
- Too many children still start school behind their peers: in *Requires Improvement*, we cited data showing that at the end of reception, 19 per cent of children could not link sounds to letters, naming and sounding letters of the alphabet;⁶⁶
- Children who start school behind the expected levels are less likely to ever catch up: a child's development score at only 22 months can serve as an accurate predictor of their education outcomes at 26.⁶⁷

The benefits of high quality early education are greatest for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.⁶⁸ This is because when it is good, it can offset some of the other disadvantages faced.

64 Department for Education, *Early Years Pupil Premium and funding for two-year-olds*, London: Department for Education, 2014, p3

65 Sutton Trust & Oxford University, *Sound foundations: A review of the research evidence on quality of early childhood education and care for children under three – Implications for policy and practice*, Oxford: Oxford University, 2014, p12

66 Department for Education, *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results in England, 2011/12*, London: Department for Education, 2012

67 Allen G, *Early Intervention: the Next Steps*, London: Cabinet Office, 2011, p23

68 Sutton Trust & Oxford University, *Sound foundations: A review of the research evidence on quality of early childhood education and care for children under three – Implications for policy and practice*, Oxford: Oxford University, 2014, p14

- Children from poor backgrounds attending an early education setting increase their vocabulary at a faster rate than those staying at home;⁶⁹
- Pre-school quality and pre-school effectiveness predicted students' academic attainment in Year 9, even after controlling for background characteristics;⁷⁰
- Pre-school quality is a significant predictor of later Key Stage 2 performance in both English and maths.⁷¹

Making sure we offer these children high quality provision does not reflect a 'schoolification' of the early years, nor is it about taking responsibility away from parents – parental engagement is very important. Instead, it is about supporting children's development and giving them exposure to abilities like social skills and language development, so that by the time they do start formal schooling, they are absolutely ready for learning.

One head told the CSJ:

*'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.'*⁷²

The Coalition Government has made some notable improvements to early years provision. This includes a welcome increase in provision for three- and four-year-olds, who are entitled to 570 hours of funded early education per year. Last September this was extended to reach the 20 per cent least advantaged two-year-olds, and as of this September, the initiative will be expanded even further so that forty per cent of two-year-olds will be entitled. The quality of provision has also been improving, and 78 per cent of providers on the Early Years Register are now Good or better – the highest proportion since the register was established.⁷³

Raising our expectations of those working in the early years

Staff qualification levels have a major impact on standards. Better-qualified staff have been shown to offer higher quality support for children between the ages of 30 months and five years in developing communication, language, literacy, reasoning, thinking and mathematical skills.⁷⁴

69 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills Early years 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2014, p22

70 Institute of Education, *Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project*, London: Institute of Education, 2012, p2

71 Haringey Council, *Achieving a good level of development at 5 years-old*, Final Report January 2014, p8 [accessed via: www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/Published/C00000756/M00006520/AI00036929/EYDesignReviewFullReport20140113Final.pdf (17/08/14)]

72 Mark Edwards, Principal of Manston St James Primary Academy in Leeds in evidence to the CSJ Centre for Social Justice, *Requires Improvement: the causes of educational failure*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013

73 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills Early years 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2014, p7

74 Department for Education, *Evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund Final report*, London: Department for Education, 2011

Traditionally, we have expected very little of those working with our youngest children.⁷⁵ However, recent improvements in staff quality have been made. For example, between 2007 and 2011, the proportion of full daycare staff with at least a Level 3 qualification rose from 72 per cent to 84 per cent and the proportion with a degree or higher increased from four per cent to 11 per cent.⁷⁶



However, the quality of staff in the early years is still not good enough.⁷⁷ Eight per cent of all paid early years staff hold only a Level 2 qualification as their highest qualification (equivalent to GCSE level).⁷⁸ At the same time, the sector continues to be seen as lower status and teaching young children is still seen as less important than teaching school-age children.⁷⁹ It can therefore struggle to attract the best applicants, with a perception that there are weak leadership pathways in the sector:

*'Some appear to think that working with young children means nothing more than changing nappies and wiping noses. This is a misconception of what it is to work with young children and an insult to young children themselves whose needs are as important and complex (if not more so) as those pupils in the later years of schooling...'*⁸⁰

The sector's status, and the availability of leadership pathways, will to some extent be improved by having more nursery provision attached to primary schools (as we discuss in this chapter). However, we must expect more of all of those working with our youngest children.

We therefore recommend that all staff hold at least Level 3 Early Years Educator qualifications⁸¹ and that all staff should also have a minimum grade C in English and maths GCSE.⁸² This will help to ensure that children, particularly those in deprived areas, are being stimulated by those with the skills needed to support their vocabulary and language development.

'Staff qualifications are key – it transforms the services delivered. Staff should be qualified to Level 3 [Early Years] and they should all have Level 2 English and maths.'

Joanne Smith, Children Centre and Nursery Lead, Thames Children's Centre and Thames Primary Academy, Blackpool (graded Outstanding)

75 House of Commons Education Committee, *Foundation Years: Sure Start children's Centres, Volume 1*, London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2013

76 Department for Education, *More great childcare, Raising quality and giving parents more Choice*, London: Department for Education, 2013, p16 (See Brind, et al 2012) refers to daycare staff.

77 This applies to deprived areas in particular: As will be discussed, the proportion of graduate-level staff is considerably higher in nursery schools and nursery classes based in primary schools See Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Early years 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2014, p24

78 Department for Education (Brind, et al), *Childcare and early years providers survey: 2011*, London: Department for Education, 2012, p93 Table 6.1, the 2011 Census was the most recent year that statistics are available from

79 Department for Education, *More great childcare, Raising quality and giving parents more Choice*, London: Department for Education, 2013, (See Brind, et al 2012)

80 Nutbrown Review, *Foundations for Quality*, London: Crown copyright, 2012, see p15 and p45

81 Having everyone qualified to Level 3 will not by itself solve the problem of quality and it is vital that qualifications are of value. Minimum qualifications will offer a good, objective starting point of what we expect from those working in the early years.

82 Or a Level 2 literacy qualification

Additionally, Early Years Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) should be redefined so that teachers learn the skills necessary to teach two-year-olds (rather than three-year-olds as is currently the case). This would reflect the fact that the Government is expanding access to early education for the most disadvantaged two-year-olds. Making sure the qualification also covers the initial years following the end of the Foundation Stage is also important, so that teachers can be forward-looking and know what to expect in a child's next years of development.⁸³ This will make it more likely that they can identify the areas where a child may fall behind in early primary. Doing this will therefore help staff work together to support the important transition from the early years into primary school. For these reasons, every setting should work towards having at least one person with QTS within five years.⁸⁴

'I believe expanding the QTS to start at age two would be a very good idea, as starting early would enable staff to support continuity of development, especially language and cognition, from the Foundation Stage through to Key Stage 1. We also should expect staff to have Level 3 in English and maths, it's an important step in the right direction towards enhancing professionalism in the workforce.'

Professor Kathy Sylva OBE, researcher in the early years and child psychology

In Chapter 3 we discuss the National Leaders of Education (NLE) scheme, where excellent leaders are deployed to support improvements in weaker settings. Given the importance of leadership, and the importance of improving the status of the early years sector, the Department for Education should explore the possibility of expanding this scheme into early education. Having NLEs in the early years means that effective leaders could support improvements in deprived areas in particular, whilst also reflecting that early years education is as important as the primary and secondary phases.

Recommendation: An Early Years QTS should be redefined so that teachers learn the skills necessary to teach two-year-olds. Every setting, including Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings, should work towards having at least one person with QTS within five years.

Recommendation: All early years staff should hold at least Level 3 Early Years Educator qualifications, funded by the Department for Education.

Recommendation: All staff should also have a minimum grade C in English and maths GCSE or equivalent, or a Level 2 literacy qualification, to build in literacy – and its continued study – as an expectation.

Recommendation: As the NLE scheme expands, there should be exploration of having NLEs in the early years.

83 Simultaneously, given how much development takes place at this age, stretching it much longer means teachers may be spreading their expertise too thinly.

84 Including private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings

Providing the best settings for early years education: expanding the availability of nursery classes attached to primary schools

Whilst we should aim for all staff to be better qualified, some settings are more likely to promote positive child outcomes than others.⁸⁵ The CSJ has heard that a major opportunity to further improve quality in pre-school provision lies in having nursery classes attached to primary schools. This provision has been found to be especially positive for disadvantaged children. 17 per cent of primary schools that have some pupils of nursery age were judged Outstanding as of 31 December 2013,⁸⁶ compared to 12 per cent of all providers inspected, and just ten per cent for childminders.⁸⁷ A recent study has also found that nursery classes attached to primary schools tend to promote better social development even after accounting for the child's background and prior social behaviour.⁸⁸

One of the most important reasons these settings produce good outcomes is because they give children access to better qualified staff. As the table below shows, in deprived areas the proportion of staff qualified to at least Level 6 (graduate level) is highest in nursery classes based in primary schools.⁸⁹ Research indicates that having trained teachers working with children in pre-school settings had the greatest impact on quality, and was linked with better outcomes in pre-reading and social development at age five.⁹⁰ The availability of nursery classes attached to primary schools not only gives these children access to better qualified staff, they can also benefit from the leadership and resources available in the rest of the school.

Type of setting	Proportion of all staff in 30 per cent most deprived areas with at least a Level 6 qualification (degree level)
Non-domestic childcare	10%
Non-domestic childcare in a children's centre	22%
Childminder	1%
Nursery school	35%
Primary school with nursery class	41%

Attendance at either a nursery school or nursery class also gives children a good introduction to school, by helping them develop positive attitudes to learning and the social skills to

85 Syla K et al, *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from Pre-school to end of Key Stage 1*, London: Institute of Education, 2004

86 House of Commons Library, *Deposited Paper*, 2274140, 6 March 2014, [accessed via: www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2014-03-06b.190231.h#g190231.q0 (17/07/14)]

87 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Early years 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2014, (As of 31 October 2013)

88 Syla K et al, *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from Pre-school to end of Key Stage 1*, London: Institute of Education, 2004, p4

89 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills Early years 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2014, p24

90 Syla K et al, *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from Pre-school to end of Key Stage 1*, London: Institute of Education, 2004, p3

interact with other children.⁹¹ For those children able to access a place at the same primary school, it also helps create a smoother transition from the early years into reception (the first year of formal schooling). We know that the transitions children make from one phase of education to another are extremely important, and therefore supporting disadvantaged children so that they do not fall behind is absolutely critical.⁹²

Having more nursery classes attached to primary schools also means staff can start engaging with parents earlier. When children have a difficult home life it makes it all the more important that staff are able to build strong links with families from an early age. After all, parental involvement has a substantial impact on educational outcomes.⁹³ Studies show early childhood settings which combine good quality education with strong parental involvement are linked to better outcomes for children and parents.⁹⁴ Staff can get to know parents and develop the relationships they have worked hard to form with them in the early years, making it more likely that these relationships can last as these children move into reception. Jan Tallis, Chief Executive of School-Home Support, one of the CSJ's poverty-fighting Alliance charities, told the CSJ that:

'Early years should be done in schools but it shouldn't be called "education" it's about socialisation. It should be attached to the schools because they are the ones that can engage with the parents.'

Case study: Lewisham

Lewisham has supported many of its primary schools into offering nursery classes. Sue Tipler, the Head of Standards and Achievements at Lewisham told the CSJ 'having nursery places within primary schools has been very beneficial'.

Early years outcomes in Lewisham are very good: 60 per cent of children on FSM in Lewisham achieved a good level of development (GLD) last year – the joint-highest scoring local authority in the country.⁹⁵ Sue Tipler told the CSJ that nursery classes are an important part of the landscape: in Lewisham there are 52 primary schools with nurseries, 92 per cent of which are rated Good or Outstanding.⁹⁶

Given the benefits of this provision, we should enable all Good and Outstanding primary schools that want to offer nursery classes, to do so – starting in areas of high deprivation. To encourage this, primary schools should be able to open nursery classes if they wish to, and

91 Lewisham local authority, *Nursery schools* [accessed via: www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/education/earlyyears/nursery-schools/Pages/default.aspx (18/08/14)]

92 Centre for Social Justice, *Requires Improvement: the causes of educational failure*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013, p23

93 Ibid

94 Dalli et al., 2011 in Sutton Trust & Oxford University, *Sound foundations: A review of the research evidence on quality of early childhood education and care for children under three – Implications for policy and practice*, Oxford: Oxford University, 2014, p14

95 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Early years 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2014, p34 (In Chapter 2 we highlight problems with the FSM measure)

96 House of Commons Library, Deposited Paper; 2274140, 6 March 2014, [viewed at: www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2014-03-06b.190231.h#g190231.q0 (17/07/14)]

should not have to seek the local authority's permission as can be the case.⁹⁷ The expectation should also be that all new primary Free Schools take children from nursery rather than reception. Given Free Schools come with allocated building space, they are well placed to do this.

Whilst one of the benefits of this provision is a smoother transition into primary school, nursery class attendance in a school does not currently guarantee that child a place at that primary school.⁹⁸ For disadvantaged children, who are already more likely to fall behind, this is counterproductive. Disadvantaged children attending a school's nursery class should therefore be given priority for a place at the same primary school, allowing a smoother transition into school, and ensuring staff can continue to develop the relationships already formed with these children and their parents. We suggest that two-year-olds who meet the same criteria used to determine eligibility for the Pupil Premium, who attend the nursery class of a primary school should be given priority admission to the reception class of that school.

Recommendation: All Good and Outstanding (grade 1s and 2s) primary schools should be given the support to offer nursery provision, starting with those schools serving disadvantaged communities, and those that have the capacity and desire to do so.

Recommendation: Primary schools themselves should make the decision whether they may open nursery classes. As part of this, the expectation should also be that primary Free Schools take children from nursery up to year 6, rather than reception to year 6, where they wish to.

Recommendation: Two-year-olds who meet the same criteria used to determine eligibility for the Pupil Premium, and who attend the nursery class of a primary school should be given preference in admissions to the reception class of that same primary school.

Expanding the role of Sure Start to support parental engagement in pre-school education

'Attaching Sure Start Children's Centres to schools works very well because they benefit from oversight from the headteacher, which is positive given the importance of leadership in the early years.'

Sue Tipler, Head of Standards and Achievement, London Borough of Lewisham

The CSJ has also heard that there would be advantages to also allowing more high performing primary schools to have a say in the running of Sure Start Children's Centres. For example, families would be able to access universal services like birth registration as well as services like parenting and relationship support, all available on-site, offered by trained professionals.

⁹⁷ Maintained schools must consult stakeholders, including the local authority, if they wish to extend their age range or receive capital funding. Whilst there are provisos in the system, the ability for more primary schools to do this should be made more straightforward.

⁹⁸ Children are normally admitted to school nurseries from the start of the school term following their third birthday. See for example, Lewisham local authority; *Nursery schools* [accessed via: www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/education/earlyyears/nursery-schools/Pages/default.aspx (18/08/14)]

According to the Department for Education, whilst data on the total number of schools doing this are not available, last year a survey of 90 centres showed that 11 per cent were managed by a maintained nursery, school, academy or college and 29 per cent had their main location in a school or college site.⁹⁹

Having centres attached to schools may encourage more families to access services, by reducing the stigma of walking into a centre. Having provision on-site also makes it more likely parents will access additional services – by making them accessible and more convenient. Melany Pemberton, headteacher of Edna G. Olds Academy in Nottingham told the CSJ that:

'There's much less stigma for a family to walk into a school, where they can then access other services, than if they were to walk into a centre on its own.'

Good Practice: Thames Children's Centre and Thames Primary Academy, Blackpool

'It works because it's all under the same roof and we're working with the same families. It also means we can use our staff across sites. We offer early intervention, sometimes before the children are born, but we also work with parents – helping them be better parents...helping them into work – because it's about supporting the "whole family". More primary schools should partner with their local children's centre, and if they don't have one nearby they should set one up!'

Joanne Smith, Children Centre and Nursery Lead, in evidence to the CSJ

Thames Primary Academy in Blackpool is run alongside Thames Children's Centre and nursery, offering a full range of services on site with outreach provision to support families in their homes. Despite working with challenging conditions in a deprived part of Blackpool, Thames Children's Centre was rated Outstanding at its last inspection. In their inspection, Ofsted praised that:¹⁰⁰

'The welfare and well-being of local families are never off the centre's agenda but its work is not solely focussed on providing help for its users. There is a clear drive to raise parents' confidence and self-esteem ... to take the steps towards improving their own and their families' lives.'

For these reasons the Government should allow excellent primary schools to set up their own Sure Start Children's Centres (or Family Hubs, as we would view them)¹⁰¹ or take over failing early years settings in their area. Their purpose would be to work with and support families rather than supplant them. This would help more schools act as genuine hubs of their community: nursery classes would offer early education, and centres would offer a range of services for the whole family.

'If a centre is graded poor good neighbouring primary schools should be given the opportunity to take the failing centre from the local authority – with financial support on costs.'

Ian Cleland, Chief Executive of ATT in evidence to the CSJ

⁹⁹ Information sent to the CSJ by the Department for Education. The Department will soon publish a report showing this data using the ECCE survey and therefore these percentages are only indicative.

¹⁰⁰ Ofsted, *Inspection report for Thames Children's Centre*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2010, p3

¹⁰¹ See a discussion of Family Hubs in Centre for Social Justice, *Fully Committed? How government could reverse family breakdown*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2014

Whilst we recognise the funding complexities involved given that the budget for Sure Start Children's Centres sits within the Department for Communities and Local Government (rather than with the Department for Education), the Government should explore mechanisms for enabling schools to access the funding that would allow this to happen.¹⁰²

Recommendation: Good or Outstanding local primary schools should be able to set up their own early years settings or take over failing provision.

