



House of Commons  
Education Committee

---

# **The forgotten: how White working-class pupils have been let down, and how to change it**

---

**First Report of Session 2021–22**





House of Commons  
Education Committee

---

**The forgotten: how  
White working-class  
pupils have been let  
down, and how to  
change it**

---

**First Report of Session 2021–22**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 16 June 2021*

## The Education Committee

The Education Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Education and its associated public bodies.

### Current membership

[Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP](#) (*Conservative, Harlow*) (Chair)

[Fleur Anderson MP](#) (*Labour, Putney*)

[Apsana Begum MP](#) (*Labour, Poplar and Limehouse*)

[Jonathan Gullis MP](#) (*Conservative, Stoke-on-Trent North*)

[Tom Hunt MP](#) (*Conservative, Ipswich*)

[Dr Caroline Johnson MP](#) (*Conservative, Sleaford and North Hykeham*)

[Kim Johnson MP](#) (*Labour, Liverpool, Riverside*)

[David Johnston MP](#) (*Conservative, Wantage*)

[Ian Mearns MP](#) (*Labour, Gateshead*)

[David Simmonds MP](#) (*Conservative, Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner*)

[Christian Wakeford MP](#) (*Conservative, Bury South*)

### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publications

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Commons 2021. This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament Licence, which is published at [www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright-parliament](http://www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright-parliament).

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/education-committee](http://www.parliament.uk/education-committee) and in print by Order of the House.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Kevin Candy (Second Clerk), Vanessa Donhowe (Committee Specialist), Dr Mike Everett (Clerk), Oliver Florence (Senior Media Officer), Rosemary Hill (Committee Specialist), Nelson Idama (Media Officer), Robert McQuade (Committee Operations Manager), Rebecca Owen-Evans (Committee Specialist), Steiner Teixido-Oroza (Committee Operations Officer).

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Education Committee, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 2370; the Committee's email address is [educom@parliament.uk](mailto:educom@parliament.uk).

You can follow the Committee on Twitter using [@CommonsEd](https://twitter.com/CommonsEd).

# Contents

---

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
Our inquiry	10
Definitions and clarifications	11
Disadvantage and 'working-class'	11
White British	14
White Privilege	14
Gender	17
<b>2 The extent of the achievement gap for disadvantaged White pupils</b>	<b>18</b>
Ethnic majority: number of pupils affected	18
Key metrics	19
Longevity of the issue and lack of progress	20
The impact of covid-19	22
<b>3 The influence of place</b>	<b>24</b>
The nature of geographic inequalities in education and outcomes	24
The London effect	24
Levelling up for the White working class	28
Are free schools reaching 'challenged White communities'?	31
<b>4 Supporting White working-class children and families: from cradle to career</b>	<b>33</b>
Supporting the early years sector	33
What are Family Hubs?	35
Family Hubs: supporting disadvantaged White families in the early years	36
Family hubs: providing cradle to career support	38
Breaking cycles of disengagement with education for disadvantaged White adults	41
<b>5 The school system</b>	<b>43</b>
Teacher training and recruitment	43
School funding	45
<b>6 Destinations for disadvantaged White pupils</b>	<b>49</b>
Apprenticeships and skills: parity of esteem for vocational and technical education	49
Apprenticeships and reform to the levy	51
Careers education	52
Access to and participation in higher education	53

<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Formal minutes</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Witnesses</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Published written evidence</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament</b>	<b>82</b>

## Summary

Our Committee is dedicated to championing left-behind groups. As our first step, we decided to examine the decades-long neglect of the let-down White working class, seven years after a previous House of Commons Education Select Committee found that “White working class underachievement in education is real and persistent”, and called on the Government to “take steps” to ensure that they fulfil their potential. We are aware that this is a second report from an Education Committee on this specific group. But the large number of disadvantaged White British pupils that underachieve in education remains a significant obstacle to closing the overall attainment gap. We fully recognise that other ethnic groups also experience disadvantage and discrimination in education and deserve support, and we understand the justified anger that many people feel about racism, prejudice and discrimination. It is vital that we work together as a country to address those issues and we commit to investigating this in our future work on left-behind groups.

To define “White working class” in this report, we have relied on available data: we use free school meal (FSM) eligibility and focused on the White British group. While ‘White working class’ is an imperfect substitute for this group, it is a widely used proxy, and evidence shows that this group underperforms in education compared to their peers from other ethnic groups. In the 2018–19 school year:

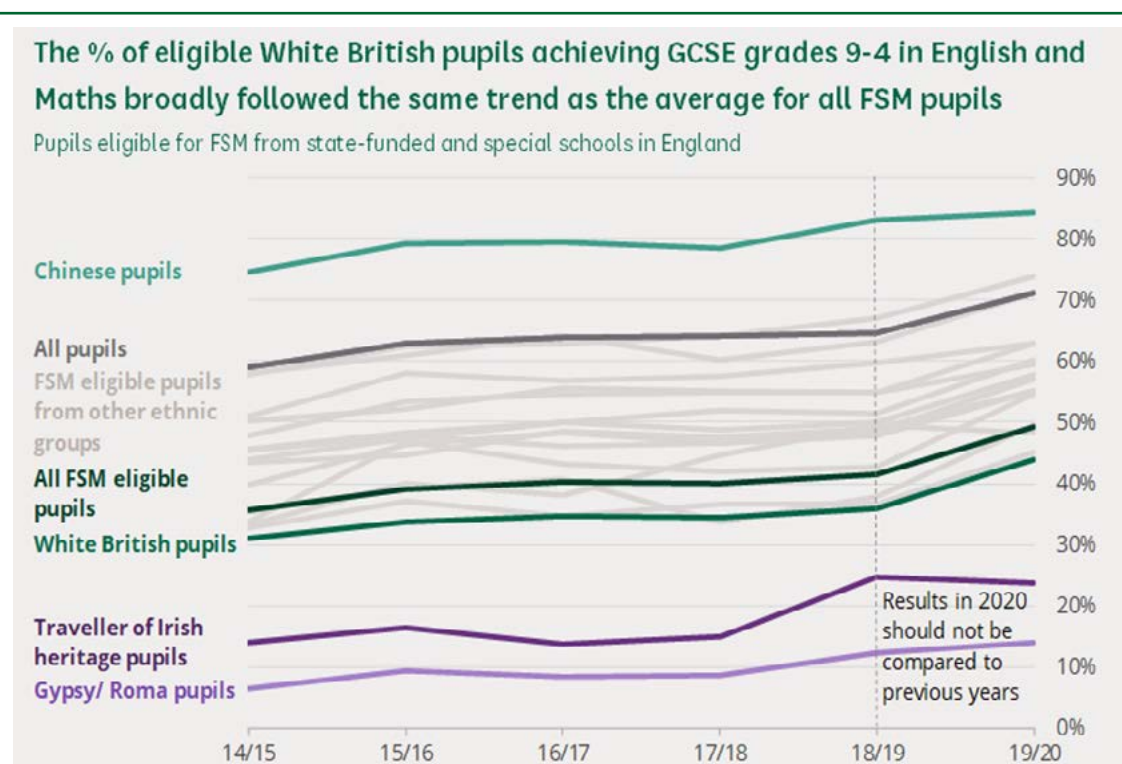
- **Percentage of 4 to 5-year olds meeting Development Goals in 2018/19:** 53% of FSM-eligible White British pupils met the expected standard of development, against an average for all FSM-eligible pupils of 55%. This was the lowest percentage for a FSM-eligible ethnic group other than Irish Traveller (29%), Gypsy/Roma (33%) and White Irish (49%). 55% of White Other FSM-eligible pupils met the expected standard, 67% of FSM-eligible Chinese pupils met the expected standard of development, and 66% of FSM-eligible Indian pupils did. 61% of FSM-eligible Black Caribbean pupils and 64% of Black African pupils met the expected standard.
- **Attainment 8 scores in 2018/19:** FSM-eligible White British pupils had an average Attainment 8 score of 31.8, against an average for all FSM-eligible pupils of 34.9. This was the lowest score for an FSM-eligible ethnic group other than Gypsy/Roma (16.9) and Irish Traveller (22.2). FSM-eligible pupils from any other White background scored 39.0, FSM-eligible Chinese pupils scored 57.9, and FSM-eligible Indian pupils scored 48.2. FSM-eligible Black Caribbean pupils scored 34.1, and FSM-eligible Black African pupils scored 42.3.
- **Access to higher education:** The proportion of White British pupils who were FSM-eligible starting higher education by the age of 19 in 2018/19 was 16.0%, the lowest of any ethnic group other than traveller of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma. FSM-eligible White other pupils had a participation rate of 37.2%, FSM-eligible Chinese pupils had a participation rate of 72.8%, and FSM-eligible pupils from a Black African background had a participation rate of 59.0%. FSM-eligible pupils from a Black Caribbean background had a participation rate of 31.8%.

While it is important to understand and address underachievement for all pupils, educational attainment is lower for disadvantaged pupils in the White group than for disadvantaged pupils in other main ethnic groups. This is particularly striking because White people are the ethnic majority in the country, and most disadvantaged pupils are White (around 982,950 pupils in 2020, compared to 139,720 Asian students, the next largest group). We are aware of a pressing need to tackle social injustices for pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, from school exclusions, to degree classifications, to disparities in the workplace, healthcare and justice systems. However, we also believe that the size of the White majority means that addressing their relatively low educational outcomes could significantly shift the overall attainment gap.

We began our inquiry during the covid-19 pandemic, and while this report does not have the scope to look in depth at the impact of the pandemic, we are aware of the consequences of multiple lockdowns on all children, especially the most disadvantaged. We also stress that this inquiry does not seek to diminish the importance of tackling racism, and the additional challenges that children from ethnic minorities face every day. We recognise that there are minor ethnic groups within the White group that face specific challenges, including Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller children and White pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). We received evidence about the marginalisation and discrimination that some children face from certain backgrounds. We believe these pupils deserve specific investigation, but the whole focus of this report is on the challenges that White working class pupils face. Here, we focus on the White British group, and commit to pursue the social injustices facing other ethnic groups in future.

The Department, the educational establishment and wider society have fallen victim to muddled thinking with regard to disadvantaged White pupils, insisting that the same policies and generalised approach which has failed to close the disadvantage gap over recent years will redress this long-term, complex issue. The graph below illustrates the failure to close the gap for this group:





There are many reasons for this gap and there will be no simple fix. We are certain that it is not due to any ethnic trait: a person's ethnicity bears no relation to their natural ability or potential. Neither is it solely an issue of poverty, as the Department seems quick to accept. Children from ethnic minorities are more likely to experience poverty—for students receiving GCSE results in 2020 there were 55,375 FSM-eligible White British pupils, from a total of 383,021 White British pupils (14.5%). For comparison, there were 8,265 FSM-eligible Black pupils from a total of 32,935 Black pupils (25.1%), and 10,443 FSM-eligible Asian pupils from a total of 61,023 Asian pupils (17.1%). While White British pupils are less likely to be FSM-eligible than pupils from ethnic minorities, FSM-eligible White British pupils as a whole are the largest disadvantaged ethnic group. Yet despite being more likely to be FSM-eligible, pupils from ethnic minorities frequently out-perform their White peers in education.

We heard many factors that may combine to put White working-class pupils at a disadvantage, including these key areas:

1. Persistent and multigenerational disadvantage
2. Place-based factors, including regional economics and underinvestment
3. Family experience of education
4. A lack of social capital
5. Disengagement from the curriculum
6. A failure to address their low participation in higher education

We do not deny that children from other ethnic groups experience these challenges. We believe, however, that disadvantaged White children may be vulnerable to a greater

cumulation of them, particularly with regard to living in deprived areas with a lack of social capital and historically low outcomes. Much of the evidence we heard, including the importance of high-quality early years support and teaching, careers guidance and mental health support, could apply to all low-income groups. It follows that some of our recommendations will benefit all disadvantaged children. However, the evidence pointed to two key areas which we believe are central to understanding relative underperformance for disadvantaged White pupils:

- Place-based disparities, not just relating to income deprivation but also poor infrastructure, struggling job markets and lack of opportunity, and multi-generational poverty and unemployment, are more likely to affect disadvantaged White pupils due to the distribution of ethnic diversity in the country. Tackling these requires highly tailored local solutions.
- Cultural factors, including family structure, experience of education, and access to community assets (including places of worship, youth groups and other social organisations), may also disproportionately impact attainment for disadvantaged White pupils.

To tackle this, the Department for Education must first acknowledge the extent of the problem and recognise that its current approach is not working. What is needed now is a tailored approach, with targeted recommendations.

**Funding needs to be micro-targeted to level up educational opportunity. To do this, we need a better understanding of disadvantage, and better tools to tackle it.**

First, we need better data on disadvantage, to pinpoint barriers and geographical areas that need more support and address stark geographic differences in educational outcomes. There is good data available about education related to ethnicity, sex, geography and socio-economic background, but it is rarely cross-referenced to provide a richer analysis. Using FSM and Ever-6 FSM as the primary measure of disadvantage is a blunt and imperfect instrument. The Government should develop more multivariant data sets that facilitate a sophisticated view of which areas, schools and pupils need the most help.

Then, the Department should reform the Pupil Premium, using these data sets, by introducing weighting for long-term disadvantage and geographic factors, as well as more accountability for schools themselves, to ensure the funding is always spent on the most disadvantaged. Should the Department's latest changes to the conditions of the Pupil Premium grant not prevent schools spending the money on plugging other gaps in their budgets, the Department should consider measures such as ring-fencing the Pupil Premium for disadvantaged children.

**Disadvantaged White families must have access to strong early years support and Family Hubs.**

'Aspirations' and 'culture' are recurring themes in the debate about how to help the White working-class. We heard evidence of an 'immigrant paradigm' that leads some families to place greater value on education, while multi-generational disadvantage, particularly amongst white (and Black Caribbean) families, has inculcated feelings of

hopelessness and powerlessness to break the cycle of poverty. We also heard suggestions that disadvantaged White parents may find it difficult to engage with schools or access the full range of support that they are entitled to, and that some families' low educational achievement made it harder for them to help their own children with their school work.

The Department must do more to support disadvantaged White families, and in doing so it will help their children reach their full potential. They can do this by:

- Using the Government's £14 million investment to create a 'national infrastructure' of Family Hubs to give parents a single point of access for the services they need. Family Hubs are local support centres where families with children and young people aged 0–19 can access a broad and integrated range of early help. Schools must have a role in this, emulating the success of the Reach Children's Hub in Feltham and their 'cradle-to-career' model; and
- Boosting adult community learning centres, to help parents without basic literacy and numeracy skills engage in their children's learning.

**We need to communicate the different but equally valuable vocational training and apprenticeship options alongside traditional academic routes.**

The Department must revisit the benefits of greater diversity of subjects in the pre-16 curriculum, so that the lower rungs in the skills ladder are in place. The focus should be ensuring that all pupils achieve the essential level of qualifications they need with academic rigour and high expectations, while acknowledging the value of practical and vocational subjects, such as Design and Technology and their potential to engage otherwise disengaged groups, such as some disadvantaged White pupils. We are clear that this does not mean introducing a two-tier system, with practical subjects a second-rate alternative for children perceived to be less able. The Department must reform accountability measures by reforming the Ebacc, with a curriculum that includes both academic subjects and at least one technical, creative or vocational course in KS4. By doing this, the Department could super-charge its technical and skills agenda, inspiring all young people to consider alternatives to the well-trodden academic pathways.

**Boosting access to higher education through improving careers guidance and specifying targets for disadvantaged White pupils.**

Strikingly, just 16% of disadvantaged White pupils went on to higher education in 2018/19, while 21.1% of FSM-eligible Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils and 31.8% of FSM-eligible Black Caribbean pupils did go on to higher education. We acknowledge that there are very concerning disparities in outcomes within higher education for different ethnic groups, most notably the tendency for pupils from ethnic minorities to attend lower tier universities and have lower degree classifications. For example, the proportion of Black Caribbean and White and Black Caribbean students entering a higher tariff institution is the lowest of all groups, even lower than White British. We will pursue these issues in our future work. We also believe that the higher education participation rate for disadvantaged White pupils is a clear indictment of the failures and attainment gaps that accumulate throughout primary and secondary

education for this group. We do not believe that university is the right destination for everyone, but we also believe that disadvantaged White pupils deserve as wide a range of options on leaving school as any other group, and that should include university.

Like all young people, disadvantaged White pupils therefore need early exposure to the advantages of higher education and much better careers guidance to help them make genuinely informed choices about their future. Organisations such as Chambers of Commerce and local businesses could play a much stronger role in providing exposure to a range of career options. Ofsted must also be stronger in their enforcement of schools' compliance, by linking schools' inspection results to compliance with the Baker Clause, and where there is non-compliance schools should be limited to a "Requires Improvement" rating.

Higher education providers must also do more to help disadvantaged White pupils access their institutions. We were concerned to hear that higher education providers are failing to tackle this problem proactively through their (regulated) Access and Participation plans. The money that universities spend on access (we heard that in 2019 this was around £800 million), should be sent "upstream" to inform pupils about the opportunities offered by higher education earlier in education, or to encouraging more students to consider degree apprenticeships. This funding should also be allocated with disadvantage and low participation rates as a key priority. The Office for Students must set clear expectations for the sector around participation rates specifically for this cohort and highlight them as 'under-represented groups' and insist that all plans contain relevant targets.

### **Finding a better way to talk about racial disparities**

Finally, we need new and constructive ways to talk about racial disparities. We agree with the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities that current discourse around White Privilege can be divisive, and we hope that by highlighting the hardships faced by many White people from disadvantaged backgrounds, our inquiry may help advance a new way to discuss disadvantage without pitting different groups against each other.

# 1 Introduction

1. The educational underachievement of White working-class pupils is clear. They are among the most likely to not achieve a pass in English and Maths GCSE and the least likely to go to university. White pupils are the country's ethnic majority, with 982,950 White pupils eligible for free school meals in 2020.<sup>1</sup> Consistently poor outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in this group is a significant challenge in closing the overall disadvantage gap.

2. The gap has been evident for years, through changing national demographics and assessment systems. Between 2004 and 2013 FSM-eligible White British pupils were the lowest performing group in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving five A\*-C grades, including English and Maths, with the exception of pupils from Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller backgrounds.<sup>2</sup> This has not gone unnoticed. Ofsted published reports highlighting this in 2008<sup>3</sup> and 2013,<sup>4</sup> and a previous House of Commons Education Select Committee published a report specifically on this topic in 2014.<sup>5</sup> Following that report, the Department published a "compendium of evidence on ethnic minority resilience to the effects of deprivation on attainment"<sup>6</sup> and committed to publishing data on FSM-status in statistical releases.<sup>7</sup>

3. This is a complex problem and throughout our inquiry it has been challenging to clarify what drives this attainment gap. We were disappointed that the Department's evidence did not acknowledge the importance of trying to do this. Instead, it relied on muddled thinking and asserted that more of the same policies to drive up standards will solve the attainment gap,<sup>8</sup> despite evidence that the gap had ceased closing before the pandemic.<sup>9</sup>

4. Witnesses stressed that the gap between disadvantaged White pupils and their peers is not caused by their ethnicity or race.<sup>10</sup> Like them, we do not believe that someone's ethnicity points to any inherent difference in ability or potential. Neither did the Department convince us that they are right to attribute all the gap to poverty alone.<sup>11</sup> Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to experience poverty, yet they consistently out-perform their White British peers.<sup>12</sup>

5. Professor Matthew Goodwin, Professor of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent, told us that "there is not one single factor that can explain the

1 [PQ 63494](#) [on Free School Meals: Ethnic Groups] 1 July 2020

2 Department for Education, [Ethnicity, deprivation and educational achievement at age 16 in England: trends over time](#), June 2015, p67

3 Ofsted, [White boys from low-income backgrounds: good practice in schools](#), July 2008

4 Ofsted, [Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on](#), 20 June 2013

5 Education Committee, First Report of Session 2014–15, [Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children](#), HC 142, 11 June 2014

6 Department for Education, [A compendium of evidence on ethnic minority resilience to the effects of deprivation on attainment](#), June 2015

7 Education Committee, Second Special Report of Session 2014–15, [Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2014–15](#), HC 647, 15 September 2014

8 Department for Education ([LBP0044](#))

9 Education Policy Institute, [Education in England: Annual Report 2020](#), August 2020, pp9–11

10 See, for example, [Q308](#) Dr Javed Khan

11 [Q361](#) Nick Gibb

12 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The report](#), 31 March 2021, pp37–39

problem. We need a multivariate analysis.”<sup>13</sup> Evidence points at interacting issues in all parts of a disadvantaged White child’s life that may cause them to fall behind. These include intergenerational disadvantage,<sup>14</sup> geographic inequalities,<sup>15</sup> family experience of education,<sup>16</sup> disengagement from school,<sup>17</sup> through to a policy failure to strategically address their low participation in higher education.<sup>18</sup>

6. Children from other ethnic groups also face these challenges, but the evidence suggests that disadvantaged White children may be vulnerable to a greater cumulation of them. As the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities found, there is much to celebrate in the educational success of some ethnic minorities in England, especially in terms of closing the disadvantage gap.<sup>19</sup> This inquiry is not about taking away from those groups, but rather acknowledging that disadvantaged White pupils have been overlooked for the help that they also need. This is a long-term problem, and solutions need time and co-ordination across Government. Many of the strategies to close the gap for disadvantaged White pupils will help other groups as well, and some of our recommendations reflect that.

## Our inquiry

7. We began our inquiry on 17 April 2020. We received 65 pieces of written evidence, and held eight evidence sessions, including one with the Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for School Standards, and Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families. We are grateful to everyone who submitted their evidence to our inquiry, and to our specialist advisers Professor Matthew Goodwin and Mary Curnock Cook.<sup>20</sup>

8. We began our inquiry during the covid-19 pandemic and recognise the impact of lockdowns and school closures on all pupils. We have examined this through our inquiry, *The impact of covid-19 on education and children’s services*,<sup>21</sup> and in one-off sessions and accountability hearings. It is not in the scope of this report to address the impact of covid-19 more generally on education, but we reflect on it where relevant.