A major criticism of Sure Start Children's Centres has been that they have not always been successful at reaching out to vulnerable families.¹⁰³ Whilst there have been some improvements in outreach in recent years, the CSJ understands that there are still many families who do not access services. Almost ten per cent of centres are in the 30 per cent least deprived areas, and draw the majority of their users from similarly less deprived areas.¹⁰⁴

The Education Select Committee recently commented that:

*'Studies of Sure Start Children's Centres by the National Audit Office (in 2006) and Ofsted (in 2008) questioned how well children's centres were reaching the most vulnerable families. While many children's centres have made progress since then, practice varies both between and within local authorities. The NSPCC found that, in one local area, children's centres' engagement with teenage parents varied from 6 per cent to 68 per cent, while engagement with non-working families varied from 28 per cent to 100 per cent.'*¹⁰⁵

Staff told us how poor data sharing still limits effective outreach. A survey of over 100 children's centres found that nearly 70 per cent face challenges accessing birth data. Problems included confusion over data protection rules, poor data-sharing protocols and stretched resources for inter-agency working.¹⁰⁶ Therefore in addition to having more Family Hubs, Sure Start Children's Centres should consistently be given better data on births and pregnancies. This would help to enable staff to improve their engagement with hard to reach families.¹⁰⁷ Whilst some centres do get this data, this should be taking place consistently.¹⁰⁸

'Having better data on births etc. would help us know which families lived in the area and their immediate needs therefore enabling us to target our outreach activities. It would also help us to have a clearer baseline to measure our outcomes against thus demonstrating the impact the Centre's activities are having on improving the lives of families in our reach area.'

Diane Durber, Centre Manager, Epsom Sure Start Children's Centre, in evidence to the CSJ

102 Currently this decision cannot be taken out of the hands of local authorities without also taking the funding away. The problem with this is that the funding is not ring-fenced and is in the DCLG budget (rather than the Department for Education budget). The budget would have to be reclaimed by the Department for Education, without offsetting the DCLG funding formula.

103 Sue Gregory, *Investing in their future: how do we ensure our children get the good quality early years provision they need if they and the country are to succeed in the future? The first Ofsted Annual Lecture on Early Years*, 3 December 2012, p7

104 Department for Education, *Evaluation of children's centres in England: strand 3 – delivery of family services by children's centres*, London: Department for Education, 2013; information sent to the CSJ by the Department for Education (nine per cent)

105 House of Commons Education Committee, *Foundation Years: Sure Start children's Centres, Volume 1*, London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2013

106 National Children's Bureau, *Partnerships for a Better Start: Perspectives on the role of children's centres*, London: National Children's Bureau, 2013, p26

107 Ibid

108 Education Committee, *Reaching children and families in need*, 17 December 2013

Recommendation: That the Government places a duty on health services and local authorities to ensure all children's centres are given local birth data, and that it strengthens its guidance on this issue. This will help ensure centres have improved knowledge on where families live so they can improve outreach by supporting parental engagement with education and care, and encourage those with the greatest needs to access services.

Redefining 'readiness' in terms of core skills

In *Requires Improvement*, we highlighted concerns that children were only assessed under the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) after they have already been in school for a year – giving little indication of readiness upon starting school. Positively, following our report, the Government revealed plans for a baseline assessment to be taken around the start of reception, when most children are age four.¹⁰⁹



However, experts have told the CSJ that there is a lack of clarity over what 'school readiness' or 'unreadiness' mean. Although the EYFSP can allow teachers and parents to see whether a child has a 'good' level of development, the means of assessment are still too complicated. A completed EYFSP consists of 20 items, with the attainment of each child assessed against 17 Early Learning Goals, together with a short narrative describing the child's three characteristics of effective learning.¹¹⁰

If we want to ensure that children 'get the basics' we need to be clearer on what the basics are, and ensure this information is passed on to parents in a way that is more easily understood. This is so that staff can engage with parents on what actions are needed, and work with them to ensure their child does not fall further behind in the first years of formal schooling. As shown, early education provision should be working with parents wherever possible.

Simplifying the profile would ensure it was more easily understood by parents, facilitating a clearer picture on the key areas of development that need additional support. Consequently, we encourage the Government to commission a new review into how the EYFSP can be slimmed down further. This review should consider how feedback to parents should be kept very simple and should focus squarely on the key areas primaries must build on, i.e. literacy, numeracy, communication and social development.

Recommendation: To help parents and teachers better understand young children's needs, the EYFSP should be slimmed down to focus primarily on the core skills of literacy, numeracy, communication and social development.

¹⁰⁹ TES, *Tests for four-year-olds to be introduced by 2016*, 27 March 2014

¹¹⁰ Standards & Testing Agency, *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook*, London: Crown copyright, 2013

The importance of language development and communication

An estimated ten per cent of all children have long-term persistent speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).¹¹¹ However, in areas of poverty the problem is far more acute: over 50 per cent of children are thought to be starting school with delayed communication skills.¹¹² We must work with families in these areas so that children do not fall further behind.

This is vital because communication precedes literacy and so children without these skills will find it considerably harder to learn to read or write.¹¹³ The long-term impact can be catastrophic. Two-thirds of seven- to 14-year-olds with serious behaviour problems have language difficulties and at least 60 per cent of young people in young offender institutions have communication difficulties.¹¹⁴ Poor communication and language skills also have a negative effect on future job outcomes meaning that these children risk facing disadvantage throughout their life.¹¹⁵

Despite this, the importance of language development and communication is still not fully recognised. A survey for 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.¹¹⁶ This is deeply worrying because if families and practitioners are not fully aware of developmental milestones, they may think it is 'normal' when a child is not reaching levels expected of their age.

We believe that communication skills should be valued equally with skills like numeracy and literacy. The importance of language development must be better conveyed to both parents and staff, starting from birth, lasting throughout the early years and beyond.

'Communication is in the EYFSP but it's not always clear enough what should be done for those children with limited communication skills within the reception classroom. But it becomes especially true later on when less attention is paid in the National Curriculum to communication relative, for example, to literacy. We need to improve support for children who fall behind the EYFSP goals and continue to provide that support as they progress through primary school.'

Professor James Law, international expert in speech and communication, in evidence to the CSJ

We recommend that communication and language be embedded into the curriculum from 0–18 so that practitioners see communication as a key skill starting from birth, lasting right through school. Language should be made explicit across initial teacher training and the

111 Also referred to commonly as 'persistent speech, language and communication difficulties'. Communication Trust, *Communication difficulties – Facts and Stats*, [accessed via: www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/2612/communication_difficulties_-_facts_and_stats.pdf (17/08/14)] p3

112 Ibid

113 Hart B and Risley T R, *The Social World of Children Learning to Talk*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes, 1999

114 Communication Trust, *Communication difficulties – Facts and Stats*, p2 [accessed via: www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/2612/communication_difficulties_-_facts_and_stats.pdf (17/08/14)]

115 Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, *Better Communication: Shaping speech, language and communication services for children and young people*, London: Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2012, p9

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

ongoing professional development teachers receive. Staff must be trained (Level 3 as a minimum) and communication should be a central component of that training.

To ensure problems are identified and addressed early on, there should be a policy for early identification of communication needs across all phases of children who are struggling, with planned evidenced and targeted interventions in place to support catch up. Those that do not reach the levels expected at the EYFSP should be given access to a targeted communication intervention. In areas of high SLCN, there should be an intensive pre-school programme focussed on the various areas of language development, such as speech sound development, social interaction and listening. The Communication Trust's what works database gives multiple examples of effective, evidence-based interventions.

Case study of a successful communication intervention – Early Words Together¹¹⁷

The National Literacy Trust's Early Words Together programme supports early years settings and parents to help children with communication needs. Activities include:

- Raising parent's confidence in Early Home Learning, promoting skills & activities on early communication, mark-making and sharing books;
- A structured programme to help identify, refer and support targeted, hard to engage families and those with communication difficulties by Early Year's services, Education or Health;
- Providing opportunities for parental engagement, adult skills development and structured volunteering, supporting steps into work.

One parent involved in the programme said that:

'It has made a lot of difference because I now have a better understanding of how to support my child at home – I can be like his teacher! It has made a huge difference because I have learnt new skills. It has helped my child to understand new things.'

Up to March 2015 the programme will operate in partnership with 12 local authorities, and has now enabled:

- 120 early year's settings to empower 905 hard to reach families, with skills and confidence in early home learning;
- 618 community volunteers trained to support families to participate in a series of six week Early Words Together sessions;
- 4,256 free books delivered for families.

'Research has shown that early intervention during a child's early years is the critical time for children's development. The earlier parents become involved in their children's learning, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects. Early Words Together contributes to a child's school readiness and strengthens the home learning environment by introducing children to books and libraries, sharing easy ideas and activities to develop early language and communication and helping parents to recognise the influence they can have on their children's literacy development.'

Sue Denning, National Literacy Trust's Early Words Together Programme Manager, in evidence to the CSJ

¹¹⁷ Case study sent in evidence to the CSJ, by the National Literacy Trust

'Speech and language are crucial skills which underpin all aspects of children's development. Early identification of difficulties in this area is crucial and once identified timely targeted support is essential. The most effective way to support communication development is through targeted evidence-based practice- this may be evidence gathered locally on what works or from a National source such as the Communication Trust "what works" data base.'

Janet Cooper, Programme Manager at Stoke Speaks Out

It is also important to ensure language and communication is supported once children start school. Therefore there should be a check carried out at age six, undertaken as part of Key Stage 1 on communication and language – with support in place for those children identified as at risk of falling behind.¹¹⁸

Recommendation: Embed communication skills through the curriculum from 0–18. Language should be measured across the curriculum and assessment and accountability frameworks in the early years and early primary. Those that do not reach the levels expected at the EYFSP should be given access to a targeted language intervention.

Recommendation: There should also be a check carried out at age six, undertaken as part of Key Stage 1 on communication and language. Rather than a universal check this should form part of a policy for early identification across all phases of children who are struggling – with planned evidenced and targeted interventions in place to support catch up.

Recommendation: Language should be made explicit across initial teacher training and continued professional development – and built into pedagogy.

Recommendation: Parents should all be given information on 'developmental milestones on communication' as part of transition plans into school. Parents should continue to be given information on their child's communication development throughout school.

¹¹⁸ The check would be there to ensure that those with language problems were identified, and would not necessarily represent a formal, universal testing programme.

chapter two

Supporting the most disadvantaged children

The Coalition Government has introduced a series of measures designed to improve the educational outcomes of the most disadvantaged children. Most notably, this includes the Pupil Premium and new accountability measures which mean schools must show how far they are closing attainment gaps between rich and poor. Despite this, there is more still to be done.

Supporting these children is a moral imperative. Failing them not only harms their individual outcomes, but deprives the country of an invaluable resource. We therefore have a duty to ensure all children have access to aspirational education. A child's background should never shape their outcomes, and we must offer them the support they deserve to fulfil their potential. In this section we look at how some particularly disadvantaged groups can be further helped.

Free School Meals and the Pupil Premium

A major reform of the Coalition Government has been the introduction of a Pupil Premium of £1,300 (primary) and £935 (secondary) for all children eligible for free school meals (FSM) to help close the attainment gap between the poorest pupils and their peers.¹¹⁹ Children eligible for FSM routinely perform less well at school than those who are not: last year, 38 per cent of pupils eligible for FSM achieved five good GCSEs including English and maths compared to the national average of 61 per cent.¹²⁰

The CSJ strongly supports the principles behind the Pupil Premium. Whilst we recognise the benefits of giving disadvantaged children a healthy meal, our discussion here focusses on the use of FSM as the mechanism for allocating the Pupil Premium. We also recognise that it was important for the Government to establish it swiftly and that using FSM provided a simple

¹¹⁹ Written statement to Parliament by Minister of State for Schools, Rt Hon David Laws MP, Pupil premium funding, 12 December 2013 (six year eligibility)

¹²⁰ Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014, See for example p7, 8

means of allocating additional funding directly to schools. However, the end of the Parliament is an appropriate time to reassess the way in which the policy has been implemented, firstly because it has now been running for a number of years, and secondly because of the roll out of Universal Credit. This latter issue makes reform essential because it replaces many of the benefits that currently determine eligibility for FSM.

At present a child's eligibility depends on whether their parents are in receipt of:

- Income Support;
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance;
- An income-related employment and support allowance;
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit;
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs) that does not exceed £16,190.

All these children attract the Pupil Premium as do:

- Children who are looked after;
- The children of Armed Forces personnel;
- Any child who has been eligible for free school meals in the past six years.

The CSJ has long argued that government should focus on addressing the root causes of disadvantage.¹²¹ Consequently, we think there is a case for attaching Pupil Premium funding to some of the specific issues which affect a child's home and learning environments, rather than the benefits which their parents claim. Similarly, a more refined system would weight the Pupil Premium based on the severity of an individual child's needs rather than giving the same amount for each child.

We acknowledge that reframing the eligibility criteria for the Pupil Premium will be a complex undertaking, but we would strongly recommend that the Government consider the following criteria as part of a review, including how each of these factors should be weighted so that the most disadvantaged children are offered most support:

- Parental education;
- Family breakdown;
- Long-term unemployment;
- Parental addiction;
- Parental mental health;
- Whether the child is a young carer;
- Whether the child is a child in need;
- Whether the child is looked after.

¹²¹ See for example: Centre for Social Justice, *Rethinking Child Poverty*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2012

Improving stability for the most vulnerable pupils

'I know that great heads and great schools in the most challenging areas would be able to reach these most disadvantaged children if we had the facility to provide boarding arrangements ... This may seem an expensive option, but the long-term cost to our country in the criminal justice system and welfare system is far greater than the cost of such provision – hence there are pragmatic reasons for government to do this as well as the moral imperative.'

Ros McMullen, CEO LEAF Academy Trust

There are some children whose home lives are so chaotic that the standard school day is not enough to offset the other disadvantages they face. As effective as some schools are, they struggle to overcome the serious challenges at home which can limit the progress made by teachers and staff.

'These youngsters weren't recognised by social services and fell through that gap ... These are the children good headteachers wish they could take home with them to offer stability. We wanted to recreate the so called "normal family", whilst also offering extremely high standards of education.'

Lynn Gadd, former Principal of The Harefield Academy (boarding school)

As an indication of the sort of challenges these young people face, looked after children who have often suffered the most severe disruption in their home lives, tend to suffer from low attainment. Last year only 15 per cent of looked after children achieved five good GCSEs including English and maths, compared to 58 per cent of non-looked after children.¹²²

Evidence suggests boarding school can help stabilise the lives of some disadvantaged children who, without their support, might otherwise have gone into care.¹²³ Boarding can offer round-the-clock attention and allow their parents the space they need to address some of the problems they are facing. Similarly, for children already in care, boarding can help share care with foster parents – offering the carers some support and the child additional stability.

'My family is a bit messy. I am the eldest child and it was my job to make sure the nappies were changed, that the house was tidy and the boys (and sometimes mum) were fed ... At first I found living in boarding difficult because I didn't have anyone to look after, there were adults here to do that ... Being away from home has meant I have a better relationship with my family – we're on the right track now ... I have my own routine here – it makes me feel much more secure ... As a result of this my attendance and grades have improved and I've been able to think about my future. I am focussed on getting my GCSE's and pursuing my dream of becoming a pastry chef. My sponsors here have given me that chance to prove to myself that I can change – I can do it ...'

Pupil at the Harefield Academy

¹²² Department for Education, *Outcomes for Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England, as at 31 March 2013*, London: Department for Education, 2013, p1

¹²³ RNCf, *Research*, [accessed via: www.rncf.org.uk/research.php (17/08/14)]

Educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in these settings are often very strong. One study found that 85 per cent of vulnerable children were assessed as being at or above the average of their peers on all social and educational criteria within three years of starting at boarding school.¹²⁴ Consequently, whilst boarding will not be appropriate for all children, this is a reform that has huge potential to improve the life chances of some of our most vulnerable children.

The Boarding Pathfinder Project

The previous Government established a Boarding Pathfinder Project that aimed to increase dramatically the number of young people placed in residential schools.¹²⁵

The project was led by Lord Adonis and worked with 12 local authorities, more than 70 state-maintained and independent boarding schools, the Boarding Schools' Association, the State Boarding Schools' Association, the Frank Buttle Trust, Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation and the Joint Educational Trust.

However, at a cost of nearly £400,000 the project was far from successful: over its two-year evaluation period only 17 young people started at a boarding school, and only 11 were still in place at its end.¹²⁶

Lord Adonis himself admitted he had been disappointed with the results, saying: 'I didn't think we did nearly enough ... We know how it can be done. We just need to make it happen.'¹²⁷

A review by the Thomas Coram Research Unit found that a major barrier to take up had been that many social care professionals who made the decision about whether to refer young people were biased against boarding schools, considering them only appropriate for privileged children.¹²⁸

Despite their strengths, there are only 36 state boarding schools in the country, offering around 5,000 places.¹²⁹ Heads have told the CSJ that if the funding was available they would like to offer boarding places at their schools:

'We sometimes despair that there isn't suitable provision in Leeds for some of our most vulnerable students. State boarding provision may seem an expensive investment but in the long term it will be cost effective for generations to come. It would provide an opportunity for joined up thinking with teachers youth workers, social workers employed to work together to support needs. Whilst students are returning to dysfunctional families all the good work of different agencies is being undermined. The proposal for boarding provision in Leeds is long overdue and has my full support.'

Mrs Eileen McCarthy, Principal of the Co-operative Academy of Leeds

124 RNCf, *Research*, [accessed via: www.mcf.org.uk/research.php (17/08/14)]

125 Department for children, schools and families, *Boarding provision for vulnerable children – pathfinder*, London: Department for children, schools and families, 2007

126 Hansard, *Written Answers*, 1 Apr 2008

127 *The Independent*, *Pupils from broken homes to be sent to top boarding schools*, 21 June 2012

128 Maxwell C et al, *Boarding School Provision For Vulnerable Children: Pathfinder Evaluation*, Research Report RR070, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009

129 Montrose42, *Boarding schools can help social mobility*, [accessed via: <http://montrose42.wordpress.com/2012/11/20/lord-adonis-says-state-boarding-schools-can-aid-social-mobility/> (21/08/14)]

'Quite often, I find that the provision which is made for vulnerable children who need intensive, 'wrap-around' support through social services, CAMHS and other external services is not fit for purpose or of high enough quality. I have often felt that boarding places attached to my school for vulnerable pupils, where teachers and support staff know the children well and the support they need and can co-ordinate service provision, would be a far more effective use of public money which is otherwise squandered on separate services where no one is prepared to take overall responsibility for a child's care and well-being.'

Dr Vanessa Ogden, Headteacher of Mulberry School for Girls

There is currently little clear information on the approximate number of disadvantaged pupils who would benefit from boarding. We do know however that there are almost 70,000 children in care and 378,600 children in need.¹³⁰ Whilst these schools will not be the answer for many of these children, it should be seen more widely as both an alternative, and as a form of prevention for the most vulnerable. To achieve a healthy social mix, it is essential that the most disadvantaged only should form part of a school's intake and it is essential that these schools are not turned into 'quasi-children's homes'. Likewise, it must be emphasised that this is not a solution for the majority, and a careful matching-process is essential to ensure that placements are in the best interests of each individual child.