---

13 [Q27](#) Professor Matthew Goodwin

14 [Q308](#) Dr Javed Khan

15 [Q38](#) Mary Curnock Cook

16 [Q5](#) Professor Diane Reay

17 Nesta ([LBP0016](#))

18 National Education Opportunities Network ([LBP0005](#))

19 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The report](#), 31 March 2021 pp31–32

20 Mary Curnock Cook declared the following relevant interests: Chair of Trustees at the Access Project; Chair, The Dyson Institute, Engineering Degree Apprenticeship provider; Council Member, The Open University; Non-Executive Director, the London Interdisciplinary School. Matthew Goodwin did not have any relevant interests to declare

21 Education Committee, [The impact of COVID-19 on education and children’s services](#), 25 March 2020



## Definitions and clarifications

### *Disadvantage and ‘working-class’*

9. In the Department’s written evidence, a footnote explains that “Throughout this paper, the term ‘disadvantaged pupils’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)’”.<sup>22</sup> Children are FSM-eligible if their parents receive the following:

- Income Support.
- Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit.
- Child Tax Credit (for those not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and with an annual gross income of no more than £16,190).
- Working Tax Credit run-on—paid for 4 weeks after the recipient stops qualifying for the credit.
- Universal Credit—for those who applied on or after 1 April 2018 their household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits they get).<sup>23</sup>

10. The National Funding Formula includes additional needs factors.<sup>24</sup> The formula allocates funding for socio-economic deprivation at pupil-level based on FSM-eligibility and ‘Ever 6’ eligibility (pupils who have been recorded as eligible for FSM at any time in the last six years), and at area-level based on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI).<sup>25</sup> Schools receive additional funding for disadvantaged pupils through the Pupil Premium, which is allocated to schools based on the number of pupils who are Ever 6 or FSM-eligible, and for pupils who are looked-after or previously looked after.<sup>26</sup>

11. The Department publishes statistics with FSM-eligibility, and eligibility for the pupil premium, as criteria to measure the progress of disadvantaged children.<sup>27</sup> FSM-eligibility is critical to the Department’s approach to funding and evaluating disadvantage. As evidence suggested, using FSM-eligibility is pragmatic, given the availability and longevity of the data. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) told us that “Pupil Premium eligibility is the best proxy for disadvantage as it captures the majority of pupils living in poverty and is strongly correlated with educational attainment”.<sup>28</sup>

22 Department for Education ([LBP0044](#))

23 Department for Education, [Apply for free school meals](#), accessed 4 March 2021

24 Department for Education, [Schools block national funding formula: technical note](#), July 2020, pp12–17

25 The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) “measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families”, and is a “subset of the Income Deprivation Domain which measures the proportion of the population in an area experiencing deprivation relating to low income”. See: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, [Open Data: i. Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index \(IDACI\)](#), accessed 28 May 2021

26 Department for Education, [Pupil premium](#), 30 March 2021

27 Department for Education, [SFR 40/2014](#), December 2014, and [Key stage 4 performance: Academic Year 2019/20](#), February 2021

28 Education Endowment Foundation ([LBP0041](#))

12. Evidence also criticised FSM-eligibility as a proxy for disadvantage. The Catholic Education Service said that families who are above the “poverty line but in low paid or zero hours employment” would not be captured in this measure.<sup>29</sup> The Social Mobility Commission questioned whether FSM-eligibility can capture “the complex drivers of underachievement, and effectively monitor and *address* poor pupil outcomes”.<sup>30</sup> We agree that FSM status is a blunt and limited tool. It treats disadvantage as a binary, with pupils being FSM-eligible (and therefore, ‘disadvantaged’), or not (and presumably, ‘advantaged’). This is not a satisfactory way to capture how disadvantage affects children. There are many other factors to consider, including:

- i) The length of time pupils are FSM-eligible.<sup>31</sup>
- ii) Those pupils who are not FSM-eligible but whose families are in financial hardship, (the ‘working poor’).<sup>32</sup>
- iii) As Anne Longfield (former Children’s Commissioner for England) described in her speech ‘Building back better’, where a combination of FSM-eligibility and other vulnerabilities combine.<sup>33</sup>

13. The New Schools Network (NSN) said that “While relevant metrics are captured individually, there are limited data that take into account multiple metrics, such as ethnicity, FSM eligibility, gender, geographic area, and performance together”. The NSN say that “this makes drawing conclusions about disadvantaged white pupils, rather than white pupils in general, more challenging”.<sup>34</sup>

14. Drawing accurate conclusions is also difficult when we consider the term “White working-class”. The term occurred spontaneously in written evidence, and from witnesses, and is widely used to refer to disadvantaged White pupils. The National Literacy Trust said that “reports ... tend to use FSM eligibility interchangeably with the term ‘working-class’”.<sup>35</sup> Yet there is no single definition of what “working-class” means.<sup>36</sup> It is difficult to quantify and means different things to different people. According to the British Social Attitudes survey 33, conducted by NatCen in 2016, up to 60% of the population describe themselves as “working-class”, including “half of people in managerial and professional occupations”.<sup>37</sup>

15. Professor Steve Strand’s analysis of educational outcomes for the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities used parental occupation, parental qualifications and family income to measure socio-economic status.<sup>38</sup> The data came from the Second Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE2) and it gives a more detailed picture of socio-economic status and ethnicity than the data made available by the Department. Organisations and witnesses in our inquiry called for wider access to statistics held by the

---

29 The Catholic Education Service ([LBP0014](#))

30 Social Mobility Commission ([LBP0046](#))

31 Henri Murison [Q81](#)

32 Helena Mills [Q167](#)

33 Children’s Commissioner, [Building back better - Anne Longfield’s final speech as Children’s Commissioner](#), 17 February 2021

34 New Schools Network ([LBP0047](#))

35 The National Literacy Trust ([LBP0020](#))

36 Universities UK ([LBP0030](#))

37 NatCen, [British Social Attitudes 33](#), 2016, p3

38 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [Ethnic, socio-economic and sex inequalities in educational achievement at age 16, by Professor Steve Strand](#), 31 March 2021



Department. This included the National Pupil Database, to allow analysis of more detailed information about disadvantaged White pupils at local level and by other measures of deprivation.<sup>39</sup> The NSN recommended that the Government convene “new studies into white disadvantaged pupils across all year groups” to improve understanding of “why this cohort underachieves”.<sup>40</sup>

16. The Social Metrics Commission<sup>41</sup> have developed a “new approach to poverty measurement”, that includes “improvements in three key areas”:

- “Identifying those least able to make ends meet”, by accounting for all material resources (not just incomes) and “inescapable costs that some families face”, as well as assessments of “overcrowding in housing and those sleeping rough”
- “Providing a better understanding of the nature of poverty, by presenting detailed analysis of poverty depth and persistence”
- Assessing “Lived Experience Indicators” that reflect “the differences in experience of those living in poverty and those above the poverty line”<sup>42</sup>

17. For our inquiry we decided for pragmatic reasons to focus on FSM-eligible pupils. This is an imperfect measure, but data on FSM-eligibility and attainment is available for multiple cohorts at many stages of education, giving a good idea of the journey that disadvantaged White pupils go on. We know that this group does not map exactly on to ‘White working-class’, but this is a familiar term and one which occurred spontaneously from witnesses and written evidence. In this report we will use both ‘White working-class’ and ‘disadvantaged White’ to refer to White pupils who are eligible for FSM.

18. The Department’s current way of evaluating and funding disadvantage, relying on current and historical FSM-eligibility, does not take account of the full range of challenges facing disadvantaged White pupils. It also makes external scrutiny of Government initiatives challenging. To understand what causes the underachievement of disadvantaged White pupils we need to understand their needs and the barriers facing them.

19. *Disadvantage is a gradient, not an ‘either-or’ of FSM-eligible or ‘advantaged’. To support disadvantaged White pupils the Government must refine its key measures of disadvantage and widen public access to its statistics. This should be done in a way that protects pupil anonymity as a priority, for example by redacting figures where they reflect very small groups of pupils. Particularly importantly, the Department must consistently publish statistics that are as locally targeted as possible, at least at local authority or constituency level. These statistics must underpin the targeting of all interventions to those communities that most need them. In the short term, the Department should learn from the former Children’s Commissioner’s approach to capturing disadvantage by including statistics on the length of time children are FSM-eligible, and how other forms*

39 See, for example, Nesta ([LBP0016](#)) and Dr Alex Gibson [Q82](#)

40 New Schools Network ([LBP0047](#))

41 The Social Metrics Commission is an independent Commission founded by the Legatum Institute’s CEO Baroness Stroud. It was bought together to “develop a new approach to poverty measurement” that better reflects the nature and experiences of poverty, and that “can be used to build a consensus around poverty measurement and action”. See: Social Metrics Commission, [About](#), accessed 28 May 2021

42 Social Metrics Commission, [Measuring poverty 2020](#), July 2020, p8

*of disadvantage (for example, SEND, care experience, and local levels of deprivation) interact with this status. In the long term, the Department should work with other parts of Government to build a more sophisticated measure of how poverty affects children. This could draw on initial work by the Social Metrics Commission to develop a metric of poverty that provides a better understanding of the nature of poverty by drawing on lived experience and identifying those least able to make ends meet.*

## White British

20. We based our inquiry on the White British ethnic group, as defined by the Department for Education's school census.<sup>43</sup> This is the country's ethnic majority and disadvantaged pupils in this group perform consistently less well than their peers. We recognise the challenges facing other ethnic groups, including minority ethnic groups within the major White group. We would like to acknowledge these issues which evidence brought to our attention:

- Pupils from Travellers of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma backgrounds are the “lowest performing groups in primary and secondary education in the UK on all measures of attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance”.<sup>44</sup> Written evidence said that these pupils may experience racism and discrimination which may lead to families not ascribing themselves to this ethnic category. As a result, this relatively small group may be underrepresented in official data.<sup>45</sup>
- The Prisoner's Education Trust (PET) highlighted the disproportionate number of young people from ethnic minorities being excluded and taken into custody, including those from Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller, Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean backgrounds.<sup>46</sup> Evidence also highlighted that there are performance measures on which pupils from ethnic minorities, particularly FSM-eligible Black Caribbean pupils, perform similarly or less well than disadvantaged White pupils.<sup>47</sup>

21. We began this inquiry because the large number of disadvantaged White British pupils that underachieve in education is a significant obstacle to closing the overall disadvantage gap. We recognise that other ethnic groups also experience disadvantage and discrimination in education and deserve support. We will investigate this in our future work on left-behind groups.

## White Privilege

22. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities defines White Privilege as the “idea that there is societal privilege that benefits White people over other ethnic groups in some societies, particularly if they are otherwise under the same social, political, or economic circumstances”.<sup>48</sup>

43 GOV.UK, [Pupil progress between 11 and 16 years old \('Progress 8'\)](#), 22 November 2019

44 Centre for Education and Youth ([LBP0002](#))

45 Centre for Education and Youth ([LBP0002](#))

46 The Prisoner's Education Trust ([LBP0012](#))

47 See, for example: [Q46](#) Professor Becky Francis, [Q77](#) Sammy Wright

48 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The report](#), 31 March 2021, p241

23. White Privilege is used in the context of discrimination and racism and the challenges that people from ethnic minorities face. We recognise the importance of openly discussing and addressing racism in all its forms. Like the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, however, we are concerned that the phrase may be alienating to disadvantaged White communities, and it may have contributed towards a systemic neglect of White people facing hardship who also need specific support. It was noted during our evidence hearings that a lot of children in these disadvantaged white communities aren't aware of their own disadvantage.<sup>49</sup> This is a problem. As a committee we believe that the use of terms such as 'White Privilege' doesn't help this matter. This is coupled with the fact that there is an industry which has emerged to support these other groups in a form that isn't available for disadvantaged white pupils. White Privilege also fails to acknowledge the damage caused by other forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism and the marginalisation of people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds. Some research from the United States also suggests that learning about White Privilege may reduce sympathy for White people who are struggling with poverty. According to a 2019 US study: "White privilege lessons may lead some people to see a hierarchy in which Whiteness is always privileged to the same degree irrespective of individual-level variability, such as growing up in an impoverished situation".<sup>50</sup>

24. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests, terms such as 'White Privilege' became increasingly common in public forums in the UK. We are aware of resources seeking to explain the term for children and families that may encounter it in this way. Barnardo's, a national children's charity working with around 287,000 White children each year, published a blog post last year entitled 'White privilege—a guide for parents'.<sup>51</sup> The blog post says:

There is a lot of talk at the moment about 'white privilege'. Your children will be encountering the term in school, and in mainstream media like BBC Newsround. The subject evokes strong emotions from a range of people—some of whom disagree with the use of the term at all ...

White privilege is the multiple social advantages, benefits and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race.