To improve clarity and inform an effective strategy, we call on Government to commission a review into the number of disadvantaged children that would benefit from attending a state boarding school and the number of additional places needed to ensure that every child who would benefit is able to access a (funded) place. Following this there needs to be a commitment to expanding the availability of places – with funded, year-on-year increases.

An obvious means of expansion is through the Free Schools programme. Free School applicants who are able and willing to offer boarding places should be supported to do so. Free Schools already come with investment from the Department for Education, with assigned building space; therefore it is right that those schools that are suitable and able to offer boarding are given priority. Excellent schools with challenging intakes should also be given the backing to start offering boarding places.



The CSJ has learnt that a lack of capital funding is preventing greater expansion – stopping existing boarding schools expanding and preventing schools from beginning to offer provision.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Department for Education, *Characteristics of children in need in England, 2012–13*, London: Department for Education, 2013, p2; In the year ending 31 March 2013, a total of 68,110 children were looked after by local authorities in England, a rate of 60 per 10,000 children under 18 years; Department for Education, *Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2013*, London: Department for Education, 2013

¹³¹ Existing academies can bid for the academies maintenance fund if they wish to extend provision; although this is limited as funding is not targeted at boarding. Schools can approach their local authority for funding but again, access is limited as funding tends to be prioritised on basic needs, such as funding school places.

We urge government to explore the possibility of looking for private sponsorship for places for vulnerable children. The support and sponsorship of schools by wealthy philanthropists was critical in the early days of the academies programme. The Department for Education should therefore consider a scheme where financial backing from philanthropists is matched by government funding, in order to facilitate an expansion of places for the most vulnerable children.

In addition to expanding provision, the children who stand to gain the most must be able to access those places. Each place typically costs £10,000–12,000 per year per child, covering the cost of the boarding, yet it costs around £40,000 to put a child in care for a year.¹³² Heads with boarding provision told the CSJ that whilst they would like to take more of these children, not enough children are being referred to them, and local authorities can be prejudiced towards boarding schools, misguidedly assuming it 'isn't for these kids'.

'Looked after Children have the funding attached and so it can be simpler to get funding for these children from local authorities. But if they're on the edge of care, it's discretionary so local authorities don't want to fund it, they don't think ahead enough.'

Paul Spencer Ellis, headmaster of the Royal Alexandra and Albert school, in evidence to the CSJ

Good practice: The Norfolk Assisted Boarding Partnership (NABP)

'For the right children, this option can offer a good all round education in an environment that is both nurturing and aspirational ... Children enjoy the stability, boundaries and routine of boarding school and also ensure the child can remain part of their family unit enjoying time together at weekends and school holidays.'

Carey Cake, Service Development Manager (Alternatives to Care), Norfolk, in evidence to the CSJ

Some local authorities and councils are taking a proactive step in recognising that by investing early, long-term outcomes are improved. NABP supports the Norfolk's Edge of Care strategy and Carey Cake told the CSJ:

'Boarding school is used as a credible alternative to care ensuring that the only children who come into care are the ones who really need to.'

Norfolk council works with key bodies in the sector, including the RNCF and Buttle Trust, who make a financial contribution for some of the placements. They also use funding from Designated School Grant and Revenue Support Grant (Children Services budget), to support the programme. NBAP has been responsible for 31 placements over the past few years and the outcomes have been good. Every placement is carefully assessed to make sure it is in the best interests of the child and family – whose involvement is critical in the decision making process.

'There's money in the system to fund state boarding places via local authorities – given the will. If we could get beyond reactive responses to crisis situations and move to long-term thinking, collaboration and prevention, the situation would improve enormously for some young people.'

Honor Wilson-Fletcher, Chief Executive of the Aldridge Foundation

¹³² House of Commons Library, *Children in Care in England: Statistics*, 2014 (the average cost of care per year in 2013/14 was £36,524)

Government must therefore encourage local authorities to make greater use of state boarding schools as a form of early intervention, particularly by those that are leading the way. However, we cannot rely on local authorities alone.

'The problem of accommodating disadvantaged children who could benefit hugely from state boarding places is not [just] one of supply, it's one of demand. The children might need it, the government might want them to have it, but with a couple of honourable exceptions the social workers and local authority people responsible for such children do not come near the schools.'

Hilary Moriarty, National Director, Boarding Schools' Association in evidence to the CSJ

The CSJ recommends that parents whose children are 'children in need' should also be able to self-refer their children for a place at a state boarding school.¹³³ Likewise, long-term foster carers should also be allowed to refer their foster children for boarding school, rather than only leaving the referral process to local authorities and social workers.

Recommendation: Government to commission a review into the number of disadvantaged children that would benefit from attending a state boarding school; the number of additional places needed and an evaluation of the socio-economic profile of current intakes. Following this they should establish a plan for expanding the availability of places – with funded, year on year increases. The aim should be to have a funded place available for every child that would benefit, alongside the introduction of minimum expectations of the numbers of disadvantaged pupils all state boarding schools should have in their intakes. There should also be a clearer metric established for those children deemed to be at the 'edge of care', potentially using the 'children in need' criteria as a basis.

Recommendation: Government should consider a scheme where financial backing from philanthropists is matched by Government funding, in order to facilitate an expansion of places for the most vulnerable children. This would build on the success of working with philanthropists as was done in the early stages of the academies programme.

Recommendation: Applications for Free Schools with boarding provision should be prioritised in determining local need and demand.

Recommendation: The Government to actively encourage all local authorities to make greater use of state boarding schools as a form of early intervention. Both parents whose children are 'children in need', and long-term foster carers should be allowed to refer their (foster) children for boarding school.

¹³³ Local authorities have a list of children representing a 'child in need' who are not in care, but who have been identified as having needs that warrant attention.

More Free Schools serving disadvantaged pupils

The Academies Act 2010 enabled an expansion in academies through introducing the Free Schools Programme. 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.¹³⁴ They can be established by a wide range of proposers including charities, universities, parent groups, businesses, educational groups and teachers. 174 Free Schools have already been set up.¹³⁵ The CSJ strongly supports the principles behind the programme, having recommended the initiative in our 2007 paper, *Breakthrough Britain: Educational Failure*.¹³⁶ The early signs are very positive. Despite being a fairly new initiative, three-quarters of the first 24 Free Schools were rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.¹³⁷

The CSJ is particularly interested in the opportunity that the programme creates for community-based poverty-fighting charities to open schools in areas of great need.

'Charities that set up Free Schools tend to put close links to the community at the heart of what they do and, whether it's involving parents in learning or using sport to motivate excluded young people a core part of their vision is often also that they are a resource for the whole community... Anecdotally, they are also particularly effective at building links with other community organisations and businesses to offer their students opportunities for work experience and volunteering.'

Natalie Evans, Director, New Schools Network, in evidence to the CSJ

However the CSJ had hoped that more charities would come forward to set-up Free Schools in disadvantaged areas across the country given that many focus on the most disadvantaged



children in society. At present a surprisingly small proportion of Free Schools are set up by charities. Whilst it is difficult to tightly define 'charity-run Free Schools' (given proposer groups generally have a range of individuals and organisations involved), the New Schools Network told the CSJ that only about ten per cent of the 330 schools open or approved Free Schools have been proposed by charities of this sort.

There are various reasons why this may be the case. 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, given the risks failure may pose to their reputation and future fundraising.

¹³⁴ Department for Education, *Free Schools* [accessed via: www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools (15/08/13)]

¹³⁵ Department for Education, *Free schools: successful applications and open schools – 2014*, [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-successful-applications-and-open-schools-2014 (18/08/14)]

¹³⁶ Centre for Social Justice, *Breakthrough Britain Ending the costs of social breakdown Volume 3: Educational Failure*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2007

¹³⁷ Department for Education, Press release, *Three-quarters of free schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted at first inspection*, 1 August 2013, [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/news/three-quarters-of-free-schools-rated-good-or-outstanding-by-ofsted-at-first-inspection (12/08/14)]

The CSJ has also been told that the application process can be a barrier for some:

'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 ...'

Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski DBE

It is important that local charities in disadvantaged areas are able to support the establishment of Free Schools, so that they may serve the most disadvantaged pupils. Evidence suggests that many of the existing Free Schools are not always serving pupils representative of the areas in which they are situated. Recent research shows that whilst, positively, Free Schools are opening in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, they are taking on fewer poor children than other local schools – only 17.5 per cent of secondary pupils were entitled to FSM and 13.5 per cent of primary pupils – compared to averages of 22 per cent and 18 per cent in the neighbourhoods where they have been established. Children joining Free Schools also tend to have higher prior attainment levels.¹³⁸

The New Schools Network told the CSJ that many successful proposals are the product of partnerships between charities and other groups including local parents, businesses and existing schools.¹³⁹ Therefore, in order to enable more of the best local charities to set up Free Schools, more charities should consider whether partnering with an existing school or educational organisation would put them in a stronger position to successfully set up a new school.

Similarly we have been told that one of the biggest issues that charities face in trying to set up a Free School is ensuring they have a robust governance structure in place. Charities cannot just set up a school under their existing structure. Because of the way that the academy trust must operate, there often needs to be a degree of separation between the proposer charity and the school. Those tasked with supporting these processes should take a more active role in supporting charities interested in setting up Free Schools.

Recommendation: The Department for Education, as well as membership or trade organisations working across the charitable sector should take a more active role in brokering relationships between individual charities interested in setting up a school and people or organisations with educational expertise.

¹³⁸ Institute of Education, *Free schools opening in poor neighbourhoods but not reaching the poorest children*, [accessed via: www.ioe.ac.uk/newsEvents/103350.html (16/08/14)]

¹³⁹ The New Schools Network, in evidence to the CSJ

chapter three

Improving schools, teaching and leadership

Over the past two decades, strong improvements in the quality of leadership and teaching have taken place in many English schools. However, there are still too many coasting schools and too many lagging primaries which are in urgent need of improvement.

Three per cent of all schools are still Inadequate, and 18 per cent 'Require Improvement'.¹⁴⁰ We must now increase our ambitions for those schools serving the poorest children and the most disadvantaged communities.

This chapter makes recommendations on how to ensure more effective brokerage takes place between schools, so that across the country, underperforming schools are able to connect with examples of good practice. In order to improve schools, we also look at ways of improving how we support teachers, headteachers and governing boards into being as effective as possible.

Improving learning between schools

Whilst there have been improvements, there are still too many underperforming schools in England. At secondary level last year, 154 were below the floor standard¹⁴¹ and the number of schools below the primary school floor standard last year was 767 – six per cent of all state-funded mainstream schools.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Extracted from <http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk/>

¹⁴¹ This applies to schools with at least 11 pupils at the end of key stage 4. State-funded mainstream schools are expected to have: at least 40 per cent of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grade A* to C including English and mathematics GCSEs or iGCSEs; not be below the median school score for the percentage of pupils making expected progress between key Stage 2 and key Stage 4 in English and in maths. See p3; Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent results in England 2012/13*, London: Department for Education, 2014, p3

¹⁴² Department for Education, *National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England, 2013 (revised)*, London: Department for Education, 2013, p2

The current emphasis is on a system where schools are expected to drive their own improvement. To do this, they are encouraged to collaborate with one another through joining, for example, multi-academy trusts (MATs), Federations and Teaching School Alliances.¹⁴³ However not all schools are collaborating in effective partnerships and there is an urgent need for better brokerage so that weaker schools can access the support they need.

This important role cannot be left to local authorities, given that for too long, many have been unable to lead the progress needed. This is evident through whole areas where there is year-on-year poor performance, such as in Blackpool, the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth.¹⁴⁴ Last year, just 44 per cent of children in Knowsley achieved five good GCSEs including English and maths, compared to the national average of 61 per cent.¹⁴⁵ Jon Coles, Chief Executive at United Learning and former Director General for Schools and Education Standards, told the CSJ that:

'Local authorities were not originally set up to do school improvement – and successive governments over 20 years have curtailed their ability to intervene in schools, except in the very weakest. Yet across the country, children on free school meals are often a minority making poor progress in a school which may otherwise be performing reasonably well. This represents one of the biggest problems in the system – but hardly ever triggers dramatic action or intervention.'

A new system for improving poor schools

Our vision is for a system that brokers support across all schools in the country, helping to share good practice across schools and chains – particularly between successful schools and schools that are struggling. Whilst many excellent schools, charities and initiatives do exist – there is no single body responsible for linking them together. The current system is extremely diverse and becoming more so. At the time of Ofsted's annual report on schools, there were just under 3,500 academies and 413 academy chains in the system.¹⁴⁶ Therefore the need for brokerage has never been greater.

'It's important that the existing and new regional structures for school improvement are able to facilitate collaboration between academies and maintained schools. If Regional Schools Commissioners and headteachers boards worked with maintained schools as well as academies then that could be one way to increase collaboration between schools. It's really important to find the best practice in both academies and maintained schools and to share it.'

Ashley Harrold, Deputy Head, Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College, in evidence to the CSJ

¹⁴³ Hill, R, *Achieving more together: adding value through partnership*, A presentation for primary school leaders in Essex, 2013, p9 [accessed via: www.essex.gov.uk/Business-Partners/Primary-schools-excellence/Documents/Conference_presentation_from_Robert_Hill.pdf (16/08/14)]

¹⁴⁴ Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014, see table 3, see also results over previous years

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁶ Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Schools, 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p22 (at the time of Ofsted's publication)

From September 2014, eight Regional Schools Commissioners will be given responsibility for important decisions about the academies in their area, including the creation of new academies, monitoring performance and improving underperforming academies, and ensuring there is a strong supply of excellent sponsors to work with underperforming schools in the region.¹⁴⁷



However many schools will not come under their remit, including the remaining local authority-maintained schools.¹⁴⁸

'Extending the remit of Regional Schools Commissioners is important because they should have oversight of all schools, including weaker schools. This ensures they have a preventative role, supporting schools before they get into a difficult position.'

Dame Sue John, headteacher, Lampton School, in evidence to the CSJ

The CSJ therefore recommends that the remit and role of Commissioners is extended to cover all types of school – academies and non-academies, as well as both stronger and weaker schools. New Regional Schools Commissioner Boards could act as a supportive layer between the Department for Education and all schools in that region. They would work with chains but also individual schools which may not be receiving adequate support from their chain.

Whilst all schools would be within their remit, Boards would target support on underperforming and coasting schools in disadvantaged areas. This reflects those schools delivering sub-standard education, and where a culture of complacency blocks any ambition for continuous improvement. By contrast, a great school is one which fosters a lifelong love of learning, where children gain not just good qualifications, but the skills they need to develop as members of society.

Regional Schools Commissioner Boards would connect weaker schools with stronger schools in their area. To encourage schools to learn from each other, it will be essential to partner schools facing similar challenges. Commissioners would therefore work with their colleagues in other regions to identify schools facing similar challenges, such as being in a coastal town or having high levels of transience.

In addition to brokering between schools, Commissioners would be able to offer direct support through, for example, the strategic deployment of National Leaders of Education and National Leaders of Governance (initiatives which are outlined in this chapter).

¹⁴⁷ Department for Education, *Outstanding academy headteachers flock to join headteacher boards* [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/news/regional-schools-commissioners-to-oversee-academies (17/08/14)]

¹⁴⁸ Department for Education, *Regional schools commissioners to oversee academies*, [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/news/regional-schools-commissioners-to-oversee-academies (17/08/14)]

It is important that support is targeted on those schools that need it most, helping them to improve before failure – and not as a response to it. To identify those schools that need support, Regional Schools Commissioner Boards would use a combination of school data, Ofsted inspections, or any evidence otherwise received. This could come through feedback from parents and teachers, or in more extreme cases, through whistle-blowers. Schools would not be obliged to engage with the Boards, but, if a school declined an offer and then failed to improve independently this may be taken into account in future Ofsted inspections. Commissioners could also alert the Department for Education or Ofsted if they identified any causes for concern in-between inspections.

Recommendation: To help poor schools improve and enable greater collaboration, the remit of Regional Schools Commissioner Boards should be extended so that they are charged with supporting school improvement and brokering support across all schools.

Improving the attainment of disadvantaged white children

One of the functions that Regional Schools Commissioner Boards could perform would be to show poorly performing schools facing particular challenges how those challenges have been overcome elsewhere. This would be particularly helpful in assisting schools dealing with issues of social disadvantage.

In our last report, *Requires Improvement*, we drew attention to the shocking underachievement of white British children on FSM. These children remain the lowest attaining group in the country and too often are left behind. Last year, just 28 per cent of white British boys eligible for FSM achieved five good GCSEs including English and maths – less than half than those white British boys not on FSM.¹⁴⁹

The CSJ has spoken to some of the schools who are bucking the trend. In 2012/13 there were 33 schools which had substantial numbers of disadvantaged white British pupils, where the achievements of this group exceeded the national average. These schools are inspirational examples of where an excellent school allows a child to overcome all the other disadvantages they may face.¹⁵⁰

The CSJ spoke to Trinity High in Redditch, which last year, was the most improved school in England. The school has a challenging intake, with a high proportion of white British children from low income families. Assistant Head Tim Thomas told the CSJ that it all starts from raising expectations:

'We focus on being positive and aspirational. We make sure they have aspirations beyond their immediate horizons and as our results got better each year, the younger students saw what was possible. We spoke to the students all the time so they felt involved in their own progress.'

We also heard from George McMillan from the Harris Academy Greenwich, which was recently graded Outstanding in every category – following being placed in Special Measures – one of the fastest turnarounds in English history:

149 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014,
150 Data sent to the CSJ by the Department for Education

'There's a direct correlation between attendance and grades. So we have our own attendance team: we greet all the kids at the gate every day and check off our PA list, sort out uniform and behaviour issues before they even present themselves. Communication amongst the team is excellent (all senior staff, pastoral and attendance team have walkie-talkies); phone calls home are made well before first period even starts – and then for those kids that still don't show up we send the minibus to get them! Plus we work with local police, social services and other agencies – whatever it takes. And it's got to be daily. It really works – too many schools let the naughty ones stay at home. We drag them in.'

One of the most important roles of Regional Schools Commissioner Boards will be to connect these inspirational schools with schools struggling against similar challenges, so that they too can share this success.

Encouraging collaboration across schools

'Some schools have been left out of trusts and academies. I would guess around 10–15 per cent of secondaries have been left out of any sort of collaboration. It's even worse in the primary sector – around 40 per cent.'

Dame Sue John, headteacher, Lampton School, in evidence to the CSJ

There must be greater incentives for the best schools to support others, without letting their own standards slip. Originally, good schools were only meant to be able to convert to academy status if they demonstrated that they were supporting improvements in other schools. However, this commitment has never been fully enforced.¹⁵¹

The creation of a fifth category with Ofsted inspection grades – 'Exceptional' – could be used to incentivise school-to-school support. Only Outstanding schools that had given intensive and extensive support to other struggling schools would be eligible for Exceptional status. In order to retain the attraction of the higher grade, it would be useful to limit the number of schools who could have it to, perhaps, five per cent of the total number of schools.

'I support a fifth category. I have long been an advocate of partnerships to bring about school improvement and CPD in particular ... it will never get anywhere until there are some carrots and sticks to promote it ... money for schools dependent on partnerships and Ofsted criteria are the obvious carrots and sticks and I am in favour of both.'

Professor Sir Tim Brighouse, former chief commissioner for schools in evidence to the CSJ

'I really agree with a fifth category for Ofsted. I think it will dramatically improve collaboration.'

Dame Sally Coates, Head of Burlington Danes in evidence to the CSJ

Recommendation: The creation of a fifth category within Ofsted inspection grades – 'Exceptional' – could be used to incentivise school-to-school support.

¹⁵¹ The RSA, The Report of the Academies Commission, *Unleashing greatness. Getting the best from an academised system*, London: The RSA, 2013

Currently schools assessed as Requiring Improvement are usually expected to devise that improvement themselves. This reform would also drive up expectations in the system that this grade would actually lead to support from the Regional Schools Commissioner Board and Exceptional schools.

How each school would contribute to and benefit from working together:

- Outstanding and Exceptional Schools (Grade 1):
 - These schools should be encouraged to support improvement across a range of schools, working with their Regional Schools Commissioner.
- Good Schools (Grade 2):
 - These schools should work with their Regional Schools Commissioners to support improvements across schools.
- Requires Improvement Schools (Grade 3):
 - These schools are expected to work with their Regional Schools Commissioners, who will help them to identify partners for school improvement. If they do not demonstrate significant improvement within a set time, as assessed by their Regional Schools Commissioner, there may be need for a structural change for these schools.
- Inadequate Schools (Grade 4):
 - There should be a structural change for these schools in how they operate, i.e. becoming a sponsored academy or if applicable, leaving their chain for a new MAT.

Improving standards in primary schools

Whilst it is important to continue to improve schools across the board, there is a particularly urgent need to improve standards in primary schools. This is essential because children who fall behind early on are less likely to catch-up, yet more than one in five primary schools is still rated less than Good.

Improving primary schools is essential if the Government wants to fulfil its admirable pledge to eliminate illiteracy and innumeracy.¹⁵² In 2013, about one in four 11-year-olds failed to reach the expected standard (level 4 or above) in reading, writing and mathematics.¹⁵³ In practice this means that about 75,000 pupils start secondary school behind in reading and about 80,000 behind in maths.¹⁵⁴ Sources from the Department for Education have floated that they may aim for a 95 per cent success rate at aged 11, on the grounds that, because of children with special

¹⁵² Speech by Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Michael Gove: an education system which works for every child, 1 April 2014

¹⁵³ Department for Education, *National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England, 2013 (revised)*, London: Department for Education, 2013, p2

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

needs, it is unrealistic to aim for 100 per cent.¹⁵⁵ By this standard the vast majority of primary schools in the country would be failing:¹⁵⁶

- Seven per cent of schools have 95 per cent of pupils achieving the expected level at age 11;
- 31 per cent of schools have 85 per cent of pupils achieving the expected level at age 11.

Poor literacy and numeracy is a major cause of educational failure at secondary school. For this reason there is an urgent need to help thousands of primary schools improve. The most obvious means of doing this is to further encourage the growth of chains and federations so that more schools can learn from those who are performing best.

MATs, Chains and Federations

Since 2010 all schools can now apply to become academies. Schools can convert on their own (if performing well), with the support of a sponsor, or as part of a group of schools i.e. an academy chain.¹⁵⁷ As of August, there were over 600 approved academy sponsors, and a total of over 4,000 academies.¹⁵⁸

Chains are partnerships of academies committed to supporting each other. Converting as part of a chain means schools can share staff and expertise, and make savings when buying goods and services. Although there are no conversion criteria for chains of schools, as part of the application it should be evidenced how the stronger schools in the chain will help the weaker schools to improve.¹⁵⁹

MATs represent several academies established under one funding agreement. The MAT decides on the allocation of funding for each individual academy, determining how that funding is used. The majority of academy chains (91 per cent) are MATs.¹⁶⁰ Additional funding is also available for MATs where most of the schools are primary.¹⁶¹

Federations are groups of at least two schools that have decided to collaborate, although the extent to which they collaborate will vary, with both 'harder' and 'softer' federations available. Important benefits of federations include the ability to share staff and to share a single governing body.¹⁶²

Being part of a chain or MAT is linked to faster rates of improvement,¹⁶³ as trusts and federations create opportunities for, for example, professional development, better succession

¹⁵⁵ As reported in: *The Times, Tory election pledge to ensure all children can read and write*, June 7 2014

¹⁵⁶ Data extracted from: Department for Education, *School performance tables* [accessed via: www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/ (25/08/14)]. We have used the achievement of Level 4 on the combined reading, writing and mathematics KS2 test as a proxy for being functionally literate and numerate.

¹⁵⁷ Department for Education, *Become an academy: information for schools* [accessed via: www.gov.uk/become-an-academy-information-for-schools (17/08/14)]

¹⁵⁸ Department for Education, *Academy sponsor contact list*, [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-sponsor-contact-list (18/08/14)]

¹⁵⁹ Department for Education, *Become an academy: information for schools*, [accessed via: www.gov.uk/become-an-academy-information-for-schools (18/08/14)]

¹⁶⁰ Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Schools, 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p22

¹⁶¹ Department for Education, *Become an academy: information for schools* [accessed via: www.gov.uk/become-an-academy-information-for-schools (17/08/14)]

¹⁶² School enterprise, *Safety in numbers*, [accessed via: www.schoolenterprise.com/strategic/legal/federation.html (17/08/14)]

¹⁶³ Evidence given to the CSJ

planning and economies of scale.¹⁶⁴ These benefits are especially great for primary schools, many of which are often too small to operate in isolation.

Collaboration is a very important part of the current school system, where schools are increasingly expected to work together. Getting schools to work together means weaker and stronger schools can both learn more about 'what works'. However in some cases this will not be enough to drive the improvements children in these schools desperately deserve. These schools need more substantial support in order to transform the education they offer.

Encouraging these schools to join effective chains and federations means they can access expertise from excellent schools in their group, benefit from economies of scale by sharing resources and have the opportunity to share effective governors. In the best chains, staff can also be deployed to whichever school in that chain needs help, meaning that strategic support is readily available.

'We know that schools improve faster and teachers perform better when they challenge and support each other through effective partnerships – particularly when those partnerships are led by executive heads or leaders. This is the pattern of schooling we should be incentivising and encouraging, particularly for primary schools. Every primary school should be part of a properly structured local cluster, federation, trust or academy chain that can deploy and share expertise across the group and enable teachers and leaders to work with and learn from each other. These partnerships should be the engine for improving the quality of teaching and learning in our schools...'

Robert Hill, Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Education and Professional Studies at King's College London

Given the benefits, more primary schools should be encouraged to join effective academy chains and trusts. However for many primary schools, the leap to becoming an academy can seem too great: only 11 per cent of the 16,788 primary schools are academies¹⁶⁵ compared to 54 per cent of all secondaries.¹⁶⁶ Sources have told the CSJ that schools joining federations often end up becoming academy chains as the way they function is so similar. Encouraging primary schools to join federations therefore offers these schools a stepping stone, and ensures they can partner together more effectively.



This should be incentivised through giving good primary schools £25,000 in seed funding when they join a Hard Federation. Currently, only academies joining together in a MAT receive the £25,000 on offer

164 Hill, R, *Achieving more together: adding value through partnership, A presentation for primary school leaders in Essex*, 2013, p17 [accessed via: www.essex.gov.uk/Business-Partners/Primary-schools-excellence/Documents/Conference_presentation_from_Robert_Hill.pdf (16/08/14)]

165 Department for Education, *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2014*, London: Department for Education, 2014

166 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Schools, 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p22 (54 per cent of secondary schools and 9 per cent of primary schools are now academies at the time of Ofsted's annual report on schools)

from the Government.¹⁶⁷ This is therefore an extension of what already happens when primary schools join a MAT and is the same amount that converting academies receive. This should be accompanied by clearer messaging on the benefits of federating. These primary schools would still have a relationship with their local authority but would be able to enjoy the benefits of working in close collaboration. Encouraging federation in this way will therefore incentivise collaboration between primary schools and simultaneously overcomes the resistance to MATs felt by some primaries.

Recommendation: Good primary schools should be incentivised to join Hard Federations through giving them the £25,000 in seed funding currently available to those converting as part of MATs.

Improving teaching and leadership

The quality of teaching is the most important school-based factor affecting pupils' education.¹⁶⁸ High quality teachers are especially beneficial for disadvantaged pupils: over the course of a year a good teacher can add 18 months of learning to a student from a disadvantaged background compared with six months for a poor teacher.¹⁶⁹

Leadership is also extremely important. Good leaders help attract good teachers and ensure those teachers are given effective professional development.¹⁷⁰ 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.¹⁷¹ Therefore if we want to help the most disadvantaged children, we must ensure they can expect ambitious teaching and aspirational leadership in their school.

Supporting teachers through professional development

Too many schools still have substandard teaching. Whilst, according to Ofsted, teaching has improved, a third of schools still have teaching rated less than Good.¹⁷²

Although initiatives to improve the quality of new teachers are positive, to drive up standards in the short term we must improve the quality of the existing workforce. Continued professional development (CPD) offers an important way of achieving this, by supporting teachers and inspiring them to inspire. Supporting teachers in this way not only makes them more effective teachers, it ensures they feel valued. A New Zealand study found that classes

167 Department for Education, *Academy funding: information for school leaders*, [accessed via: www.gov.uk/academy-funding-information-for-school-leaders (18/08/14)] – or the equivalent level of funding if this is reduced for converting academies

168 Department for Education, *The Importance of Teaching The Schools White Paper*, London: Department for Education, 2010, p9

169 Sutton Trust, *Improving the impact of teachers on pupil achievement in the UK – interim findings*, London: Sutton Trust, 2011, p2

170 Ofsted, *Twenty outstanding primary schools – Excelling against the odds*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2009, p20

171 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

172 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Schools, 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p12 [65 per cent of schools had teaching which was good or better; of schools inspected this year at the time of Ofsted's annual report]

where teachers had taken part in high quality professional development improved twice as fast as those in other classes.¹⁷³

Despite its importance CPD is often under-used and under-evaluated. Schools in England spend only 0.25 per cent of their budget on CPD – just £8 on average per student.¹⁷⁴

'Staff development is a hugely neglected aspect of school improvement. Ofsted does not reflect enough on this in their inspections.'

Professor Sir Tim Brighouse, former schools commissioner for London, in evidence to the CSJ

Currently, there is little UK evidence on the use and evaluation of CPD. The Department for Education should therefore urgently carry out an evaluation of CPD looking at uptake in schools, what activities spending goes on and how well it is evaluated. In the future, if a Royal College of Teaching is established, one of its core functions should be to support CPD, setting out what a teacher can expect over their career; extending from Initial Teacher Training (ITT) through to leadership.

In the meantime, as part of their role in brokering support, Regional Schools Commissioners should offer schools which are underperforming for teaching free support and training in how to access online research networks. This would be a simple means of showing schools how to use the existing evidence base available online through resources like the EEF toolkit and the Teacher Development Trust's CPD guide, which helpfully outline the interventions available, and research on their effectiveness. Teacher quality is the most important school factor shaping outcomes for disadvantaged children – and so it is absolutely essential that more schools are shown how they can use research to transform the quality of their teaching.

'The TDT is working for powerful professional development in every school and college, to help children succeed and teachers thrive. We welcome the CSJ's call for more government focus on this important area and fully agree that a professional body for teachers needs to help establish a more formal career pathway.'

David Weston, Chief Executive of the Teacher Development Trust

CPD should also be encouraged through greater collaboration. Whilst all schools are now expected to use performance-related pay, some chains have gone further by introducing contractual arrangements where staff are employed by the chain, rather than the school. This means they can be deployed where, and when they are needed.¹⁷⁵ In addition to getting quality where it is needed, it offers effective CPD for staff by creating opportunities for shadowing, promotion and succession planning. More chains should therefore set staff contracts with the academy chain, rather than the individual school.

173 See Teacher Development Trust, *Why focus on professional development?* [accessed via: [http://tdtrust.org/our-work-2/evidence/\(07/07/14\)](http://tdtrust.org/our-work-2/evidence/(07/07/14))]; 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

174 Teacher Development Trust, *Why focus on professional development?* [accessed via: [http://tdtrust.org/our-work-2/evidence/\(07/07/14\)](http://tdtrust.org/our-work-2/evidence/(07/07/14))]

175 Unlike maintained schools, academies are not bound by the School Teacher's Pay and Conditions Document and can therefore set their own pay and conditions. see for example London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, *Considering academy status*, p2 [accessed via: www.lbbd.gov.uk/Education/SchoolImprovementService/Documents/Considering_academy_status.pdf (17/08/14)]

'The assistant head (currently in a secondary school) wanted to explore his career development opportunities in primary phase. We had a vacancy in a primary school, so following discussion he asked to move for one term on a secondment basis. He made an excellent transition and now has the job full-time following a formal interview that was clearly informed by his previous performance in the role. We believe it is about helping staff develop their talent but most importantly, it's in the interests of the children that our staff are positioned to make the best use of their skills.'

Ian Cleland, Chief Executive of ATT in evidence to the CSJ

Recommendation: the Department for Education should commission an evaluation of CPD looking at uptake in schools, what activities spending goes on and how well it is evaluated.

Recommendation: Regional Schools Commissioners should ensure that schools which are underperforming for teaching are offered free support and training in how to access online research networks like the EEF toolkit and the Teacher Development Trust's CPD guide.

Recommendation: In the future development of a Royal College of Teaching, one of its core functions should be to support CPD and present a framework of what a teacher can expect in terms of CPD. Under this, teachers would also have a responsibility to update their CPD as part of this framework.

Supporting headteachers

Being a headteacher is a very challenging and demanding role. Large numbers of headteachers are taking early retirements: almost half of headteachers who reach 55 go on to take early retirement between the ages of 55 and 59.¹⁷⁶ There are also concerns that not enough good deputy heads now aspire to be headteachers. Furthermore, those deputy and assistant heads that do have aspirations to headship tend to prefer not to go to challenging schools.¹⁷⁷



Heads working in challenging schools which are Good and Outstanding, should be rewarded and incentivised to stay in the profession through entitlement to a sabbatical every five years, lasting for a maximum of seven weeks.¹⁷⁸ This sabbatical should be treated as a period of refreshment and opportunity for professional development. This would also build capacity in the system and improve succession planning by giving deputy heads the opportunity to gain experience in the head teacher's absence.

¹⁷⁶ National College for School Leadership, *Review of the school leadership landscape*, London: National College for School Leadership, 2012, for example p33

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Or approximately equivalent to half a term

A useful way of improving leadership is through the National Leaders of Education (NLE) programme. NLEs are outstanding headteachers deployed to support schools in challenging circumstances by sharing their expertise and experience with headteachers. Evidence suggests that schools supported by NLEs make faster gains in student outcomes than the national average.¹⁷⁹ Crucially, they have also been found to be particularly successful in raising the performance of primary school pupils: a study involving 43 primary schools found that following the injection of support (of which NLEs were a key element) supported schools increased the proportion of their pupils gaining level 4 for English and maths at Key Stage 2 by ten percentage points between 2006/07 and 2008/09.¹⁸⁰

Yet the spread of NLEs is not even. For example there were just three NLEs in Norfolk and two in Derbyshire at the end of 2012.¹⁸¹ This is worsened by the lack of strategic deployment given to NLEs:

'Often NLEs are told they have to look for schools where they should deploy themselves – effectively, to “shark” schools. This is not something I would be prepared to do. There is lots of expertise in the system but many NLEs are not being deployed effectively.'

Dr Vanessa Ogden in evidence to the CSJ

There are now over 800 NLEs with a target to designate 1,000 by 2015.¹⁸² This expansion demands a more strategic deployment across the country, and across primary and secondary sectors. As part of their mission to spread good practice, Regional Schools Commissioners should support more effective deployment of NLEs to schools where headteachers stand to gain the most from their experience.

Recommendation: Headteachers working in challenging schools rated Outstanding and Good should be rewarded, and incentivised to stay in the profession through entitlement to a sabbatical every five years, lasting for a maximum of seven weeks.

Recommendation: The Expansion of NLEs must be met with more strategic deployment across geographic areas, and across primary and secondary sectors. This should be supported by Regional Schools Commissioners. Funding given to NLEs must be protected against any funding cuts.

Improving governors and governance

If we want better schools, we need stronger governing boards. Good governance is vital to driving a school's success and the contribution their expertise makes to the school system is estimated to be worth £1bn per year.¹⁸³ The role of governors is to ensure clarity of

¹⁷⁹ Department for Education and the Isos Partnership, *The evolving education system in England: a 'temperature check'*, London: Isos Partnership, 2014, p17 (see Hill and Matthews 2010)

¹⁸⁰ National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, *Schools leading schools II: the growing impact of National Leaders of Education*, London: National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, 2010, p75

¹⁸¹ Ofsted, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p70

¹⁸² Department for Education, National leaders of education: a guide for potential applicants [accessed via: www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/docinfo?id=157129&filename=nle-fact-sheet-2.pdf] (18/08/14)

¹⁸³ BBC NEWS, School governors: Call to recruit more widely, 15 May 2014 [accessed via: www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-27405358] (17/08/14)]

vision, ethos and strategic direction; hold the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and oversee the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.¹⁸⁴

Despite their important role, too many schools have weak governing boards. Ofsted found that the 6,000 schools rated less than good usually have weaknesses in their leadership and governance.¹⁸⁵ A particular problem is that some schools struggle to fill vacancies. Although the actual level is disputed, around 11 per cent of governor posts are vacant.¹⁸⁶

The extension of chains and federations means new forms of governance are increasingly used. Encouraging more schools to join federations and MATs in the ways already outlined will help to address the shortage of good governors – because these structures enable schools to share the skilled governors we already have.