This doesn't mean that, as a white person, you haven't worked hard for what you have, or that you haven't suffered.

49 See, for example, Qq 266–271 Rae Tooth and The Telegraph, [Primary school pupils should learn about white privilege, says RE teachers' organisation](#), 15 June 2021

50 Cooley, E., Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., Lei, R. F., & Cipolli, W. III. (2019). Complex intersections of race and class: Among social liberals, learning about White privilege reduces sympathy, increases blame, and decreases external attributions for White people struggling with poverty. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 148(12), 2218–2228 (p.2118). <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000605>

51 Barnardo's, [White privilege—a guide for parents](#), 30 October 2020

25. Barnardo's is not the only organisation with similar material on its website. There are several examples from other organisations, including local authorities.<sup>52</sup> We share concerns with the Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch MP, that there is a risk of some “pernicious” ideology beginning to spread to organisations and charities that work with children.<sup>53</sup> We understand the justified anger that many people feel about racism, prejudice and discrimination and it is vital that we work together as a country to address those issues. What we also know is that the disadvantaged White pupils our inquiry focuses on do not have “White Privilege” in the education system, and we are concerned about the impact that hearing terms like that presented as fact will have on those children. Organisations which are in receipt of taxpayer money should have full regard to their duties under the Equality Act 2010, and should consider whether the concept of White Privilege is consistent with those duties.

26. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities’ would welcome “the Government to set school leadership expectations around political neutrality and transparency on curriculum design”, and recommends that the Department “commission and publish research” on “whether schools are teaching in an impartial way”.<sup>54</sup> We share this view, and believe these principles should be applied to the concept of White Privilege. The Commission’s Chair, Dr Tony Sewell, said that “teachers need guidance” on how to handle areas like White Privilege “sensitively and carefully”.<sup>55</sup> He also pointed out that for many people living in “very poor backgrounds” the main issue is “not all this academic stuff about ‘White privilege’”, and called for a “focus on the real needs of real people”.<sup>56</sup> He added that:

They just basically want to get their kids into a job. Some of those single mothers and single fathers just want to try and get childcare sorted out. These are the very pragmatic things that face ordinary working-class people. What this commission is doing is trying to get practical answers to those parents. On this academia thing about White privilege, I will put it bluntly: it is a fair argument you put forward, but let’s focus on the real needs of real people.

27. When asked about White Privilege, Dr Javed Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Barnardo’s described it as “not an ideal phrase. I personally do not like it”. He acknowledged that it “creates barriers” for “people who want to engage in the debate, want to learn and want to contribute to creating a more harmonious society in this great country of ours, but they find it difficult to get past that phrase”. He also noted that the phrase is “commonly used at the moment” in mainstream media, with “CBBC and Newsround ... Radio 4 and

---

52 For example, Brighton and Hove Council have committed to include “building understanding of the impact on pupil and staff of bias, discrimination, white privilege and institutional racism” in the training the council offers to schools (see: Brighton and Hove Council, [Tackling racism and bias in schools](#), 18 June 2020). A training document by the Department for Transport explains that “When talking about race, some people refer to this as ‘white privilege’ - whatever else someone may be dealing with in their life, they usually don’t have to deal with negative reactions based on the colour of their skin” (see: Department for Transport, [How to use the real theme in training](#), 4 December 2020). The BBC published a video for newsround called “What is white privilege” (see: BBC, [What is white privilege](#), 17 June 2020).

53 HC Deb, 20 October 2020, [Column 1012](#), [Commons Chamber]

54 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The report](#), 31 March 2021, p92

55 [Q435](#) Dr Tony Sewell

56 [Q441](#) Dr Tony Sewell

local councils” all talking about White privilege.<sup>57</sup> Dr Khan also said that “What [White Privilege] means for us is simply that lots of children are disadvantaged ... If you happen to be non-White, there is one additional disadvantage that you face”.<sup>58</sup>

**28. Our inquiry has shown that poor White pupils are far from “privileged” in education.**

*29. Schools should consider whether the promotion of politically controversial terminology, including White Privilege, is consistent with their duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Department should take steps to ensure that young people are not inadvertently being inducted into political movements when what is required is balanced, age-appropriate discussion and a curriculum that equips young people to thrive in diverse and multi-cultural communities throughout their lives and work. The Department should issue clear guidance for schools and other Department-affiliated organisations receiving grants from the Department on how to deliver teaching on these complex issues in a balanced, impartial and age-appropriate way.*

## Gender

30. Evidence highlighted the gender attainment gap. This exists in all ethnic and socio-economic groups and is stark for disadvantaged White boys. The Men and Boys Coalition said that while “there are many complexities within attainment data by ethnicity, on gender there need be no reservations; girls outperform boys in every cohort”.<sup>59</sup> The challenges facing boys and young men from ethnic minorities are not confined to academic underachievement. There is a disproportionate rate of exclusion for boys and young men from Black Caribbean backgrounds. In academic results, FSM-eligible boys from mixed White and Black Caribbean, and Black Caribbean backgrounds, sometimes achieve similar or lower scores to FSM-eligible boys from White British backgrounds.<sup>60</sup> FSM-eligible girls from a White British background, while scoring higher than boys were also consistently scoring lower than FSM-eligible girls from other ethnic groups.

31. We will focus on disadvantaged White boys and girls, given that in comparison with girls from other ethnic backgrounds, disadvantaged White British girls also have consistently low attainment. We will also consider measures that benefit boys’ attainment in acknowledgement of the challenges they face and the benefits of closing the gender attainment gap.

---

57 [Q310](#) Dr Javed Khan

58 [Q317](#) Dr Javed Khan

59 Men and Boys Coalition ([LBP0033](#))

60 Department for Education, [Key Stage 4 performance 2019 \(revised\)](#), September 2020 (see [‘National characteristics tables’](#) (MS Excel Spreadsheet, access 20 April 2021))

## 2 The extent of the achievement gap for disadvantaged White pupils

### Ethnic majority: number of pupils affected

32. The 2011 census found that 86.0% of the population of England and Wales was White, and that 80.5% of the population identified as White British.<sup>61</sup> For students receiving GCSE results in 2020 there were 55,375 FSM-eligible White British pupils, from a total of 383,021 White British pupils (14.5%).<sup>62</sup> For comparison, there were 8,265 FSM-eligible Black pupils from a total of 32,935 Black pupils (25.1%), and 10,443 FSM-eligible Asian pupils from a total of 61,023 Asian pupils (17.1%). While White British pupils are less likely to be FSM-eligible than pupils from ethnic minorities, FSM-eligible White British pupils as a whole are the largest disadvantaged ethnic group.

Table 1: Number of pupils in each ethnic group (for pupils receiving their GCSE results in 2020)

Ethnicity	Number of FSM-eligible pupils	Total number of pupils	% of pupils that are FSM-eligible
White British	55,375	383,021	14%
Pakistani	5,162	24,275	21%
Black African	5,153	21,299	24%
White other	3,119	30,321	10%
Other	2,783	10,522	26%
Bangladeshi	2,707	10,372	26%
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	2,244	8,028	28%
Mixed other	2,183	11,093	20%
Black Caribbean	2,039	7,378	28%
Asian other	1,431	10,247	14%
Unknown	1,411	9,570	15%
Indian	1,143	16,129	7%
Black other	1,073	4,258	25%
Mixed White/Asian	1,062	6,654	16%
Mixed White/Black African	832	3,706	22%
Gypsy/Roma	497	1,354	37%
White Irish	223	1,648	14%
Chinese	140	1,959	7%
Irish Traveller	89	160	56%

Source: GOV.UK, Ethnicity Facts and Figures, [GCSE English and Maths results](#), 6 April 2021

61 Office for National Statistics, [Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales: 2011](#), 11 December 2012

62 GOV.UK, [GCSE Maths and English results](#), 6 April 2021



## 33. According to Department statistics:

- In the 2018/19 school year, 47% of FSM-eligible White British pupils did not meet the expected standard in development at early years Development Goals.<sup>63</sup> This represents around **28,000 pupils**.<sup>64</sup>
- In the 2018/19 school year 17.7% of White British students who were FSM-eligible scored a strong pass (grade 5 or above) in English and Maths at GCSE. This means around **39,000 White British FSM-eligible pupils** did not achieve a strong pass in English and Maths.<sup>65</sup> In 2019/20, 22.7% of FSM-eligible White British students achieved this benchmark, with around **42,805 FSM-eligible White British pupils not achieving it**.<sup>66</sup>

## Key metrics

- **Percentage of 4 to 5-year olds meeting Development Goals in 2018/19:** 53% of FSM-eligible White British pupils met the expected standard of development, against an average for all FSM-eligible pupils of 55%. This was the lowest percentage for a FSM-eligible ethnic group other than Irish Traveller (29%), Gypsy/Roma (33%) and White Irish (49%). 55% of White Other FSM-eligible pupils met the expected standard, 67% of FSM-eligible Chinese pupils met the expected standard of development, and 66% of FSM-eligible Indian pupils did (please note that the number of Chinese, Indian, and White minority ethnic groups are significantly smaller than the White British group).<sup>67</sup> 61% of FSM-eligible Black Caribbean pupils and 64% of Black African pupils met the expected standard.
- **Attainment 8 scores in 2018/19:** FSM-eligible White British pupils had an average Attainment 8 score of 31.8, against an average for all FSM-eligible pupils of 34.9.<sup>68</sup> This was the lowest score for an FSM-eligible ethnic group other than Gypsy/Roma (16.9) and Irish Traveller (22.2). FSM-eligible pupils from any other White background scored 39.0, FSM-eligible Chinese pupils scored 57.9, and FSM-eligible Indian pupils scored 48.2.<sup>69</sup> FSM-eligible Black Caribbean pupils scored 34.1, and FSM-eligible Black African pupils scored 42.3.
- **Progress 8 scores for 2018/19:** FSM-eligible White British pupils scored an average of -0.78 at Progress 8, against an average for all FSM-eligible pupils of -0.53. This was the lowest score for an FSM-eligible group other than Irish Traveller (-1.16) and Gypsy/Roma (-0.99). FSM-eligible pupils from any other White background scored -0.03, FSM-eligible Chinese pupils scored 0.66, and FSM-eligible Indian pupils scored 0.34.<sup>70</sup> FSM-eligible Black Caribbean pupils scored -0.54, and FSM-eligible Black African pupils scored 0.17.

63 The [early learning goals](#) set out the expected level of development for children in the final term of the year in which they reach age 5. Practitioners assess whether children are meeting expected levels, exceeding expected levels, or where they have not met the expected levels.