Given the enormous impact leadership has on school standards, the selection of a new headteacher is one of a governor's most important responsibilities. Yet most boards only recruit a head every five to seven years at most and so may have little experience of doing so. To overcome this potential skills gap, Regional Schools Commissioner Boards should offer schools a list of external experts to assist in the recruitment of a new headteacher, such as a member of an effective MAT or an NLE.

'Unless you're in a chain – the appointment of heads is left too much to chance. Governors make senseless choices. Someone that does it regularly should be involved.'

Professor Sir Tim Brighouse, in evidence to the CSJ

Supporting the chairs of governing boards would benefit the entire governing board, and enable them to support improvements in the school. National Leaders of Governance (NLGs) are effective chairs who use their skills and expertise to support chairs in other schools. There are nearly 300 NLGs in the country¹⁸⁷ that can provide up to ten free days of support to schools per year, after which a charge is negotiated with their school.¹⁸⁸

Regional Schools Commissioner Boards should undertake a governance health check in schools that are struggling – which would include coordinating for the Chair to receive support from a NLG, or pointing out effective training for the Chair.

The CSJ has also heard that Interim Executive Boards (IEB) are an effective and yet underutilised tool. These can be appointed to replace a governing body for a temporary period, for example, where a school has been put in Special Measures.¹⁸⁹ Evidence suggests

184 Department for Education, *Governors' handbook*, London: Department for Education, 2014, p6

185 Ofsted, Press Release, Chief inspector raises the stakes for school governance, 27 Feb 2013

186 House of Commons Education Committee, *The Role of School Governing Bodies, Volume I*, London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2013, p4

187 National College for Teaching and Leadership, *NCTL School to school support* (live data) [accessed via: http://apps.nationalcollege.org.uk/s2ssd_new/create_xls.cfm (17/08/14)]

188 National College for Teaching and Leadership, *Teaching schools and system leaders: who they are and what they do*, 25 March 2014 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/system-leaders-who-they-are-and-what-they-do (17/08/14)]

189 Gov.uk, *Schools causing concern – guidance for local authorities*, See guidance for example p2 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269116/scc_guidancefinal_4.pdf (16/08/14)]



IEBs effectively deliver rapid improvements in failing schools and HMI have referred to them as 'a model of good practice'.¹⁹⁰

IEBs were intended to be used only in exceptional circumstances and the procedure for approval can be quite lengthy; they can only be appointed subject to a request from the local authority and with the consent of the Secretary of State. Therefore despite a

good record of success relatively few have been set up.¹⁹¹ As many as 70 local authorities have never even issued a warning notice – the step taken towards having an IEB.¹⁹²

IEBs should be used much more widely and the decision to implement an IEB should be taken by the newly extended Regional Schools Commissioners where this is viewed as the appropriate action for an underperforming school.¹⁹³

Recommendation: In supporting the critical task of appointing a new headteacher; Regional Schools Commissioners should have a list of external experts who can be offered, but not forced, on governing boards preparing to select headteachers.

Recommendation: The Department for Education should carry out an evaluation of how well NLGs are working. Once areas of strength have been identified this scheme should be used more widely to support the chairs of governors. Regional Schools Commissioners should also undertake a governance health check in schools that are struggling.

Recommendation: Greater use should be made of IEBs and IEBs should be consistently paid. The decision to implement an IEB should be taken by the Regional Schools Commissioners, where this is the appropriate action for an underperforming school.

Improving the reach of Teaching Schools

*Teaching Schools are outstanding schools that work with others to provide high-quality training and development to new and experienced school staff. They are part of the government's plan to give schools a central role in raising standards by developing a self-improving and sustainable school-led system.*¹⁹⁴

190 National Education Trust, *Challenging the way we govern schools*, [accessed via: www.nationaleducationtrust.net/ShapingIdeasShapingLives070.php] (16/07/14)]

191 The Governor, *Challenging the way we govern schools*, p5 [accessed via: www.thegovernor.org.uk/freedownloads/ideasfordifferentformsofgovernance/Challenging%20the%20way%20we%20govern%20schools.pdf] (16/08/14)]

192 Montrose42, *Interim Executive Boards and failing schools-an intervention that is rarely used*, [accessed via: <http://montrose42.wordpress.com/2013/03/29/interim-executive-boards-and-failing-schools-an-intervention-rarely-used/>] (17/08/14)] Lord Nash, in evidence to the Education Select Committee

193 Currently, members may be paid where this is decided by the local authority or Secretary of State

194 Department for Education, *Teaching schools: a guide for potential applicants*, [accessed via: www.gov.uk/teaching-schools-a-guide-for-potential-applicants] (17/08/14)]

Teaching Schools were set up by the Coalition Government to drive collaboration between Outstanding schools and others. Teaching Schools provide high-quality training and development to staff in other schools and work across six key objectives:

1. Leading the development of a school-led initial teacher training system;
2. Leading on CPD;
3. Supporting succession planning and talent management;
4. Supporting other schools;
5. Designating and broker Specialist Leaders in Education;
6. Engaging in research and development activity.¹⁹⁵

Because Outstanding schools are not spread evenly across the country the 600 or so Teaching Schools that currently exist are not spread evenly either.¹⁹⁶ For example, despite having a concentration of coastal towns and underperforming schools, the huge distance between Ipswich and Middlesbrough is poorly served.¹⁹⁷ In the long term there is a need to drive up standards in all regions of the country (as discussed in Chapter 4), but in the short term there is a need for better brokerage between schools that are quite isolated from their nearest Teaching School. We therefore recommend that Regional Schools Commissioners ensure every school is far better-connected with their nearest Teaching School Alliance (TSA).

Senior civil servants have told the CSJ that TSAs are not expected to carry out all six of their stated objectives. However, currently, this is by no means clear and we have heard from some TSAs that they feel under pressure to do so. The Department for Education must therefore urgently publish clarification that they are not expected to carry out all six of their stated roles, underlining that there is flexibility for them to specialise. The Department should also publish clearer guidance on those particular objectives TSAs should aim to focus on, such as CPD and research, as civil servants have told us that these functions have not been taken up as effectively as the others.

Recommendation: The Department for Education must urgently publish clarification on the expected roles of Teaching Schools, including guidance on which functions more Teaching Schools should focus on, such as CPD.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶ National College for Teaching & Leadership, *Designated Teaching Schools*, [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/319519/teaching-schools-map.pdf (16/08/14)]

¹⁹⁷ Ibid; See also, Centre for Social Justice, *Turning the Tide: Social justice in five seaside towns*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013

chapter four

Spreading success around the country

Whilst there have been strong improvements in many schools, with more and more children attending schools which are Good or better, success has not been spread equally. Some areas and schools have struggled to attract the great headteachers and teachers they need. These areas are also often isolated from some of the initiatives currently driving the school improvement agenda, such as Teaching School Alliances (TSAs), National Leaders of Education (NLEs) and the best academy chains.

This chapter makes recommendations which will help to spread success to more parts of the country so that more disadvantaged children will have access to a high quality education. These recommendations will encourage more strategic deployment of staff, more headteachers to take on challenging schools and the best academy chains to sponsor schools in challenging areas.

Together these reforms amount to a National Improvement Programme which can ensure that no school or area gets left behind. This package of reforms will:

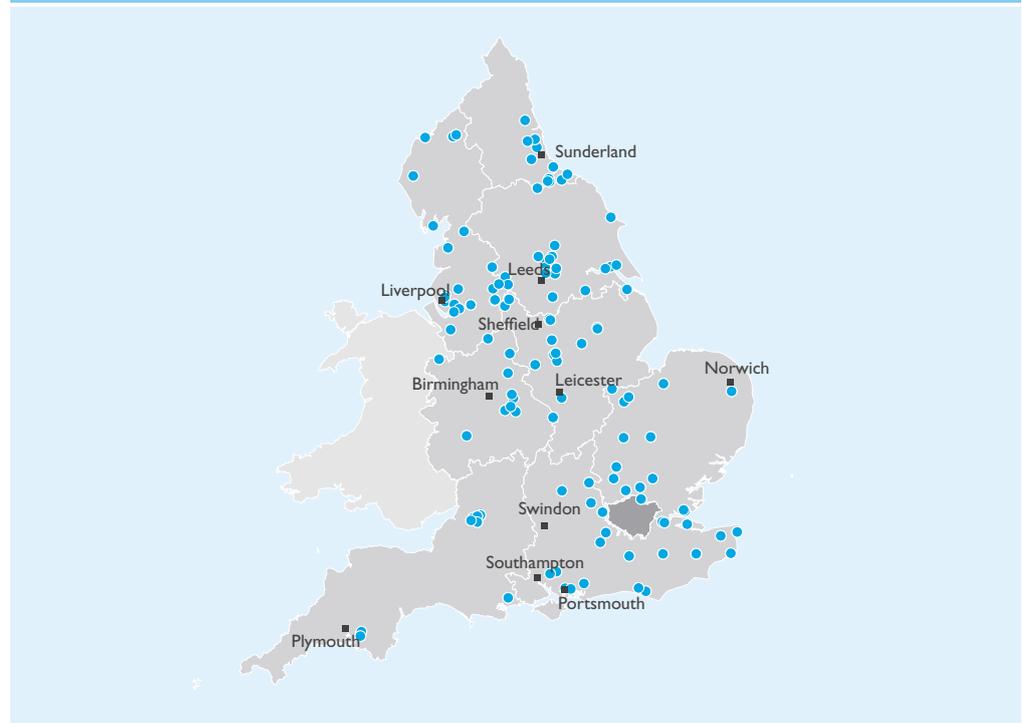
- Encourage the best academy chains and federations to start working in parts of the country they have previously ignored;
- Incentivise the headteachers who have experience of turning challenging schools around to move to schools facing particular difficulties;
- Establish a National Teacher Service programme to deploy high performing teachers to the schools that need them.

The uneven spread of success

Despite improvements overall, the quality of education varies enormously between schools and areas. A mere 14 per cent of pupils in the Isle of Wight attend a secondary school graded good or better, compared to 100 per cent of pupils in London's Islington and Tower Hamlets.¹⁹⁸

Unacceptably low standards are also evident in variations in GCSE results. These variations have serious implications for levels of social mobility, given that outcomes at KS4 help shape a young person's access to continued education and employment. The maps below illustrate the location of the lowest and highest performing schools in the country (with above average FSM levels).¹⁹⁹ This depicts just how uneven is the spread of success, and the current lottery facing many children.

Figure 1: Location of low attaining schools at KS4, serving disadvantaged intakes



198 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Schools, 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p35, 36

199 Maps taken from Ofsted, *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013; Ofsted shows the location of the 97 secondary schools in England serving above average proportions of pupils eligible for FSM, with the highest performance at GCSE for these pupils; and the location of the 111 secondary schools in England serving above average proportions of pupils eligible for FSM, with the lowest performance at GCSE for these pupils

Figure 2: Location of high attaining schools at KS4, serving disadvantaged intakes



Tables 2 and 3 show the ten lowest attaining local authorities at KS4, for all pupils, and for pupils on FSM. Last year, there were 64 local authorities where more than 40 per cent of all children left school without five good GCSEs including maths and English.²⁰⁰ Results are even worse for the most disadvantaged children: in 22 local authorities more than 70 per cent of children on FSM did not achieve this key benchmark.²⁰¹

Table 2: Attainment at KS4, by local authority

Local authority	All pupils: percentage achieving 5+ A*–C grades including English and Mathematics GCSEs
Knowsley	43.7
Blackpool	46.1
Portsmouth	47.6
Isle of Wight	48.7
Stoke-on-Trent	49.9
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	50.0
Middlesbrough	50.3
Barnsley	50.3
Nottingham	50.3
Bristol, City of	52.3

200 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent results in England 2012/13*, London: Department for Education, 2014,

201 Ibid

Table 3: Attainment of pupils on FSM at KS4, by local authority

Local authority	FSM: percentage achieving 5+ A*-C grades including English and Mathematics GCSEs
Barnsley	21.8
Portsmouth	22.6
South Gloucestershire	24.4
North Lincolnshire	24.6
Northumberland	25.2
Blackpool	25.8
Cumbria	25.9
Knowsley	26.0
Central Bedfordshire	26.2
Cheshire East	26.4

This failure to spread success to many disadvantaged areas means that some communities are falling behind.

Tackling underperformance in challenging areas

Whilst many schools that are struggling would benefit from the reforms set out in the previous chapter, there is also a need for radical action to improve quality in parts of the country that are falling behind.

Incentivising high quality providers to take on schools in challenging areas

‘Some schools are so vulnerable that no amount of external support can help them. They need to be taken over. Sometimes there’s rhetoric that everything can be solved by collaboration but different schools and areas require different forms of improvement.’

Amanda Spielman, Chair of Ofqual and Adviser to ARK

The most effective academy chains have been shown to inject dynamism and aspiration into their schools. The Sutton Trust carried out a study which found that in 2013, in nine of the 31 chains they looked at, disadvantaged students in sponsored academies outperformed the average for disadvantaged pupils in mainstream schools.

In addition they found that there were five chains in particular which enable high attainment for disadvantaged pupils across a very wide range of measures. In these chains, the proportion of disadvantaged students achieving five good GCSEs is at least 15 percentage points higher than the average for disadvantaged students in mainstream school.²⁰²

However, a number of these highly effective chains, including the Harris Federation, ARK and the City of London Corporation, are disproportionately concentrated around London.²⁰³ The

²⁰² Sutton Trust, *Chain Effects, The impact of academy chains on low income students*, London: Sutton Trust, 2014

²⁰³ Ibid

CSJ has heard concerns that academy chains are still reluctant to expand into some of the most disadvantaged areas.

Figure 3: KS2 results at primary schools in England²⁰⁴

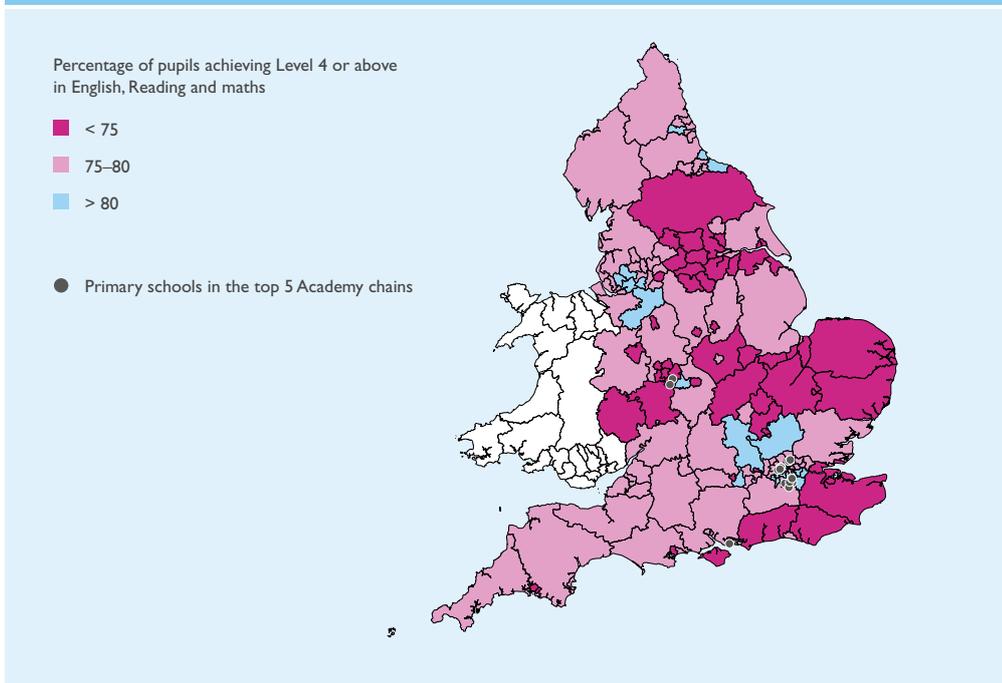
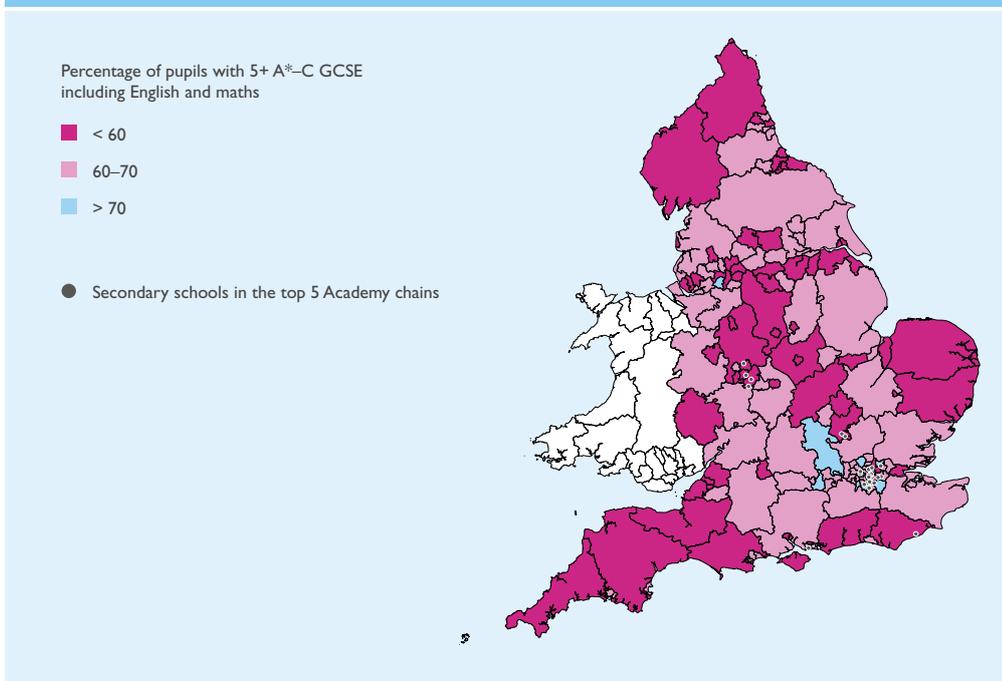


Figure 4: GCSE results at secondary schools in England²⁰⁵



204 Data extracted from: Department for Education, GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics, London: Department for Education, 2014; The 'top 5 academy chains' refers to chains with schools that perform significantly better than the national average as identified in: The Sutton Trust, Chain Effects: The impact of academy chains on low income students, London: The Sutton Trust, 2014

205 Data extracted from: Department for Education, GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics, London: Department for Education, 2014; See previous footnote for information on The 'top 5 academy chains'.

The most effective chains tend to have schools in close geographic proximity, which allows them to leverage support to a school quickly and deploy staff flexibly across schools. It also means that the schools feel supported as part of a community, and can share a central office responsible for finance and HR. Roger Alston OBE, Chief Executive of the Northern Education Trust told the CSJ that:

'Geographic clusters work best – otherwise it wastes resources travelling between schools. You need geographic proximity in order to be able to share expertise.'

Therefore rather than encouraging chains to grow too quickly and to spread themselves too thinly, the Government should incentivise successful chains to replicate their model and set up mirror infrastructures in underperforming areas. This could include a cash injection to take on a group of failing schools – including capital funding to set up a central office in that area, and separate investment for each failing school they take on.

'I think that it might be possible to further fund 'up-scaling' of successful chains, so long as the resource was meaningful (i.e. didn't simply undermine the capacity and hence outcomes, as appears to have happened with so many of the biggest academy chains) ... The quality of existing chains is extremely diverse and so in addition to urgently addressing the rigour on criteria for sponsorship, the Government should consider funding research enabling us to learn from the better chains like Harris and ARK.'

Professor Becky Francis, Professor of Education and Social Justice, King's College London

Sir Dan Moynihan who runs the Harris Federation explained to the CSJ that replicating a successful chain in another area would be relatively straightforward, but that to be successful, the local infrastructure must be developed in tandem:

'Our schools are easy for us to get to from the centre when support is needed, and it is also easy for teachers from individual Harris Academies to visit their colleagues elsewhere. This enables extremely close collaboration and support, which is especially important for schools which are in the first stages of improvement. Having a concentrated community of schools also means we have been able to invest in a shared team of experienced teachers to identify the common challenges facing our pupils and find solutions that work. Although we are sometimes asked to expand further afield, having academies dotted here and there rather than a cluster would diminish our ability to improve children's education.'

To incentivise the best chains to replicate their model in disadvantaged areas, the Government should therefore offer these chains the following package:

- Groups of at least three schools, to enable them to build a local 'cluster';
- Funding to set up a local headquarters, which can take on administrative tasks and coordinate support to all schools in the chain;
- Funding to build the local infrastructure in those schools (as already occurs).

'If academy chains have the appropriate organisational structure and thereby capacity there is no reason why they shouldn't be keen to move into new areas. However, there does need to be a more flexible approach both by the Department for Education and the EFA. Where a MAT has failed and another is taking on the school from the failed MAT there needs to be both financial support and educational appreciation of the journey of the school within its new MAT.'

Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski

In addition, to help chains cover some of the costs of moving into new areas and to incentivise them to invest their own resources in these schools, the Government should offer a time-limited payment-by-results scheme. This would see providers rewarded for the rate of improvement of results in core subjects in the school, with a heavy weighting towards the results of the most disadvantaged pupils.

Getting good headteachers to disadvantaged areas

There is a shortage of excellent headteachers in the schools and areas where they are most needed. As graphs 5 and 6 show, some areas and schools are far less likely to have the great leadership they desperately need. The effects of this are far reaching given the role strong leaders play in attracting good teachers and effecting improvement throughout the school.

- Deprived areas are less likely to have good leadership. In secondary schools in Eastern England leadership is Good or better in 83 per cent of the least deprived schools, compared to just 63 per cent in the most deprived schools.
- Some areas are less likely to have good leadership, regardless of deprivation. In the most deprived secondary schools in regions like the East Midlands; the North East and Yorkshire and Humber; leadership is Good or better in below 60 per cent of schools. Yet even in the most deprived secondary schools in London, 87 per cent of schools have leadership which is Good or better.²⁰⁶

206 Extracted from <http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Figure 5: percentage of secondary schools judged good + for leadership by region as of 31 March 2014

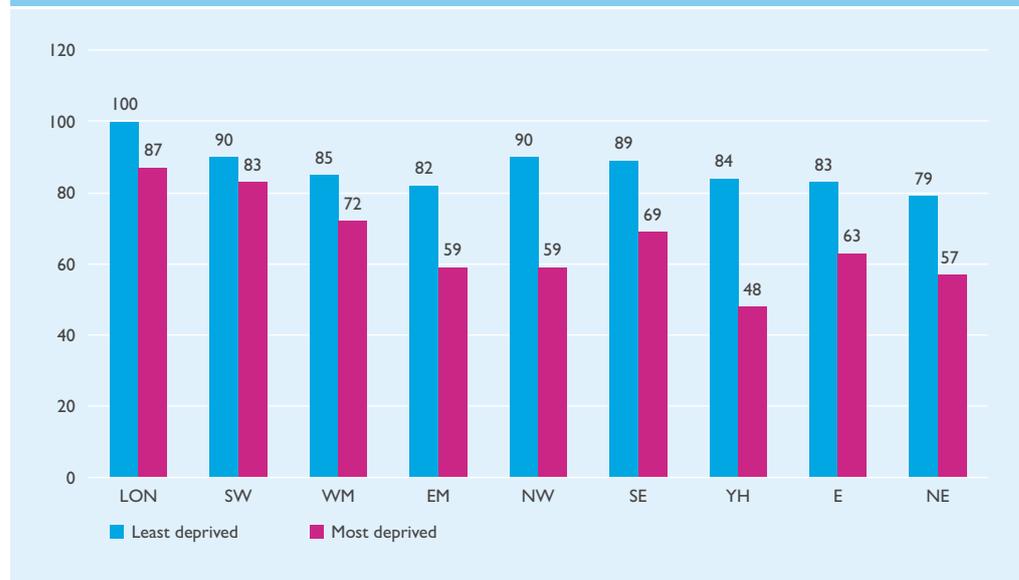
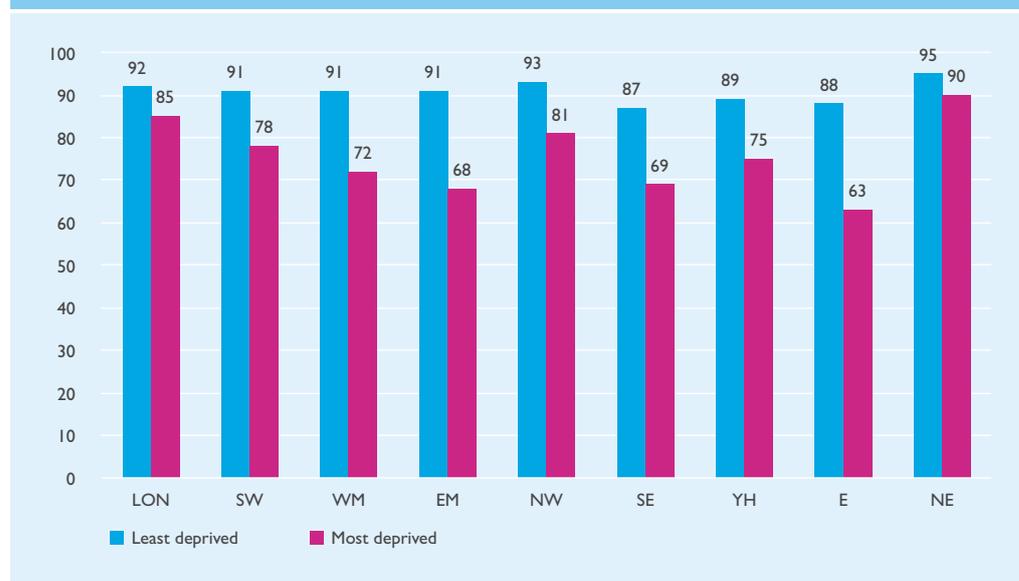


Figure 6: percentage of primary schools judged good + for leadership by region as of 31 March 2014



To help meet this challenge the Government has recently announced the Talented Leaders Programme which will match 100 top headteachers with a mixture of primary and secondary schools struggling to attract the best leaders in carefully selected pilot areas.²⁰⁷ This programme has huge potential to bring strong leadership to schools where it is badly needed. There is, however, a need to encourage even more high performing heads to move to schools of greatest need.

²⁰⁷ Speech by the Schools Minister, Rt Hon David Laws MP, David Laws speech to the North of England Education Conference, 16 January 2014

The CSJ has heard that a major disincentive for headteachers to take on failing schools is the current Ofsted regime. Current pressures to deliver rapid turnaround can deter successful heads from taking on a new challenge, leaving some schools less able to attract the best leaders. The nature of inspections, occurring with little notice, can put considerable pressure on schools to evidence how they are working.

Ofsted can be very inflexible with schools which fail to evidence rapid turnaround being subject to repeat inspections. We have heard that the risk of failing means heads worry that they will lose their hard-earned reputation – or even their job – if they do not evidence rapid improvement quickly enough. Indeed 78 per cent of ASCL members say they are less likely now than a year ago to seek posts in challenging schools, which was attributed at least in part to the accountability system which sees 'schools dropping into Ofsted categories on the basis of one year's examination results, [and] unrealistic expectations of the time it takes to improve...'²⁰⁸

'The inflexibility of the Ofsted inspection framework is leading to too many damning judgements on schools and a brutal football manager market place for school leaders which is a major disincentive for highly able professionals to risk their careers by taking on the headship of schools in challenging circumstances ... the very schools which most need them.'

Mark Sutton, Principal of Charnwood College, in evidence to the CSJ

To overcome this, we recommend that proven heads who take on a school with poor results in areas of deprivation should not be subject to a formal inspection during the first two years of taking over. Instead, they should be given the tools and support they need to bring genuine and long lasting improvements in the school. This would send a positive signal to heads thinking about taking on a new challenge, and give them time to instill long-term transformation for these pupils. These heads would have a proven track record of bringing about school improvement in challenging circumstances.

'We have to ask, what would make these heads move? They might do it for more money – but we're talking a significant sum. They might do it because they have a social conscience – but the chances are they're already supporting disadvantaged children. In other schools they are more likely to do it if Ofsted say "we'll give you a timed break from inspection if you take on this school".'

Sir Robin Boshier, Head of Primary Education at the Harris Federation, in evidence to the CSJ

Dame Sue John also told the CSJ that this would be positive:

'These heads need a bit more time, they have families and mortgages ... If you only get given one year you'll be tempted to gloss over the issues. But two years gives you time and opportunity for genuine change.'

To support them, whilst also holding them to account, there should be immediate diagnostic inspections when they take over so the incoming head does not fear being unfairly blamed for problems they inherit. In failing schools there will already have been a series of inspections –

²⁰⁸ Speech by the General Secretary of the ASCL, Brian Lightman, General Secretary's address to annual conference, 22 March 2014

but this might be necessary for schools at Grade 3 (Requires Improvement). This also means a school improvement plan can be established early on, followed by discretionary, termly visits from HMI.²⁰⁹

There is also a need for a far clearer picture of which schools are struggling to attract the best staff. We have been told that some schools receive many applications for a post but few which are good enough to be shortlisted. Therefore as a first step towards supporting these schools, the Department for Education should collect data on the ratio of shortlisted applications per vacancy rates. This would not be bureaucratic and would be extremely useful in providing data on those schools and areas where shortages are most acute. This data would also help guide decisions on which schools should be targeted for extra support attracting an excellent headteacher.

Improving teacher deployment: National Teacher Services

'The best teachers should be recruited and deployed to work at those schools failing to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils.'

Baroness Sally Morgan, Chair of Ofsted, in evidence to the CSJ

The CSJ has repeatedly heard that we need to build a system in which more of the best teachers are deployed to the schools which need them most. In our report, *Requires Improvement*, excellent heads told us about the challenges that even they faced in attracting the best staff to work at their schools:

*'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...'*²¹⁰

Headteacher, in evidence to the CSJ

Another head told the CSJ that lack of supply in their area even forced them to hire teachers they knew were poor:

*'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.'*²¹¹

Tragically, there are whole regions where the quality of teaching is sub-standard. It is inexcusable that disadvantaged children going to schools in these areas have a much lower chance of accessing the high quality teaching which is proven to improve their attainment. For example:

209 Unless the takeover is the result of a poor Ofsted grading following inspection, as it often is

210 Centre for Social Justice, *Requires Improvement: the causes of educational failure*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013, p97, Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski DBE, Executive Head, Altrincham Grammar School for Girls and CEO of Bright Futures Educational Trust, in evidence to the CSJ

211 Ibid, p101, Headteacher; anonymous, in evidence to the CSJ

- 70 per cent of the most deprived secondary schools in the North East have teaching which is less than good;
- This compares to less than ten per cent among the least deprived schools in London, the South West and the North West;
- Children going to the least deprived secondary schools in the North East are also more than twice as likely to have good teaching as those in the region's most deprived schools.²¹²

Figure 7: percentage of secondary schools judged good + for teaching, by region as of 31 March 2014

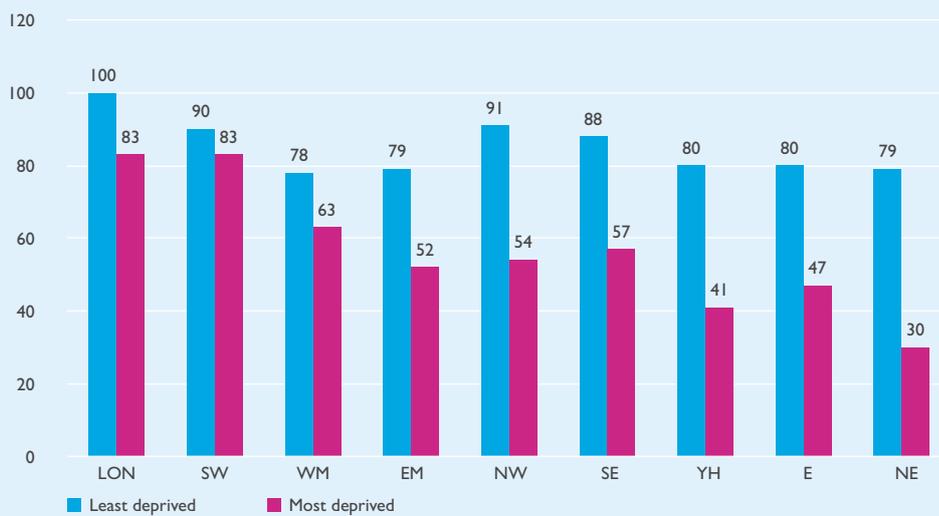
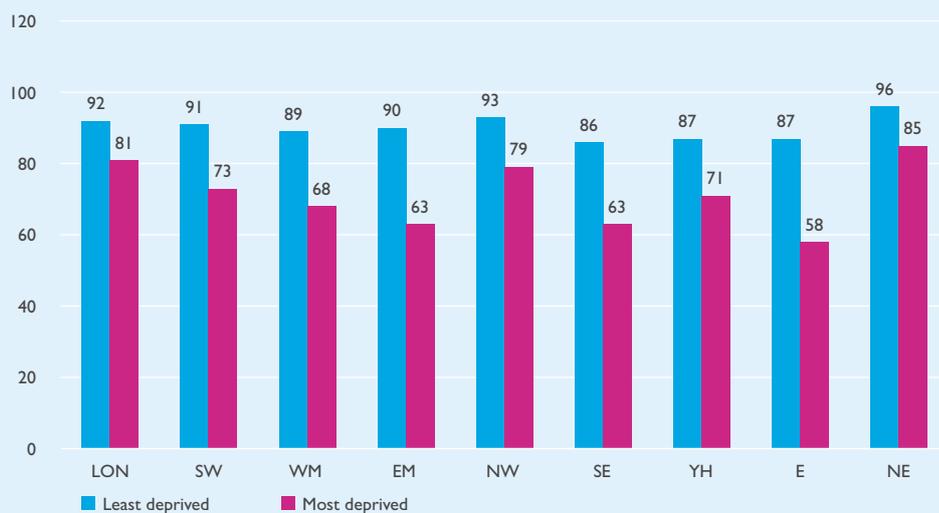


Figure 8: percentage of primary schools judged good + for teaching, by region as of 31 March 2014



212 Extracted from <http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk/>



We therefore recommend that the Government introduces a National Teacher Service Scheme where teachers are employed on two-year contracts and deployed strategically to challenging schools in areas that struggle to attract high quality teaching. Organisations like Teach First have done much to raise the status of teaching by deploying bright young graduates to challenging schools. A National Teacher

Service would take this idea further by getting our most effective teachers to the schools which are desperate for their ambition.

The scheme would be reserved for the highest quality teachers who would need to demonstrate their ability to achieve positive results for children in challenging circumstances. Teachers would not be able to choose which area they worked in: participants may express a preference but must recognise that the educational needs of the children come first. Following a successful deployment teachers could be sent to a new school, or if they preferred, leave the scheme and remain at the school. This in itself would help build long-term capacity in the school.

Rather than having the Department for Education directly responsible for the contracts of hundreds of teachers, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) could commission a provider to deliver the National Teacher Service. For example, applications could be made by educational organisations or national charities.

In its first years, the National Teacher Service scheme could be piloted alongside the Talented Leaders Programme mentioned – meaning that teachers are initially deployed to schools receiving one of these top headteachers. This would ensure that teachers could be confident they will be sent to a school where there is already an effective leader in place who will support their professional development. It also means these areas are able to access comprehensive support, spanning across teaching and leadership. Children in these schools would not only have access to excellent leadership – they would also have access to the ambitious teaching proven to shape their attainment.

Teachers on the scheme should come from core subjects where shortages are most acute. To match the 100 heads on the Talented Leaders Programme, it might be appropriate to recruit approximately 400 teachers over a two-year period: 200 deployed in the first year, and 200 the year after. This would enable a good spread over the schools where these heads are being deployed in its first two years.

In a survey of 2,000 teachers carried out by TES for the CSJ, 93 per cent said that 'knowing an effective headteacher will be based at that school' was an important factor on their decision to relocate to an underperforming school.

Upon starting at the school heads could assess how many National Teacher Service teachers they need, based on how many existing staff need to be replaced and how many can improve through better support. Where a whole department needs help, heads could request a middle leader via networks available through organisations like Teaching Leaders – which has a pool of one thousand alumni. This would also create the added incentive for National Teacher Service teachers being in a new area with others who are also motivated and passionate.

'If a group of you are going to somewhere a bit bleak and unknown ... It really helps to be there together, so you can meet in the pub on a Friday night and compare notes ... and even have a good moan.'

Baroness Sally Morgan, in evidence to the CSJ

Following the pilot and its evaluation, the scheme could be extended so that teachers on the scheme could be deployed to any school in need. This is important given that there are many schools in challenging areas which have effective leaders but still struggle to recruit teachers in particular subject areas.

This scheme would primarily target teachers earlier on in their career, with several years successful teaching experience, who are looking for a new challenge, but who are not yet ready for a leadership post. Younger teachers are less likely to have as many barriers to moving, such as having children or a mortgage.