64 GOV.UK, [Development goals for 4 to 5 year olds](#), 12 February 2020

65 Department for Education, [Key stage 4 performance 2019 \(revisited\)](#), 6 February 2020

66 GOV.UK, [GCSE English and maths results](#), 11 December 2020

67 GOV.UK, [Development goals for 4 to 5 year olds](#), 12 February 2020

68 Attainment 8 “measures pupils’ attainment across 8 qualifications” including Maths and English. See: Department for Education, [Secondary accountability measures](#), February 2020

69 Department for Education, [Key stage 4 performance 2019 \(revisited\)](#), 6 February 2020

70 Department for Education, [Key stage 4 performance 2019 \(revisited\)](#), 6 February 2020

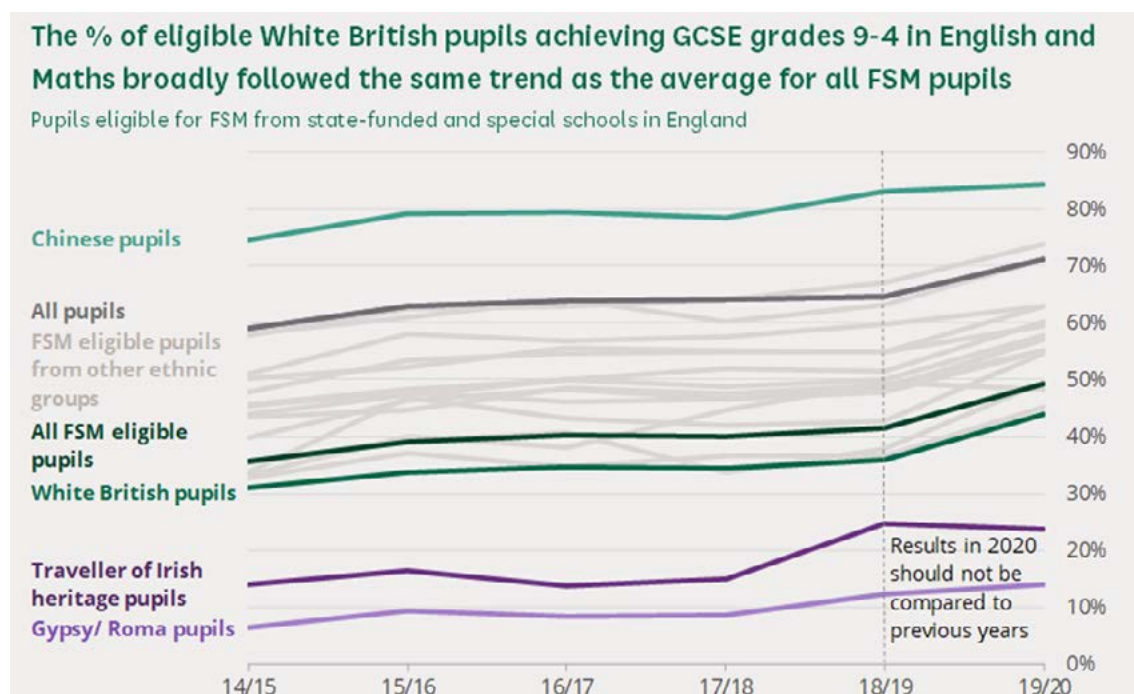
- **Access to higher education:** The proportion of White British pupils who were FSM-eligible starting higher education by the age of 19 in 2018/19 was 16.0%, the lowest of any ethnic group other than traveller of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma. FSM-eligible White other pupils had a participation rate of 37.2%, FSM-eligible Chinese pupils had a participation rate of 72.8%, and FSM-eligible pupils from a Black African background had a participation rate of 59.0%.<sup>71</sup> FSM-eligible pupils from a Black Caribbean background had a participation rate of 31.8%.

## Longevity of the issue and lack of progress

34. In 2014, the 2010–15 House of Commons Education Select Committee published its report, *Underachievement in education by white working-class children*.<sup>72</sup> The Department for Education responded in September 2014, saying:

The Committee’s report highlights many of the complex and interwoven factors that influence the educational attainment of poorer White British children, including socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, geographical, and inter-generational aspects. That complexity should never be an excuse for apathy or inaction ...<sup>73</sup>

35. Evidence suggests that despite an earlier rejection of “apathy or inaction”, the Department’s generalist approach and muddled thinking has failed to narrow the gap between disadvantaged White pupils and their peers. This graph shows that the gap between disadvantaged White pupils and their peers has remained stable since 2015:



Source: [Key Stage 4 performance: various years, DfE](#)

71 Office for Students, [White students who are left behind: the importance of place](#), 26 January 2021

72 Education Committee, First Report of Session 2014–15, [Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children](#), HC 142, June 2014

73 Education Committee, Second Special Report of Session 2014–15, [Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children: Government Response to the Committee’s First Report of Session 2014–15](#), HC 647, 10 September 2014



36. The Education Policy Institute (EPI)'s 2020 Annual Report found that "Policymakers have not succeeded in responding to earlier reports warning of a major loss of momentum in closing the gap".<sup>74</sup> The former Children's Commissioner for England criticised the Government for working in silos and focusing too much on "school improvement targets without recognising that many of the outcomes for children attending these schools are, overall, getting worse".<sup>75</sup> The fact that the disadvantage gap has not significantly narrowed in the last six years demonstrates that a generalist approach to school improvement will not catalyse pupil improvement in all cases, and that a more tailored approach that acknowledges pupils' individual needs and circumstances is needed.

37. Despite evidence that the disadvantage gap is not closing and has never narrowed for disadvantaged White pupils, the Department was clear that it intends to "double down" on its current school improvement programme which does not target the needs of specific groups. The Minister stressed the importance of take up of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) at GCSE,<sup>76</sup> and said that what "we need to do to address the very issue that this Committee is concerned about is to double down on our education reform programme that we have implemented since 2010".<sup>77</sup> In an evidence session with the Minister the Committee had the following exchange:

**Chair:** What I am trying to understand is how can you just say it is down to poverty when we know there are different outcomes under the existing system for those of most ethnic groups?

**Nick Gibb:** There are many reasons why it will differ and why those figures differ for white disadvantaged children compared to other ethnic minorities. This is a very complex area, but what we do know is that white disadvantaged children make up the overwhelming majority of disadvantaged children [ ... ]

**Nick Gibb:** [ ... ] what I am interested in is how do we address and improve the attainment of those disadvantaged young people. What we have found is that the measures that we have taken since 2010 work, but they are not easy to implement, and they are controversial. We need support in rolling out higher levels of EBacc uptake, making sure that all schools are teaching reading in the most effective way through phonics, that they are adopting the evidence-based approach to teaching maths ...<sup>78</sup>

38. The Department have not provided us with any convincing evidence that their reforms have closed the gap for disadvantaged White pupils. We believe that this is muddled thinking from the Department, particularly in the context of the number of pupils who are still leaving education every year without a pass in English and Maths GCSE (a key benchmark for progression to further education and employment). In the 2018/19 school year, only 35.9% of disadvantaged White British pupils achieved a pass in these subjects.<sup>79</sup>

74 EPI, [Education in England: Annual Report 2020](#), 26 August 2020

75 Children's Commissioner, [Building back better—Anne Longfield's final speech as Children's Commissioner](#), 17 February 2021

76 The EBacc is a set of subjects at GCSE, which includes English language and literature, Mathematics, the sciences, geography or history and a language. See GOV.UK, [English Baccalaureate \(EBacc\)](#), 20 August 2019

77 [Q378](#) Minister for School Standards

78 [Q399](#) Chair (Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP) and Nick Gibb

79 GOV.UK, [Key stage 4 performance 2019 \(revised\)](#), 6 February 2020 (see '[National characteristics tables](#)' (MS Excel spreadsheet))

39. The University of Manchester highlighted the challenges facing young people finishing their GCSEs without this benchmark, who may miss opportunities, including apprenticeships, as a Grade 4 or above in English and Maths is sometimes used as an entry requirement. The University of Manchester also found that although many students “do progress between the ages of 16 and 19, a quarter do not achieve a Level 2 qualification and three-fifths do not achieve a Level 3 qualification”.<sup>80</sup>

**40. Disadvantaged White pupils fall behind their peers at every stage of education. Every year, thousands of disadvantaged White pupils leave school without strong passes in English and Maths GCSE. We recognise the efforts that the Government has made to close this gap, but the Department has fallen victim to muddled thinking, and has shown little interest in exploring why disadvantaged White pupils underachieve relative to similarly deprived peers. As a result, the Department has not been able to target support and tackle specific barriers facing these groups. The Department must acknowledge that its reforms are not producing results, particularly for disadvantaged White pupils. A knowledge-rich curriculum is essential, but with progress on closing the disadvantage gap stalling, it is time to invest in a more targeted approach.**

## The impact of covid-19

41. We are concerned about the impact of lockdowns on children and young people during the pandemic. Research from the Department found that “All year groups have experienced a learning loss in reading. In primary schools these were typically between 1.7 and 2.0 months, and in year 8 and year 9, 1.6 and 2.0 months respectively”.<sup>81</sup> It seems that there are geographic disparities and a greater learning loss in schools in disadvantaged areas. This is troubling, especially when combined with evidence of the pandemic’s impact on children and young people’s mental and physical health,<sup>82</sup> development in the early years,<sup>83</sup> and employment prospects.<sup>84</sup> The New Schools Network (NSN) said that the pandemic’s effects “in terms of schooling, economy, mental and physical health—are all likely to disproportionately affect disadvantaged white students”.<sup>85</sup> The NSN points to a range of factors that may cause this, including:

- 6.6% of homes in the UK lack a good internet connection, with working class students particularly vulnerable to a lack of digital connectivity.
- Domestic abuse reports rose during the pandemic, with one charity supporting disadvantaged pupils reporting a rise of 750% in child referrals to social services in 2020 compared to 2019.

42. The International Public Policy Observatory (IPPO) said that it would be “wrong to focus efforts too heavily on pure academic achievement” and also call for support for “emotional recovery”.<sup>86</sup> In the light of the pandemic, is it important that schools prioritise students’ mental health and wellbeing. Nesta said that: “During and after this pandemic

80 University of Manchester, [Progression from GCSEs not working for many young people, new research finds](#), 5 February 2021

81 Department for Education, [Pupils’ progress in the 2020 to 2021 academic year: interim report](#), 24 February 2021

82 St Christopher’s Fellowship ([LBP0024](#))

83 The Sutton Trust, [Covid-19 impacts: early years](#), 1 July 2020

84 Professor Liz Atkins ([LBP0011](#))

85 New Schools Network ([LBP0047](#))

86 IPPO, [‘The Great Summer Reset’: an IPPO policy note on how best to support children’s emotional recovery](#), 9 April 2021

it is critical that provision for pastoral and mental health support is prioritised, especially for disadvantaged young people who have suffered neglect, anxiety or bereavement”.<sup>87</sup> The National Health Service (NHS) found that for 5 to 16 year olds, “18.8% of White ethnic backgrounds had a probable mental disorder in 2020”.<sup>88</sup> Children from lower income households were more likely to have mental health challenges,<sup>89</sup> and there is evidence that young people’s mental health has suffered during the pandemic.<sup>90</sup> We heard similar concerns in an evidence session with mental health professionals in our inquiry on the impact of covid-19. Dr Alex George, the Government’s Youth Mental Health Ambassador, said that:

One teacher said to me that, to be honest, if you did a mental health lecture a year, you could tick the box of wellbeing and mental health at the school ... I feel that we should look to rebalance that and consider that it is not just about coming out with grades and things, it is what you create in terms of that child coming out of school as a whole person, rather than just the academia.<sup>91</sup>

43. On 31 March 2021, we wrote to the Secretary of State for Education and suggested that the Department consider focussing catch-up plans for longer school days on pupils’ mental health and emphasising sport and wellbeing activities alongside academic catch-up. We also called for the Government to fast-track their commitment for every school and college in the country to have a designated mental health lead by 2025, and recommended adaptations to the Ofsted inspection framework to put more emphasis on mental health support in schools and colleges.<sup>92</sup> Through our other inquiries we will continue to hold the Government to account for how it deals with the challenges of covid-19.<sup>93</sup>

**44. Schools have an important role in how well disadvantaged White children recover from the pandemic. This relates to academic progress, emotional development, and good mental health. This is as true for disadvantaged White pupils as it is for other groups, particularly given NHS statistics indicate that around 18% of White pupils may suffer from mental health challenges.**

**45. *The Government must develop a more rounded view of what children need and what positive outcomes for children are as we recover from the pandemic. Specifically, with regard to mental health, we believe that the Department must fast-track its commitments under the 2018 Green Paper, particularly with regard to ensuring all schools have a designated mental health lead or counsellor. All catch-up plans, including enrichment activities and longer school days, must include a specific role for activities that focus on mental health and wellbeing. These plans must also be targeted to those areas of the country where the disadvantage gap is currently greatest, particularly outside London.***

---

87 Nesta ([LBP0016](#))

88 NHS, [Mental health of children and young people in England, 2020: Wave 1 follow up to the 2017 survey](#), 22 October 2020, pp15–16

89 NHS, [Mental health of children and young people in England, 2017: summary of key findings](#), November 2018, p17

90 The Lancet, by Tamsin Newlove-Delgado, Sally McManus, Katharine Sadler, Sharon Thandi, Tim Vizard, Cher Cartwright, Tamsin Ford, [Child mental health in England before and during the covid-19 lockdown](#), January 2021

91 Education Committee, The impact of covid-19 on education and children’s services - [Q1396](#), Dr Alex George

92 Education Committee, [Letter from ESC Chair to the Secretary of State for Education on Children and young people’s mental health](#), 31 March 2021

93 Education Committee, [The impact of COVID-19 on education and children’s services](#), 25 March 2020

### 3 The influence of place

46. Evidence led us to the role of place and geographic inequalities as a possible cause of the attainment gap for disadvantaged White pupils. Dr Javed Khan told us that “Geography clearly has an impact, too. The evidence shows, for example, that white pupils in the north-east have some of the worst educational outcomes, yet pupils from all backgrounds in places like London do better, irrespective of their race”.<sup>94</sup>

47. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) found that the United Kingdom is among the “most geographically unequal countries in the developed world”.<sup>95</sup> The IFS said that there is no “single set of factors that characterise a ‘left-behind’ place”, something that we also heard from the Local Trust and their work on a Community Needs Index.<sup>96</sup> Economic deprivation is one measure, but there are others. These include low levels of social capital. For example, high levels of unemployment and low adult qualifications, and community cohesion in areas lacking “places to meet, an active community and connectivity [to] both transport and digital access to economic opportunities in the wider geography”.<sup>97</sup> This is in contrast to what we heard about ethnic minority populations, who often have more support from “extended family structures and the sense of community and religion”.<sup>98</sup>

#### The nature of geographic inequalities in education and outcomes

48. Evidence highlighted the difficulty of analysing geographical differences in attainment broken down by ethnicity and FSM status. Liverpool City Region Combined Authority said that the way in which the Department publishes data makes it challenging to “... assess the achievement of different ethnic demographics of pupils that are eligible for FSM, or find consistent filters”.<sup>99</sup> Dr Alex Gibson and Professor Sheena Asthana, of the University of Plymouth, said that ethnic groups are “distributed unevenly across the country” so the Department’s “highly aggregated” data is “no use” in teasing out geographic factors.<sup>100</sup> The Department’s data is often not available below the national level when broken down by ethnicity and FSM-eligibility. Nevertheless, it is possible to form a picture of differences in pupil population and educational attainment.

#### The London effect

49. The two cartograms below illustrate:

- i) Firstly, the extent to which ethnic diversity is concentrated in certain areas of the country, particularly around London and urban centres
- ii) Secondly, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers by geographic area. This shows that disadvantaged pupils in London have more similar outcomes to their peers than pupils in other areas of the country, including areas that are proportionately more White:

94 [Q308](#) Dr Javed Khan

95 Institute of Fiscal Studies, [Levelling up: where and how?](#), 2 October 2020, p315

96 The Local Trust ([LBP0039](#))

97 The Local Trust ([LBP0039](#))

98 [Q158](#) Ruth Robinson

99 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority ([LBP0017](#))

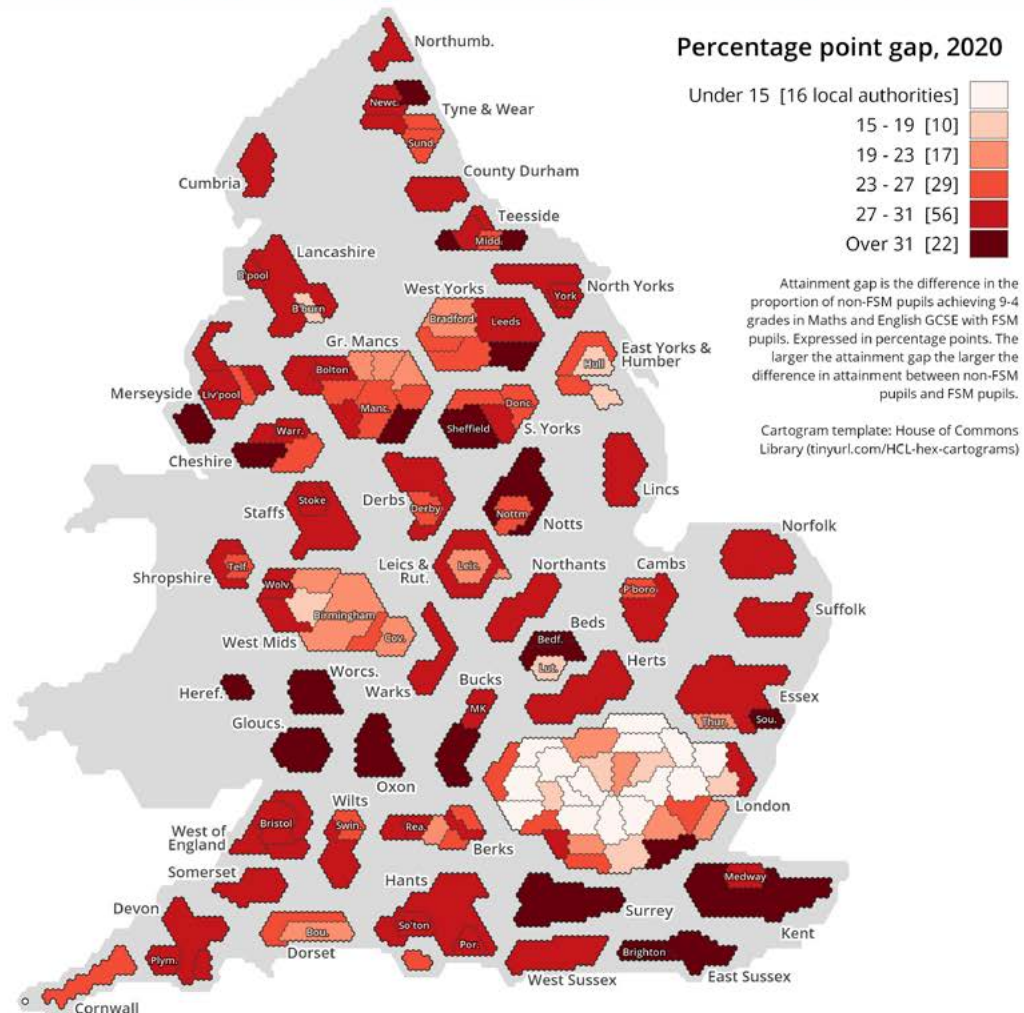
100 Dr Alex Gibson and Professor Sheena Asthana ([LBP0034](#))





## Attainment gap between state-funded pupils eligible for FSM and those not eligible

(Population-based cartogram map of local authorities)



### How to read this map

On this map, areas are approximately scaled in size according to their populations. Each shape represents an upper-tier local authority composed of small hexagons, with each small hexagon representing a resident population of around 8,000.

Areas are grouped by ceremonial counties (e.g. Kent), conurbations (e.g. Greater Manchester), and other recognisable sub-national areas. These groups include unitary authorities (e.g. Nottingham UA inside the Notts group) and don't all reflect current local government structures.

Dark lines between hexagons represent constituency boundaries. Extra labels are provided for large towns & cities to help you locate particular settlements (e.g. 'Lut.' = Luton, 'Warr.' = Warrington). These are also outlined with grey boundaries.

Light grey shaded areas between county groups don't represent data and serve only as a background.

50. The Office for Students (OfS) have analysed statistics on access to higher education on a regional level, although not by specific ethnic group. The OfS explains that for “white students who receive free school meals in London, the entry rate has pulled away from that in other parts of the country, and is now nearly eight percentage points higher than any other region. In London, less than half of the population is white, compared with 80 per cent across England as a whole”.<sup>101</sup>

51. Geographic disparities also affect children from ethnic minorities who live in left-behind areas. That said, the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities found that geographic inequality is “in simple numerical terms” an “overwhelmingly White British problem”.<sup>102</sup> The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities acknowledged that ethnic minorities are more likely to live in poverty, however “it is the poorer White people, outside London, who are the largest group to be found in areas with multidimensional disadvantages, from income to longevity of life”.<sup>103</sup> For example, the report found that “Nearly 70% of all the social mobility ‘hotspot’ success stories are in London and the South East”, while there “are none in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the West Midlands”. In terms of IDACI scores, “The worst 5 areas with IDACI scores of around 30% are all overwhelmingly White British places: Middlesbrough, Blackpool, Knowsley, Liverpool and Hull”.<sup>104</sup>

52. Professor Sheena Asthana and Dr Alex Gibson point out that there are challenges for “disadvantaged coastal children, the majority of whom are ethnically white”, including a limited range of employment opportunities, “growing rates of deprivation”, “higher than average proportions of working age adults with low or no qualifications”, and “poor educational outcomes”.<sup>105</sup>

53. The Kings Fund cited research that the London Challenge was a contributory factor to the “dramatic improvement” of London schools between 2000 and 2014.<sup>106</sup> This improvement was welcome and shows the potential of targeting interventions to a specific area. According to the 2011 census, “58.4% of Black people, 35.9% of Asian people, 33.1% of people with Mixed ethnicity, and 49.9% of people from the Other ethnic group” lived in London, compared with 10.1% of white people.<sup>107</sup> This means that the success of this initiative likely had much less impact on attainment gaps for all poor white children than for all children from ethnic minorities, as White children are proportionally less likely to

101 Office for Students, [White students who are left behind: the importance of place](#), 26 January 2021

102 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The Report](#), March 2021, p37

103 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The Report](#), March 2021, pp38–39

104 It is time to learn the lessons of educational reform in London and adapt and apply them to all of the UK. In London, according to the Educational Trust, “the educational performance of all major ethnic groups in inner London improved between 2005 and 2013 at a greater rate than those elsewhere in the country”. They do not attribute this to differential treatment of different ethnic groups or larger number of pupils from different groups but to better resourcing of teachers, schools and school buildings. According to a report on school improvement in London: “The conclusion from our research was that the improved performance of London schools could not easily be explained in terms of external factors such as ethnicity or resources. Instead, we concluded that the internal effectiveness of schools had changed for the better and we identified four key school improvement interventions that provided the impetus for improvement.” These were: “a government-funded programme known as London Challenge, improved support from some local authorities, new forms of school governance made possible through the government’s academies programme, the Teach First programme, which brought talented and idealistic new teachers into many schools serving disadvantaged communities.” (Source: Education Development Trust, by Tony McAleavy and Alex Elwick, [School improvement in London: a global perspective](#))

105 Dr Alex Gibson and Professor Sheena Asthana ([LBP0034](#))

106 The Kings Fund, [Case Study 5: The London Challenge](#), accessed 21 April 2021

107 GOV.UK, [Regional ethnic diversity](#), 7 August 2020



live in London. We agree with the New Schools Network (NSN), who explain that “there is no singular national solution to the issue of low attainment for disadvantaged White children: we need to find an answer that works for the particular context of each local community and region”.<sup>108</sup>

54. We also note the Office for National Statistics’ recent work on local income deprivation, which found that “every local area has its own unique profile of income disparity”.<sup>109</sup> As Dr Alex Gibson of the University of Plymouth told us, the National Pupil Database has data according to the Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA),<sup>110</sup> which looks at specific neighbourhoods,<sup>111</sup> and we heard from the Local Trust that “the most meaningful geography at which to consider the issue is, in our view, the neighbourhood–communities of 3,000–10,000 people”.<sup>112</sup> The Department’s statistics should reflect the most nuanced picture of geographical variation in attainment possible. Without more detailed data on education we are not sure that geography is the only cause of the attainment gap between disadvantaged White pupils and their peers. Yet we do believe that it is time to eliminate geographic discrepancies in attainment for disadvantaged pupils. We hope that tackling this will give disadvantaged White pupils a fairer chance regardless of where they were born.