In a survey of 2,000 teachers carried out by TES for the CSJ, 80 per cent said their partner's job was among key factors that would prevent them relocating; and 64 per cent said their children's school would be an important barrier.

Becoming a National Teacher Service teachers would also mark an added step in a teacher's career development. This is an important incentive given that studies have shown that under the current system there are insufficient leadership pathways available to ambitious teachers. Of course, not all teachers will want to be leaders and many may wish to remain in the classroom full-time. Nonetheless, the vast majority of teachers remain at the same school without promotion each year which can thwart their ambition, or, cause some teachers to leave the profession altogether.²¹³ Dame Sue John, headteacher at Lampton School, told the CSJ:

'Unfortunately the culture in a lot of schools is very slow; it takes time for aspiring young teachers to rise through the ranks. And this can put some people off.'

Simultaneously, the jump from teaching into a leadership role can be intimidating, and so this scheme would act as an excellent building block for the very best teachers.

213 National College for School Leadership, *Review of the school leadership landscape*, London: National College for School Leadership, 2012, p39

In a survey conducted by TES for the CSJ of 2,000 teachers, we asked about the factors that would influence a teacher's decision to relocate to an underperforming school. We received over 2,000 responses, and found that:

- Almost 80 per cent of teachers said they would consider relocating to a different town or village;
- When asked at what stage in their career they would be willing to move, the most popular answer (35 per cent) given was *in their first few years as a teacher*;
- 93 per cent of teachers said that 'the excitement of taking on a new challenge' was an important factor in their decision to move to an underperforming school;
- 92 per cent said 'freedom to innovate' was an important factor in shaping this decision.

'Many teachers do want to carry on teaching in the classroom whilst also wanting a new challenge. This would offer a fantastic step before thinking about going for a leadership role, doing something challenging and worthwhile with colleagues who feel the same!'

Amanda Timberg, Executive Director of Programme at Teach First

To ensure the programme gave genuine opportunities for career progression, participants would be entitled to a generous CPD package – drawn from a pot of money ring-fenced to support professional development at their new school. Whilst schools would pay the teachers' salaries, the Department for Education would cover their relocation costs, under the principle that participating teachers should not be out of pocket.

Recommendation: The Department for Education should create a National Improvement Programme to improve standards in the most poorly performing disadvantaged schools. This would:

- Encourage effective chains into areas of particular challenge, where they should be offered groups of failing schools and given funding to set up a regional headquarters to help them mirror their operations elsewhere;
- Pilot a payment-by-results scheme which would reward chains for improvements in results in their first few years with a heavy weighting towards the results of the most disadvantaged.

Recommendation: Effective headteachers should be encouraged to take up posts in challenging schools, especially in areas where applications are low, by offering them a two-year grace from a formal inspection. To help inform which schools would be targeted for this help, the Department for Education should monitor shortlisted applications per vacancy rates for heads (and teachers) via the school workforce census.

Recommendation: A National Teacher Service scheme should be rolled out to take ambitious teachers to areas of high need, with initial deployment starting in those schools receiving one of the headteachers deployed as part of the Talented Leaders Programme.

chapter five

Further Education and the journey into work

Introduction

Further Education (FE) can play an important role in making sure more young people leave education ready for work.²¹⁴

However, too much provision is still below par: it is unacceptable that one-quarter of learners are in provision which is less than Good.²¹⁵ What makes this worse is that these learners disproportionately come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, too often left behind.

- There are three times as many students eligible for FSM at colleges than at maintained school sixth forms;²¹⁶ It is estimated that around 100,000 pupils aged 16–18 in colleges would be eligible for FSM;²¹⁷
- Post-16 and adult learners interviewed by Ofsted in 2011 said negative experiences of school led to continued barriers to learning, such as a fear of ‘feeling thick’ and the stigma of attending a literacy class;²¹⁸
- 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;²¹⁹
- Many of these children leave school without good GCSEs: in FE colleges and Work Based Learning, around 50 per cent of post-16 entrants lack GCSE English.²²⁰

214 FE includes three sectors – sixth form colleges, specialist colleges and general FE colleges. This chapter focusses in particular on FE colleges

215 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Further education and skills, 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013

216 The Association of Colleges, *No Free Lunch? Key Statistics*, [accessed via: www.aoc.co.uk/en/parliament-and-campaigns/campaigns/no-free-lunch/key-statistics.cfm (11/08/13)]

217 House of Commons Library, *Free school meals for students in post-16 Education*, 17 January 2013, p4 subject to estimations by the AoC

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

219 2020 Public Service HUB, *The further education and skills sector in 2020: a social productivity approach*, London: 2020 Public Service HUB, 26 May 2011

220 RCU, *English & Maths – the challenge in numbers*, [accessed via: www.rcu.co.uk/blog/english-maths-the-challenge-in-numbers (20/08/14)] Calculations done by Mick Fletcher

Many of these children may have been failed by the school system, or suffered significant barriers in their home life. FE must not be seen as a 'dumping ground' for lower ability students; instead we must ensure it is especially accountable to these learners, offering them a route into long-term employment.

This chapter sets out recommendations which mean these learners are able to fulfil their potential: first, by improving the quality of provision available, and second, by bridging the gap between education and work so that learners gain the soft and hard skills valued by employers.

Improving quality

Reforms to the sector

Despite calls for a greater focus on vocational routes, FE has never gained the same respect as either schools or universities. It is only relatively recently, with 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.²²¹

Positive reforms introduced include:

- The introduction of the Technical Baccalaureate Standard for courses beginning in September 2014, reported in league tables in January 2017 providing an alternative to the A-level study route for post-16 education;
- Since September 2013, some FE colleges have been able to enrol, on a full time basis, 14–16-year-olds. This follows Wolf's findings that some young people also do better in core academic subjects if following a vocational route at 14;
- A more transparent funding system to support for example, the raising of the participation age. 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 disadvantage, all adjusted for area costs;
- Since September 2013, schools, colleges and other providers have been expected to introduce Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds;
- Those failing to get a C grade in English and maths GCSE must continue to study those subjects.²²²

Inspections

FE encompasses a huge range of courses and qualification levels – including all forms of upper secondary education and elements of higher education.²²³ Across the whole sector, 71 per cent of providers were judged good or better at their last inspection, an increase of seven percentage points from last year²²⁴ and the proportion of learners in provision rated less than

221 See for example, *Wolf A, Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report*, London: Department for Education, 2011; Lingfield's Review, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, *Professionalism in Further Education, Interim Report of the Independent Review Panel*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012.

222 Ibid.

223 Whilst there are numerous settings and providers, this section focusses on FE colleges.

224 As at 31 August 2013

Good is down from a third to a quarter.²²⁵ However, this still means many learners are in poor settings, and 29 per cent of providers were still judged less than Good.²²⁶

Some colleges cater to the learning of tens of thousands of learners, often studying very different courses, at very different levels. Ofsted should move to a system where all colleges are inspected on a similar basis to hospitals – consistently looking at all departments, with each department given a grade. This would mean that whilst one department may be graded Outstanding, another may not. Given that departments within a college can differ widely in quality, this would make inspections more accurate and give a clearer picture of quality to students choosing where to go and what to study.

Improving teaching

To be an excellent teacher in FE, staff must be skilled in their trade as well as in teaching. Pedagogy is also especially important given the high levels of need and disengagement amongst some learners. Dual professionalism is therefore a positive model allowing staff to combine teaching with their day-job, ensuring teaching is delivered by those with practical experience of the labour market.

*'The best vocational teaching and learning...demands "dual professionals" – teachers and trainers with occupational expertise and experience, who can combine this with excellent teaching and learning practice.'*²²⁷

The CSJ has come across the following initiative that has excellent potential to further dual professionalism.

Teach Too

Teach Too is a recently commissioned scheme launched this year looking into the best ways of enabling industry professionals to combine their day-job with teaching. Teach Too was first proposed in the report of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning.²²⁸ It enables off-the-job vocational education to stay up-to-date with current work practices. It supports the notion of the 'two-way street' which operates in excellent vocational education and training – where industry and colleges work together in genuine partnerships.

Although in its early days, we support the development of Teach Too and recommend that its further development and evaluation should be pursued.

'The Education and Training Foundation has been locating outstanding Teach Too practice across the country: colleges and training providers working together to introduce learners to the advanced skills of occupational experts. In one example dealing with aerospace, lecturers are providing the theoretical aspects of the programme while airline staff provide practical training in a live aircraft hangar. Students exiting the programme have qualifications that are portable within the UK and globally.'

Paul Grainger, Co-Director of the Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation, Institute of Education

225 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Further education and skills, 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013; According to Ofsted, this must be a priority for the new FE Commissioner

226 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Further education and skills, 2012/13*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, as at 31 August 2013

227 CAVTL, *It's about work...Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning*, London: LSIS, 2013,

228 Ibid

Recommendation: Ofsted should inspect all individual departments within colleges and give each department a separate grade.

Recommendation: Teach Too should be developed, and subject to evaluation, expanded.

Fairer funding

'My biggest worry is for post-18 education – which is wildly underfunded for anything outside Higher Education. As a society we forget a whole lot of people at age 16 and if we don't forget them at age 16, we definitely forget them at 18.'

Professor Alison Wolf, in evidence to the CSJ

Fair funding not only affects the status of the sector; but its ability to deliver high quality provision. Since 2009 there has been a growing gap between how learners of different ages are funded. Spending for children under 16 was ring-fenced under the Department for Education, and BIS has maintained undergraduate funding for those 18 and over via tuition loans.²²⁹ However, around £7.78 billion of public funds were allocated to the FE and skills sector; £100 million less than last year.²³⁰

*'The budget for the education of 5–16 year olds rose faster than inflation throughout up until 2010 and has been formally ring-fenced since then to protect funding per pupil and the pupil premium. This means that budget cuts agreed in successive spending reviews for Department for Education fall mainly on the funding of education for 16- to 18-year-olds and are hitting core college budgets.'*²³¹

Positively, disadvantaged students aged 16–19 studying in FE and sixth form colleges are now also eligible for FSM.²³² However, various irregularities remain, with these often hitting the most disadvantaged learners hardest.

For example, whereas schools can reclaim VAT, sixth form colleges and FE colleges cannot; given that the VAT exemption also applies to new 16–19 academies it seems unfair that it should not apply to Colleges.²³³ The burden can be considerable: a sixth form college's VAT load is typically £300,000.²³⁴ Additionally, whilst the Department for Education provides 100 per cent capital grants to Schools, Academies and sixth form colleges; FE colleges must get by on 33 per cent grants and find the balance from the cash they generate, or through commercial borrowing. The Government should therefore introduce a VAT rebate and consider how best to address all irregularities in how different education institutions are funded.

Recent funding cuts affecting 18-year-olds in full-time education are also deeply concerning. From September 2014, these learners will be funded at a rate 17.5 per cent lower than

229 AoC, *College Funding and Finance*, London: AoC, 2014

230 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, Further education and skills, 2012/13, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p7

231 AoC, *College Funding and Finance*, London: AoC, 2014

232 Education Funding Agency, Further education free meals, *Departmental advice for further education funded institutions*, 16 April 2014

233 FE Week, *Chancellor Osborne buries hopes of college VAT refund*, January 02 2014

234 *Hansard, Commons Debate*, 28 January 2014

16- and 17-year-olds.²³⁵ Colleges teach the majority of 18-year-olds, and therefore will be disproportionately affected by the cuts: General FE colleges face an average funding reduction of three per cent, compared to just 0.4 per cent for school sixth forms.²³⁶



The Education Funding Agency (EFA) justified cuts on the basis it was partly necessary to support increasing the participation age for 16–17 year olds (seen as a priority group) and that 18 year olds would already have had two years of post-16 education.²³⁷ Then Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP, also said that:

*'It is a way of reducing the budget overall for institutions that educate 16, 17 and 18-year-olds, and it is a painful cut forced on us by difficult economic circumstances and the fact that some parts of the education budget are protected and some are not.'*²³⁸

The cut is estimated to affect 100,000 students and save £150 million²³⁹ at an average cost to FE colleges of £600,000 per college.²⁴⁰ Cuts risk limiting colleges' ability to provide high quality courses, which will have a particularly negative impact on the most disadvantaged learners, students from disadvantaged areas, and black, minority and ethnic students.²⁴¹

Currently funding for schools is ring-fenced – meaning that cuts often affect the FE sector and adult education.²⁴² The Government should set out a long-term strategy to ensure greater fairness in how learners are funded across the board (spanning schools and Higher Education).

How does this affect the most disadvantaged learners disproportionately?

*'Under the English education system, most students complete only two years of post-16 education before leaving school and going on to higher education, studying for some kind of vocational qualification or joining the workforce. However, there is a small minority who remain at school in order to complete an extra year, usually because their attainment in previous years has not been of a high enough standard for them to be awarded the qualifications which they are studying towards. Therefore, many of the students who will be affected are likely to come from difficult backgrounds or have other issues which make them educationally challenging.'*²⁴³

235 Following a new announcement from the Education Funding Authority, from September schools and colleges in England will see the grant they are given to fund each pupil's place cut by 17.5 per cent for all students who are already over the age of 18 at the beginning of the academic year.

236 FE Week, *Colleges hit by 18-year-old funding rate cut far worse than school sixth forms, government assessment reveals*, Jan 13, 2014 [accessed via: <http://feweeek.co.uk/2014/01/13/colleges-hit-by-18-year-old-funding-rate-cut-far-worse-than-school-sixth-forms-government-assessment-reveals/> (18/02/14)] (Refers to 18-year-olds outside Higher Education)

237 House of Commons Library, *Cuts in funding for 18 and 19 year olds*, 23 January 2013

238 Hansard, Uncorrected transcript of oral evidence, Education Committee, 18 December 2013

239 Hansard, Commons Debate, 28 January 2014

240 Ibid; Although some will suffer much greater cuts – in some cases, in excess of £1 million

241 House of Commons Library, *Cuts in funding for 18 and 19 year olds*, 23 January 2013; see: RCU and AOC Analysis of 18-year-olds in Further Education Colleges Data Analysis Report, 2013

242 Funding for schools is ring-fenced up to age 16

243 Intergenerational Foundation, *Government announces plan to cut education funding for post-18 students*, [accessed via: www.if.org.uk/archives/4732/government-announces-plan-to-cut-education-funding-for-post-18-students (18/08/14)]

Simplifying funding streams

Funding can be very complex, coming from among various sources, often cutting across two Government departments – the Department for Education and BIS. The complex way funding is managed makes reductions in funding even more challenging to cope with. According to Peter Mayhew-Smith, Principal of Kingston College, simplification would improve efficiency:

'... the way we're expected to account for that money and the multiplicity of different funding routes means this money is made less efficient: there's money for apprenticeships, student loans, SFA, EFA... So we've got to spend more of it on back office.'

It would simplify matters, and promote equity if FE and schools were in the same department and funded on a single common formula. Therefore we call on Government to examine the possibility of bringing FE into the Department for Education. This would also ensure the Department for Education took greater responsibility for the outcomes of these learners.

Colleges should also be given greater stability through funding arrangements, through the introduction of three-year funding plans. Julian Gravatt, the assistant Chief Executive of the AoC, told the CSJ:

'Three-year funding plans would give institutions confidence to plan for the future, and invest in people and in facilities which would help public funds go further.'

Recommendation: We must address irregularities in the way some institutions are funded, relative to comparable others. For example, the Government should consider reversing the cut affecting funding for 18-year-olds, and consider changes to VAT.

Recommendation: The Government should commit to introducing three-year funding plans for colleges.

Recommendation: The next Government should set out a timetable to achieve funding equivalence across all providers. Government to consider bringing responsibility for FE into the Department for Education.

Bridging the gap: improving the links between FE and employment

'The link between education and work has become fractured. For the last 15 years policy prioritised retaining young people in education for as long as possible, but it damaged employer engagement. We must rebuild those relationships.'

Professor Sue Maguire, Warwick University, in evidence to the CSJ

Improving accountability: focussing on outcomes

FE colleges should act as a gateway to employment, giving learners the skills valued by national and local employers. Vocational teaching and learning should therefore be characterised by a clear line of sight to work – where learners see, as Frank McLoughlin, Principal of City and Islington College, put it, ‘why they are learning what they are learning ... and experience the job in its context.’²⁴⁴

The recent publication of data on student destinations is extremely positive, as it means data is publicly available at institutional level and reveals the effectiveness of colleges in helping their students find further study or work. Publishing data on the percentages going into employment, higher education and training in each school and college will also help prospective students make more informed choices.

- **Destination Measures (16–18):** available via the Department for Education, looking at the outcomes for those completing KS4 and KS5 (equivalent to GCSE and A Level);
- **Outcome-based success measures (post-19):** these are experimental statistics available via BIS – looking at outcomes post-19.²⁴⁵

The CSJ strongly supports the publication of this information, however, its compilation is still at an early stage and there are currently weaknesses with it:

- There is a time lag between pupils finishing KS4 and the publication of data. For example, destinations published in June 2014 relate to pupils completing KS4 in July 2011. For post-19 measures, statistics published in 2014 relate to outcomes in 2010 – meaning they may not reflect current standards and efforts of colleges. This is particularly important given the greater focus on preparation for work since 2010;²⁴⁶
- Employment destinations are obtained via survey data and are therefore not as robust as data for those staying on in education. This is especially problematic for KS5 destinations – where larger numbers leave to enter the labour market;
- Learners have to have had a sustained destination for the full six months between October and March. This risks making figures misleading: for example, someone who found a job slightly later may not be included as a positive destination.²⁴⁷

The Department for Education and BIS should take urgent steps to improve the robustness of this data. Once its quality has been improved, schools, and colleges, should be encouraged to track trends over time, and Ofsted should give this data greater weighting in their assessments. This will also establish a more accurate picture of outcomes, helping providers respond to trends, and helping young people choose where they study.

²⁴⁴ CAVTL, *It's about work...Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning*, London: LSIS, 2013, p7

²⁴⁵ These are experimental statistics under consultation

²⁴⁶ Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, *Adult further education: outcome based success measures – experimental data 2010 to 2011*, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills: London, 2014

²⁴⁷ Whilst there is some flexibility around having a sustained destination, this should be expanded on

As BIS develops the measures they should also consider including a breakdown of outcomes for different income groups, as already done in the destination measures (via FSM). It is important after all to show outcomes achieved for the most disadvantaged learners in particular. BIS should also explore charting destinations for individual subject areas, to show the impact taking particular courses has on employability.

Providers should not however be ranked, as this would ignore the hugely different contexts and labour markets they operate in, which also influence outcomes. Instead data should be used to improve accountability and support improvements in quality made by institutions.

Recommendation: The Department for Education and BIS should take urgent action to improve the robustness of their measures, improving reliability and reducing the time lag in collection as far as possible to ensure schools and colleges can be more responsive to trends. They should also explore the practicalities of including breakdowns of outcomes for individual subjects.

Improving engagement with employers

'The benefits are clear: young people gain the skills needed to become the workforce of tomorrow whilst employees gain new or enhanced skills. This is not only good for economic and social returns but good for our commercial success too.'

Nicole Lovett, CSR at Deutsche Bank

We are now enduring the effects of a 'skills-mismatch'²⁴⁸ 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.²⁴⁹ 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.²⁵⁰



Education should play an important role overcoming the skills shortages some sectors face. Yet whilst some colleges are effective in engaging with employers, others are less so. In their last report, Ofsted stated that: 'there is still too much provision that is not responsive to local employment needs.'²⁵¹

248 Think Young, Skills mismatch [accessed via: <http://thinkyoung.eu/overcoming-the-skills-mismatch/> (20/08/13)]

249 The Telegraph, *Rise in arts degrees has left UK with major skills crisis*, 02 May 2013 [accessed via: www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10031303/Rise-in-arts-degrees-has-left-UK-with-major-skills-crisis.html (04/05/13)]

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

251 Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills*, Further education and skills, 2012/13, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013, p5; Whilst it is positive that Ofsted are increasingly looking at employment outcomes, findings should be treated with caution. For example, Ofsted compares overall curriculum to LEP priorities without showing that these priorities are accurate, and does not necessarily reflect whether young people are being prepared for jobs in the economy which simply do not come within those growth areas.

Whilst employers should help develop qualifications, it is important they retain a strong common core so learners can apply these skills in a variety of roles throughout their career. Colleges must also make it clearer where courses are likely to lead to jobs in particular industries. This will be helped by better destination measures – but also requires honest guidance when learners sign-up to courses.

'Having media courses is fine, but these should not be sold as leading to jobs working at the BBC. The offer must be made clearer: some of these courses are an innovative way of repackaging learning for less motivated students; they aren't about a direct route into a job.'

Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski, Chief Executive of the Bright Futures Education Trust, in evidence to the CSJ²⁵²

Good Practice: Blackpool and The Fylde College

Blackpool and The Fylde College operates within a challenging context: Blackpool is an area of high economic and social deprivation, with below average GCSE results. Despite this it was graded Outstanding at its last inspection, supporting a total of over 20,000 learners in 2012/13. Ofsted praised the College on its outcomes:

'The college is very successful at engaging learners from disadvantaged groups and ensuring that they stay on course and succeed. Outcomes are very positive for learners from a wide range of groups, such as young people in care and unemployed adults on job-search programmes'

'Partnership work with employers, schools and a range of other organisations is exceptional and makes a significant contribution to the learners' experience and success, and to the local community'

'Learners thoroughly enjoy coming to college and most achieve exceptionally well. Progression rates onto higher education and employment are very high...'

Improving planning: the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

If we want more young people to leave education with the soft and hard skills employers need, we must improve the strategic planning between education providers and local employers.

LEPs are locally-owned partnerships between local authorities and businesses which help determine local economic priorities and support local job creation. So far 39 LEPs have been created.²⁵³

As discussed in *The Journey to Work*, LEPs should be given responsibility for identifying local employment needs and working closely with education providers (both schools and FE colleges) to ensure that courses available, and the content of those courses, matches closely with the current and future needs of labour markets. Employers should work with LEPs and map the age profile of their work force – with the expectation that they inform LEPs about likely skills shortages for the next three years.

²⁵² Ofsted, *Report on Blackpool and the Fylde College, General further education college*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013

²⁵³ Department for Communities and Local Government, *Supporting economic growth through local enterprise partnerships and enterprise zones*, London: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2014

'Local industry needs to be part of workforce planning. Local employers need to map out their needs for a future workforce and work with schools to inform and inspire young people about future job opportunities and to raise their aspirations.'

Azhar Mobin, Chief Operating Officer at Stoke and Staffordshire Education Trust and member of the local LEP

The current effectiveness of LEPs varies and there should therefore be a cross party pledge to enable LEPs to continue to develop. This would add much-needed stability to the sector; and ensure we learn from countries like Germany where employer structures have been around for hundreds of years.

Improving brokerage: the role of local chambers of commerce

To improve transitions into work, relationships between providers and employers should be made far stronger. Collaboration can take various forms to suit the needs and capacity of both parties, for example, through encouraging staff to volunteer as mentors or governors, offering work placements or running career taster sessions. There is evidence that the more employer engagement young people have during education, the better they do as young adults – earning more and less likely to be NEET, even after allowing for highest levels of qualification.²⁵⁴

Some employers proactively engage with young people, getting involved from an early age and building long-term relationships with schools and colleges.

Good Practice: Born to Be, Deutsche Bank

'Not only does it provide me with the chance to develop my leadership skills, I get the chance to experience a whole range of management scenarios I would not experience in my day-to-day job.'
Robert Sutton, Global Transaction Banking, Deutsche Bank.

Born to Be is part of Deutsche Bank's corporate citizenship strategy focussed on education and enabling talent through using early intervention to break the cycle of youth unemployment. 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.

In its first year, it reached over 55,000 young people in the UK alone and last year, over 25 per cent of staff gave their time as volunteers. For example, staff volunteer as school governors and mentors; and Deutsche Bank is one of SGOSS²⁵⁵ most active corporate members – enabling staff to contribute their key strategic skills to governing boards.

Born to Be programmes include:

- Design Ventura: brings the business of design of life through an enterprise-led national competition. They also work with Young Enterprise: 'The main thing I've gained is the confidence and knowledge that I can do it – I can set up and run a business' – Young Enterprise participant, 2013

254 See for example, CfBT, *Employer engagement in education*, Berkshire: CfBT Education Trust, 2014

255 SGOSS is a charity that matches schools with those willing to volunteer as governors

- Debate Mate: uses debating to provide the foundation for young people to apply clear thinking, articulation and raise aspirations for their future;
- City Year: supports 'Corp Members' to give one year of their time to provide intensive curriculum support to some of the most vulnerable children, helping to improve student attendance, behaviour and attainment.
- Through career workshops and work experience, especially in STEM related fields: they aim to demystify the banking industry for young people from less advantaged backgrounds, informing them about the range of jobs available to them.

However not all schools have been able to engage with employers, with many unsure about how to start engaging in this way.²⁵⁶ Likewise businesses identified barriers like too little guidance on how to make work experience worthwhile and uncertainty on how to make contact with schools and colleges.²⁵⁷ Better brokerage is therefore essential.

'There's no system that exposes children to work based experiences at an early age. We need something formal in place, coordinated by someone like the British Chambers.'

Senior civil servant in evidence to the CSJ

The British Chambers of Commerce is a national umbrella body owned by, and acting for, 52 local chambers of commerce across the UK.²⁵⁸ Local chambers of commerce should be given extended responsibility for brokering these relationships. As schools and colleges are made increasingly accountable for the long-term outcomes of their learners, it is right that more schools engage with chambers in this way.

'Schools must think more about pupil employment destinations and look at how well they can work with their local chambers to close the gap between education and business. Ofsted should also consider making a specific judgment on destinations in the future as the quality of data improves.'

Marcus Mason, Policy Manager, Employment and Skills, British Chambers of Commerce

The British Chambers of Commerce are well-placed to do this as they already work with schools and employers. Brokerage is especially important outside of London where there may be fewer links with large employers.

Chambers represent thousands of members and positively, the majority of their members are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This is critical given SMEs are responsible for the majority of local job creation. According to the Federation of Small Businesses, 92 per cent of movements from either unemployment or non-participation into private sector employment result from starting up a small business or becoming an employee in an SME.²⁵⁹

256 The Rt Hon the Lord Heseltine of Thenford CH, *No stone unturned, In pursuit of growth*, London: Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012

257 CBI, *Learning to grow: what employers need from education and skills, Education and skills survey 2012*, London: CBI, 2012

258 British Chambers of Commerce, *About the BCC* [accessed via: www.britishchambers.org.uk/about-the-bcc/ (17/08/14)]

259 Federation of Small Businesses, *Back to Work, The role of small businesses in employment and enterprise*, London: Federation of Small Businesses, w2012 p5

The Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry is an important part of the country's landscape. It plays a critical role in supporting young people into work. Indeed, Germany's system is seen as one of the most successful models for the integration of young people in the labour market.²⁶⁰ All German companies registered in Germany, with the exception of handicraft businesses, the free professions and farms, are required by law to join a chamber. The culture in Germany is one where employers and learners work together to ensure that the future workforce has the skills these employers need.

Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce work closely with schools, colleges and employers in their area. Their Policy Adviser, Gill Prangnell, told the CSJ:

'It's been very positive but sometimes we need to help schools manage expectations of what they can expect from local employers: one school asked us to supply them with 3,400 work placements! We work mainly with SMEs, who are keen to engage but they can only do so much and they also need help managing the relationship. So we help connect them and eventually they form their own relationships and can partner long-term.'

To encourage businesses to free-up staff time, chambers should also help them monitor their impact on student outcomes, as well as the impact on their employees' own professional development. This would help foster long-term sustainable partnerships by showing employers how they have made a difference as well as 'what's in it for them'. Where appropriate, and requested by an employer, chambers could draw up voluntary agreements setting out the expectations on both sides, including levels of engagement and impact updates. This would also encourage both sides to think strategically about the most effective use of employers' time and resource.

'Employee volunteering delivers much more than helping young people realise their potential, which in itself gives a sense of self-fulfilment and purpose, but also supports employee pride and personal development. Employers need to see the tangible value that giving employee time to volunteering [in schools and colleges] can have on their business.'

Nicole Lovett, CSR at Deutsche Bank

Recommendation: The role of LEPs should be extended to incorporate strategic planning, with responsibility for working with employers to map the employment needs of an area – including the identification of future skills shortages and emerging industries. To be successful, LEPs must ensure they work closely with FE colleges in their area. There should be a cross party pledge to enable LEPs to continue to exist.

Recommendation: Extend the role of the British Chambers of Commerce so that local chambers act as brokers of employer engagement between employers, schools and colleges. All schools and colleges should be expected to engage with local employers, with local chambers facilitating this if needed.

260 DIHK, *Education and training*, [accessed via: www.dihk.de/en/segments/training (19/08/14)]

University Technical Colleges (UTCs)

The CSJ has heard that UTCs are an excellent means of bridging the gap between education and employment. UTCs are Academies for 14- to 19-year-olds, focussed on delivering technical education that engages young people and meets the needs of modern business. All UTCs are sponsored by employers and a local university ensuring their curriculum is designed by experts, and supported through work placements.

'There's 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. UTCs are a great way of persuading employers to become involved directly in the education system.'

Dr Vanessa Ogden, Headteacher of Mulberry School for Girls, in evidence to the CSJ

However, the 45 UTCs that will be open next year will not be enough to ensure access throughout the country.²⁶¹ The Government should therefore aim to offer at least one UTC in every town, which would benefit.

'UTCs are boutiques. Numbers of students are miniscule but they provide useful innovation in the system and are possibly part of a shift away from 16 being the end point in education to a world where more young people make choices at 14 but where they stay in education and training at 18.'

Julian Gravatt, Assistant Chief Executive of the AoC, in evidence to the CSJ

To extend the reach of this initiative, Outstanding FE colleges should also be allowed to sponsor UTCs.²⁶² Some areas are served by their local college, and they may not have a university within close proximity. This would therefore increase the initiative's geographic reach to more communities and more young learners who would benefit. To maintain the credibility of the initiative, only the best colleges should be able to do this.

'FE colleges are embracing all manner of new delivery models and are involved in supporting many different institutions. UTCs should be no exception to this, provided they are proven to be a successful model.'

Andy Gannon, Director of Policy, PR and Research, I57 Group, in evidence to the CSJ

UTCs are not a panacea, and careful planning is required: colleges and schools are parts of a system and so if a new player is introduced it affects the whole system. Unfortunately this is not always taking place. Jane O'Neill, interim Principal and Chief Executive of the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, a college in North London, told the CSJ that there was little planning behind the decision to open a UTC in their area:

²⁶¹ Department for Education, Press release, *New wave of approved UTCs will take total to 45*, 28 March 2013 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/news/new-wave-of-approved-utcs-will-take-total-to-45 (17/08/14)]; 13 new UTCs are set to open from September 2014, adding to the 27 preparing to open and five currently open.

²⁶² It was originally intended for only universities to do this -UTCs all have a university as a lead sponsor: FE colleges, charitable organisations and the private sector may co-sponsor a UTC; but they must also be led by a university.

'There's a huge overlap with what we already offer and what this UTC will offer. They'll be offering a curriculum very similar to ours so it's just duplicating efforts. There's been no discussion or planning about what the area needs, and what its young people need. We used to have strategic reviews so that we were planning effectively – but this no longer happens.'

It has already been announced that one UTC will be closed due to lack of demand, illustrating that where there is already a number of high performing institutions, there must be careful consideration of whether there is room and need for a new organisation.²⁶³ Therefore expansions in the number of UTCs must be accompanied by more strategic planning of where UTCs are based and what skills they specialise in according to local labour markets and gaps in existing provision.

Recommendation: As UTCs develop, their success should be fully evaluated and the Government should aim to have at least one UTC in every town in the country.

Recommendation: Good or Outstanding colleges should be allowed to sponsor UTCs.

Recommendation: New institutions should arrive when there is a proven skills gap that cannot be met with sufficiently high quality by existing local providers. Conversations between schools, FE and UTCs need to take place in a planned forum, to map gaps in an area's skills and provision. As part of their extended role, LEPs should support this.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships have to be part of the solution for disadvantaged young people. They can offer excellent on-the-job training and improve how we prepare more people for industry.

The number of apprenticeships has expanded substantially under this Government: in the 2012/13 academic year there were 510,000 apprenticeship starts, 231,000 more than 2009/10.²⁶⁴

However, many employers are reluctant to offer apprenticeships and proper work placements – both of which act as important pathways into employment. Whilst the 2012 Richard Review of Apprenticeships called on the UK to imitate the high esteem in which apprenticeships are held in other countries;²⁶⁵ less than one in five employers offer apprenticeships compared with half of employers in Germany.²⁶⁶

The standard of apprenticeships also tends to be lower: In Germany, 90 per cent of young people's apprenticeships are at Level 3 and above compared to just a third in this country.²⁶⁷ In her review, Professor Wolf identified Level 3 courses and apprenticeships as particularly

263 FE Week, *Hackney UTC closure prompts tough 157 Group leader criticism for Lord Baker project*, July 11 2014

264 Apprenticeship statistics, *Standard Note: SNI/EP/6113*, ten February 2014, James Mirza-Davies, Economic Policy and Statistics

265 Richard D, *The Richard Review of Apprenticeships*, Copyright 2012: Doug Richard, CEO and Founder, School for Startups, 2012

266 Boston Consulting Group for the Sutton Trust, *Real Apprenticeships, Creating a revolution in English skills*, London: The Sutton Trust, 2013, p6

267 Ibid

good.²⁶⁸ Having more apprenticeships at Level 3 would mean they can offer a genuine alternative to Higher Education, giving those taking them strong skills in their field. The decline of the pre-18 labour market also means that being qualified to Level 3 is increasingly important and two-thirds of the public believe most apprenticeships should be designed to meet A-level standard (Level 3) or above.²⁶⁹

The Government should therefore ensure a radical expansion of Level 3 apprenticeships so as to make them the norm for young people choosing this path. In practice this would mean about 150–250,000 extra Level 3 apprenticeships each year.²⁷⁰

Recommendation: There should be a radical expansion of Level 3 apprenticeships, with 150–250,000 extra places established each year, making these the norm.

Conclusion

As the quality of schools improves, we expect that more young people will leave with the essential basics to be able to find work or take advantage of training. However there may always be some children leaving school without the basics, needing remedial education. Wasting the potential of these children not only harms them and their families, it damages the country's economic prospects. These children must be able to access the best provision.

Our recommendations build on recent reforms so that FE can be better quality, fairer and more accountable on the opportunities it creates for young people.

Making sure more FE acts as a gateway to work also depends on the relationships formed between education providers and employers. We must urgently bridge the gap between education and work, and make sure employers support this process. Not only is it their social duty to do so, it is in their economic interests to make sure young people have the skills they need. These reforms will ensure those with most to gain can access a wide range of opportunities and aspirations, regardless of their background.

²⁶⁸ Wolf A, *Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report*, London: Department for Education, 2011

²⁶⁹ See for example SKOPE (Keep E), *Youth Transitions, the Labour Market and Entry into Employment: Some Reflections and Questions*, Cardiff: SKOPE, May 2012

²⁷⁰ These numbers are based around revised estimates from evidence to the CSJ, as well as statistics in: Boston Consulting Group for the Sutton Trust, *Real Apprenticeships, Creating a revolution in English skills*, London: The Sutton Trust, 2013

Conclusion

Whilst there have been some long-term improvements in school standards in England, and whilst this Government's hugely promising reforms will undoubtedly lead to further improvements, it is clear that there is still far more to be done. Last year, more than 225,000 pupils, almost 40 per cent, left school without five good GCSEs including English and maths.²⁷¹ For some children, the picture is even bleaker. In some local authorities last year, more than 70 per cent of the poorest children did not achieve this basic standard.²⁷²

The challenge we must set is to offer all children the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential, so that they leave education ready for the next steps in life and on the path to employment. The reforms of recent years are building an education system in which schools are held to high standards but with the freedom to innovate, and are encouraged to do all they can to ensure that those who have the most to gain from a good education get all the support they need.

In this report we have sought to build on these ideas and spread their success to the poorest parts of the country. Our recommendations can benefit everyone in the education system but their value will be greatest for the most disadvantaged children and communities which for years, have been left to fail. They can help to improve the quality of early education so that more children start school ready for learning, and offer support to the most vulnerable children who face significant barriers to achievement. They can enable weaker and stronger schools to work together more effectively so that those who are struggling can learn from those who have overcome the same challenges. They can bring the best leaders and teachers to the areas that need them most, helping communities that have, for too long, been let down. And they can help smooth the transition to work for young people taking vocational routes.

By extending excellent education to the most deprived parts of the country we can do more to help these areas shrug off deprivation and offer all young people a route out of poverty.

271 Department for Education, *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics*, London: Department for Education, 2014

272 Ibid

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