## Levelling up for the White working class

55. This Government has frequently referred to a focus on “levelling up” and supporting “left-behind” areas. As the Institute for Fiscal Studies explains, the focus on levelling up is not new, and the UK is currently “one of the most geographically unequal countries in the developed world”.<sup>113</sup> Previous governments have had a similar focus, with initiatives including the Industrial Strategy (2016) and the Towns Fund (2019).<sup>114</sup> The Government’s has set out a programme of policies in its *Build Back Better Plan*.<sup>115</sup> The Industrial Strategy Council assessed this plan in their 2021 Annual Report, and criticised the plan’s over-reliance on “infrastructure spending and the continued use of centrally controlled funding pots thinly spread across a range of initiatives”. The report says that “Sustained local growth needs to be rooted in local strategies, covering ... skills, sectors, education and culture”.<sup>116</sup> The Department has since published a Skills for Jobs White Paper, and more recently the Government has brought out a Skills and Post-16 Education Bill.<sup>117</sup> The Bill includes a clause on Local Skills Improvement Plans, to introduce “duties on providers to co-operate with designated employer representative bodies to develop local skills improvement plans and have regard to the plans once they have been developed”.<sup>118</sup>

108 New Schools Network ([LBP0047](#))

109 Office for National Statistics, [Exploring local income deprivation](#), 24 May 2021

110 According to the NHS, lower layer super output areas are a “geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales”. There is a LSOA for each postcode, and the minimum population is 1,000. See: NHS Data Model and Dictionary, [Lower Layer Super Output Area](#), accessed 28 May 2021

111 [Q82](#) Dr Alex Gibson

112 The Local Trust ([LBP0039](#))

113 IFS, [Levelling up: where and how?](#), 2 October 2020

114 The Social Mobility Commission, [The Long Shadow of Deprivation](#), 15 September 2020, p8

115 HM Treasury, [Build Back Better: our plan for growth \(HTML\)](#), 3 March 2021

116 Industrial Strategy Council, [Annual Report](#), March 2021, p6

117 [Explanatory Notes to the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill](#) (HL Bill 5-EN)

118 The Skills and Post-16 Education Bill describes “relevant providers” as those that provide “post-16 technical education or training”. See [Skills and Post-16 Education Bill \[HL\] Clause 1 HL Bill 5](#)



56. Dr Alex Gibson said that while schools are central to raising attainment, pupils make “decisions in the context of their environments” and there is a wider issue about “providing the opportunities locally for children to benefit from school education”.<sup>119</sup> The Local Trust recommended investing in “left behind” neighbourhoods as an effective way to benefit disadvantaged White pupils. They suggested using a Community Wealth Fund to invest in social and civic infrastructure in deprived neighbourhoods, and using the Town Deals and UK Shared Prosperity Fund to connect underachieving pupils to training and jobs.<sup>120</sup> The Community Wealth Fund would use a “new wave of unclaimed assets - from bonds, shares, pension funds and insurance policies” that could be “worth up to £2 billion”.<sup>121</sup> These recommendations will benefit disadvantaged White pupils, but they do not always fit into the Department’s remit. The Department must work with other parts of Government to ensure that outcomes for children are central to any work on equalising opportunities throughout the country, particularly with regard to redressing the imbalance of investment and attention between urban centres (most notably London) and other parts of the country. As the Social Mobility Commission said, we need “a co-ordinated strategy across Government departments to tackle root causes”, with a more “systematic approach”.<sup>122</sup>

**57. The Government has committed to ‘levelling up’, but there remain stark differences in educational outcomes in different parts of the country, which seem likely to be exacerbated by the differential impact of covid-19. Education is a part of a larger whole with regard to geographic inequalities. Without improvements to local job markets and infrastructure (including digital infrastructure), education faces an uphill battle to raise outcomes for disadvantaged White pupils in left-behind areas. Equally, creating opportunities is of limited use if education has not equipped local people with the skills to fill them.**

**58. *The Department for Education must make itself central to levelling-up, and ensure that a focus on improving outcomes for children of all ages is a key part of any Government initiative to equalise opportunity and productivity across the country. Publishing all data on attainment measures on as localised a basis as possible, including by neighbourhood, will be the beginning of demonstrating a commitment to levelling-up education by identifying specific communities that are struggling. The Department must co-ordinate its efforts with wider Government in a comprehensive strategy to tackle the root causes of underachievement.***

59. The Minister for Universities, Michelle Donelan MP, told us that Opportunity Areas (OAs) are part of the Department for Education’s contribution to the Government’s levelling up work.<sup>123</sup> She explained that OAs are “taking a place-based approach to achieving lasting culture and system change”, and they are designed to respond to “specific local context”. The Minister highlighted four “elements”, including improving teaching quality and support for early years provision (together these account for around 60% of total funding for OAs), supporting projects on mental health and school attendance, and sharing learning from OAs with areas facing “similar challenges”. There are 12

---

119 [Q84](#) Dr Alex Gibson

120 The Local Trust ([LBP0039](#))

121 The Local Trust, [Making the case for a Community Wealth Fund](#), see Summary, 6 August 2018

122 Social Mobility Commission ([LBP0046](#))

123 Education Committee, [Letter from the Minister of State for Universities on Opportunity Areas, dated 17 March 2021](#), March 2021

Opportunity Areas based on local authority districts (LADs), which were announced in 2016.<sup>124</sup> The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities found that 10 of these OAs are “overwhelmingly White places”.<sup>125</sup>

60. The Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP) described the evaluation process of OAs, which has three phases. The results of a national qualitative evaluation are expected in Spring 2022.<sup>126</sup> The NPP found that “Early years outcomes for pupils have improved in 9 out of 12 OAs”, and “phonics results for all pupils have increased in 10 out of 12 OAs”. In 10 OAs, “Key Stage 2 combined attainment data for all pupils has increased by more than the national rate between 2016 and 2019”.<sup>127</sup>

61. We are not convinced that the evidence the Department has presented so far justifies the investment that has been made in Opportunity Areas. Our predecessor Committee had concerns about the value for money of the OA programme when it was first begun, and given that the programme has now received £108 million of investment we are disappointed that there are not more tangible benefits that the Department can indicate to us.<sup>128</sup>

62. During evidence sessions, the previous House of Commons Education Select Committee heard that a key feature of OAs was their “convening power”,<sup>129</sup> and bought a “sense of coming together, of collaboration”.<sup>130</sup> Our predecessor Committee was concerned about the effectiveness of OAs, and whether these activities represented value for money. A letter to the then Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, highlighted concerns around the selection of OAs, with some parts of the country receiving no additional support and a lack of joined-up working in Government.<sup>131</sup>

63. More recently, Martyn Oliver, a Commissioner for the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, said that it would be useful for a level of “micro-analysis of data to become the norm”, with funding micro-targeted to individual schools that need support rather than large areas.<sup>132</sup> The NPP also said that OAs could be improved, through increasing their coverage while reducing the size of each individual project and introducing more local leadership.<sup>133</sup> Nesta said that OAs have had “some degree of early stage success”, but that “putting so many resources into one area and picking an arbitrary number of places to try and help is not a long-term or sustainable model”.<sup>134</sup> We agree that the money invested to date in OAs could have been better spent if it were “micro-targeted” to specific areas of need.

---

124 GOV.UK, [Opportunity Areas selection methodology](#), 2017

125 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The Report](#), March 2021, p39

126 The Northern Powerhouse Partnership ([LBP0058](#))

127 The Northern Powerhouse Partnership ([LBP0058](#))

128 Department for Education, [Thousands more young people to benefit from Opportunity Areas](#), 19 May 2021

129 Education Committee 2017–19, Opportunity Areas inquiry, [Q8](#) Graham Cowley, Chair, Blackpool Opportunity Area Partnership Board

130 Education Committee 2017–19, Opportunity Areas inquiry, [Q23](#) Graham Cowley, Chair, Blackpool Opportunity Area Partnership Board

131 Education Committee 2017–19, [Correspondence to the Secretary of State regarding Opportunity Areas](#), 16 July 2019

132 [Qq474–476](#) Martyn Oliver

133 The Northern Powerhouse Partnership ([LBP0058](#))

134 Nesta ([LBP0016](#))

64. In May 2021 the Government announced a fifth year of the OA programme. The Department is spending an additional £18 million on the programme, with the 12 OAs twinning with areas experiencing “similar challenges”.<sup>135</sup>

65. **We need a better solution to geographic disparities in education. The Government must acknowledge the diversity of challenges facing disadvantaged White communities and develop better ways to target support. We understand that Opportunity Areas are a relatively recent policy and it is difficult to evaluate them. We heard evidence about initial success, but we remain concerned about their value for money.**

66. *We were disappointed that the Department is investing another £18 million in a policy which is reaching limited numbers of pupils and seems to be generating little return on investment. We urge the Department to set out a clear methodology to define what the programme’s success criteria are. These should emphasise that the funding is not to be spent on “convene-itis” and discussion, but should go to frontline services, using statistics to micro-target struggling communities, with explicit targets for:*

- i) *Improving support for families, through targeting Family Hubs to deprived communities and closing the early years attainment gap*
- ii) *Focussing resource to schools that most need it, through a better measure of disadvantage and funding that is micro-targeted to areas of need*
- iii) *Channelling funding to schools that struggle to recruit and retain the best staff, through more local teacher training initiatives*
- iv) *Ensuring all pupils get the best careers advice, particularly in areas where varied career options are less visible*

## Are free schools reaching ‘challenged White communities’?

67. The Department’s evidence emphasises how free schools can raise attainment,<sup>136</sup> and as the New Schools Network pointed out, some free schools perform highly and deliver excellent results for largely disadvantaged White cohorts.<sup>137</sup> However, research from the EPI found an imbalance in the free school programme, saying that 48% of secondary free school pupils are drawn from “just 3 of 24 ‘types’ of local community (as classified by the Office for National Statistics)”.<sup>138</sup> The EPI said that those three areas are inner city cosmopolitan, urban cultural mix and young ethnic communities, whereas hampered neighbourhoods and challenged White communities are “considerably under-served by free schools”.<sup>139</sup>

135 Department for Education, [Thousands more young people to benefit from Opportunity Areas](#), 19 May 2021

136 The Department for Education ([LBP0044](#))

137 New Schools Network ([LBP0047](#))

138 Education Policy Institute, [Free schools in England: 2019 report](#), October 2019

139 The Office for National Statistics created ‘pen portraits’ based on the 2011 Area Classification for Local Authorities, “providing an informal view of the characteristics of each cluster”. Challenged White communities are part of the “Hard-pressed communities” group, representing 5.7% of the UK’s population. Hard pressed communities tend to be in current or former industrial areas, with below average ethnic mix and higher than average rates of divorce and separation and below average rates of persons aged over 16 with higher qualifications. Unemployment rates are higher than the national average. See: Office for National Statistics, [Pen portraits and radial plots](#), 24 July 2018

68. We are concerned that the Department has not been proactive enough in directing the free schools programme to date, resulting in free schools being established in areas with lower need for them. As the NSN calls for, the Government must do more to encourage free schools in disadvantaged White areas. This could be through targeting funding to disadvantaged areas and making the application process less prescriptive and more open to community organisations (rather than existing trusts).<sup>140</sup>

69. **The free school system has failed to place new schools in areas of highest need and so has failed to reach left behind pupils, and should be encouraged in areas of disadvantage or deprivation.**

70. *The Department must take a more proactive role in directing the evolution of free schools. It is not enough to suppose that disadvantaged White communities in left-behind areas will have the same resources as inner-city areas to create their own outstanding schools. All future free schools must be established in areas where they will bring a specific benefit to the local community, and the Department should ensure there is a clear focus on targeting disadvantaged areas and should proactively encourage free schools in areas such as 'challenged white communities'.*

## 4 Supporting White working-class children and families: from cradle to career

---

### Supporting the early years sector

71. We were concerned by evidence that disadvantaged White children fall behind their peers from the early years. To close the gap the Government must address wider issues in the early years sector, in the hope of levelling up provision for disadvantaged White pupils.

72. There is evidence that attending early childhood education and care (ECEC) has an impact on children's outcomes. Research from the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), published in 2018, found that "more hours spent in formal and informal ECEC between ages two and four has benefits for child cognitive and socio-emotional development at age four", and that "children from disadvantaged families may be considered to have more to gain from time in ECEC".<sup>141</sup>

73. We have also seen evidence that the quality of education on offer is important. The Centre for Education and Youth highlighted that the quality of childcare settings that families from lower socio-economic backgrounds can access tends to be lower than that of childcare providers that wealthier families use.<sup>142</sup> Our predecessor Committee found that maintained nursery schools (MNS), a provider that tends to have higher-qualified staff than other provider types, need long-term support. MNS have a strong record of "ensuring excellent outcomes for disadvantaged children".<sup>143</sup> Research from the Department in 2019 explained that MNS tend to have a higher fraction of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and "higher structural quality" than other provider types. They have higher average staff qualifications (27% of MNS staff are educated to degree level, compared with 12% in private providers, 10% in voluntary providers and 11% of childminders). 63% of MNS are rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, compared with 18% of other provider types.<sup>144</sup>

74. A House of Commons Library briefing explains that:

... in recognition of the higher costs faced by MNS compared to other early years providers ... since the introduction of the EYNFF in 2017–18 the Government has provided additional supplementary funding to MNS. This supplementary funding was initially intended to last for two years only but has been subsequently extended and is currently committed up to the end of 2021–22 financial year. Around £60 million of supplementary funding will be provided in 2021–22.<sup>145</sup>

---

141 Department for Education, [Study of Early Education and Development \(SEED\): Impact Study on Early Education Use and Child Outcomes up to age four years \(research report\)](#)v, September 2018, p94

142 CfEY (LBP0002)

143 Education Committee, Ninth report of Session 2017–19, [Tackling disadvantage in the early years](#), HC 1006, January 2019, p3

144 Department for Education, [The role and contribution of maintained nursery schools in the early years sector in England](#), February 2019, pp10–11

145 House of Commons Library, [Early years funding \(England\)](#), Number 8052, November 2020

75. The briefing paper outlines concerns about the short-term nature of this supplementary funding. The Minister for Children and Families, Vicky Ford MP, responded to a written question in November 2020, saying:

The government announced on 24 August that up to £23 million of supplementary funding will be provided to local authorities, to enable them to continue protecting the funding of MNS during the summer term in 2021 ...

The department has secured a continuation of around £60 million of supplementary funding for MNS in the 2021–22 financial year, as part of this Spending Review. The department continues to consider what is required to ensure a clear, long-term picture of funding for all MNS ...<sup>146</sup>

76. According to Early Education, MNS faced additional financial pressures during the pandemic. Only 28% of MNS were “still expecting to balance their budget at the end of the year”. There is “little scope left for further cuts or efficiency savings”, with 57% of MNS already staffed at “minimum ratios”.<sup>147</sup>

77. The rest of the early years sector has also faced challenges during the pandemic, and there is some evidence to suggest that the sector was experiencing financial difficulties before then too.<sup>148</sup> The pandemic has added pressure for many settings, and in July 2020 The Sutton Trust found that “a third of settings in the most deprived areas reported they were unlikely to still be operating next year” and “69% of settings anticipated operating at a loss over the next six months”.<sup>149</sup> The Sutton Trust recommended in the short term, a “package of support for the early years sector in line with the support offered to schools”, and a long-term “commitment to increased levels of funding” for free childcare entitlements to “ensure delivery is viable for providers”. The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years claimed that the pandemic “has shone a stark light on the already threadbare financial existence” of the sector, and called for the Government to promote “the value of early education and care... in its own right”, reforming the funding system “to produce a clearer universal offer, targeted to disadvantaged areas”.<sup>150</sup>

78. In a response to a written question, the Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP outlined the Department’s support for the early years sector during the pandemic. The Minister explained that the Department has:

- Provided £5.3 million to “existing early years voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners on the home learning environment and EYSEND to support disadvantaged early children’s development and well-being and early years providers to help children catch up and transition back into early education in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak”.
- Invested £9 million on “improving the language skills of reception age children who need it most this academic year”, “working with the Education Endowment

146 [PQ119183](#), [on Nurseries: Finance] 26 November 2020

147 Early Education, [Maintained nursery schools and COVID-19: vital community services on a cliff-edge](#), October 2020, p2

148 House of Commons Library, [Early Years Funding \(England\)](#), 9 June 2021, p25

149 The Sutton Trust, [COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #4: Early Years](#), July 2020

150 Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years ([LBP0057](#))



Foundation, we are providing training and resources for the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI), free of charge, to schools that would particularly benefit”.

- Announced a further £18 million to “support language development in the early years next academic year—£8 million to offer the NELI to many more schools and £10 million for a pre-reception early language catch up programme”.<sup>151</sup>

**79. Having access to high quality early years provision helps disadvantaged children, including White working-class children. Maintained nursery schools deliver consistently high outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, but they face financial difficulties.**

*80. The Government’s announcement of continued supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools is welcome, but the underlying issues of short-termism and insufficiency remain and are more acute as a result of the pandemic. It is not enough for the Government to continually push a decision on the long-term future of maintained nursery schools back to the next spending review - the Government must decide how to guarantee their long-term future as soon as possible. The Government must also acknowledge the “threadbare” state of the early years system previous to the pandemic, and outline a long-term plan for the early years accompanied by a funding settlement for at least the next three years.*

## What are Family Hubs?

81. Family Hubs are “local support centres where families with children and young people aged 0–19 can access a broad and integrated range of early help to overcome difficulties and build stronger relationships”.<sup>152</sup> Family Hubs are a “central access point” for all families that works with other services to signpost support.<sup>153</sup> Family Hubs can also have an important role specifically in educating and supporting parents through initiatives such as parenting classes. The Family Hubs network highlights Family Hubs in Stockton-on-Tees that offer “parentcraft sessions” and virtual parenting courses during lockdown, which particularly helped the centre reach fathers.<sup>154</sup> We have heard about the potential of this model to support disadvantaged White families throughout their child’s time in education.

82. In December 2020 the Minister for Children and Families, Vicky Ford MP, announced a National Centre for Family Hubs and Integrated Services.<sup>155</sup> The Minister told us that the Government is “doing a big piece of research on what works best within those integrated services, because it is about getting early support out to families that need it”.<sup>156</sup> The Government have committed £2.5 million to “research and developing best practice around the integration of services for families, including family hubs”,<sup>157</sup> and more recently the Secretary of State for Education announced an investment of £14 million “to champion family hubs” through launching the National Centre for Family Hubs (run by the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families).<sup>158</sup>

151 [PQ 153130](#), [on Department for Education: Coronavirus] answered 3 March 2021

152 [Family Hub Network](#), accessed 31 March 2021

153 Family Hub Network, [Introducing Family Hubs](#), accessed 31 March 2021

154 Family Hubs Network, [Antenatal and postnatal services](#), accessed 10 June 2021

155 GOV.UK, [Vulnerable families to benefit from additional package of support](#), 8 December 2020

156 [Q388](#) Vicky Ford

157 HM Treasury, [Budget 2020](#), 12 March 2020

158 Department for Education, [Education Secretary addresses Centre for Social Justice](#), 20 May 2021

## Family Hubs: supporting disadvantaged White families in the early years

83. We heard that the early years sector is difficult to navigate, with multiple strands of support for families run by different Government departments. The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) outlines these strands:

- Universal 15 hours offer for three- and four-year olds
- Extended 30 hour offer for three- and four-year olds (for working families with three and four year olds)
- 15 hour offer for disadvantaged two year olds (for low income families)
- Tax credits covering 70% of childcare costs (low income working families)
- Universal Credit childcare element (low income families)
- Childcare vouchers (any income group)
- Tax free childcare (families potentially earning up to £199,000)<sup>159</sup>

84. Dealing with a confusing system is an issue for many disadvantaged families, including disadvantaged White families. PACEY highlighted barriers to taking up these early years education and childcare for disadvantaged families, saying that “disadvantaged families are less likely to be well informed about childcare, and more likely to receive information via organisations such as JobCentres and word of mouth”. PACEY add that “nearly a quarter of parents of eligible two-year-olds are not aware of their entitlement”. Poor access to entitlements and services extends to health care. The previous House of Commons Education Select Committee found that “there is a lack of data on the number of health visitors”, and that “only around 80% of children were receiving the home visits required”.<sup>160</sup> That inquiry found examples of good practice, including in Manchester where “every child is assessed eight times between 0–5 years old ... with interventions following as necessary”.

85. We spoke to Merle Davies, Director of the Blackpool Centre for Early Child Development (CECD).<sup>161</sup> The centre operates in “very much a white disadvantaged community”.<sup>162</sup> Merle Davies described her experience of supporting disadvantaged White parents, highlighting:

- Hesitance to engage with professionals, and a need for services with local connections and people who are trusted in the community.<sup>163</sup>
- The value of joined-up working, with the CECD forming a “partnership” with “all the statutory organisations, the community and voluntary sector” and with the community co-produce services.<sup>164</sup>

159 Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years ([LBP0057](#))

160 Education Committee, Ninth report of session 2017–19, [Tackling disadvantage in the early years](#), HC 1006, 29 January 2019

161 Blackpool Better Start, [Centre for Early Child Development](#)

162 [Q305](#) Merle Davies

163 [Q314](#) Merle Davies

164 [Q323](#) Merle Davies



- The need for a long-term planning and change to turn around “embedded long-term multi-generational disadvantage” in a disadvantaged White community,<sup>165</sup> and the value of universal services like Family Hubs.<sup>166</sup>

86. Family Hubs seem ideally placed to help families who are unaware of, or confused about, their entitlements.<sup>167</sup> As the Early Years Healthy Development Review found, “Local Family Hub networks may consist of both physical and virtual places where services to support families come together, from birth registration to midwifery, health visiting to mental health support and parenting courses to infant feeding advice”. This could include a “key contact”, who ensures continuity of care and builds relationships with families, allowing “a greater sense of continuity as the family could be personally introduced to other service providers within the Family Hub network”.<sup>168</sup>

87. **High-quality, joined-up education and health support for disadvantaged White families in the early years of their child’s life is crucial and has demonstrable benefits. The Family Hub model is ideally placed to deliver continuity of support and care, helping disadvantaged White families build relationships with trusted contacts, navigate a complex system of entitlements, and identify problems early on.**

88. However, there are areas of the country, including those serving disadvantaged White communities, where families do not have this support. The Government’s work on the National Centre, and investment of £14 million is positive, but children need this support now.

89. *The Government must explain how the National Centre for Family Hubs will support the development of Family Hubs and should set out bold targets for every town to have a Family Hub using existing community assets where appropriate.*

90. *All Family Hubs must have a clear strategy for the early years, with the aim of bringing services, including health visitors and early years educators, together into one place to make it easier for disadvantaged White families to navigate the system, particularly with regard to taking full advantage of their free entitlements. The Government must implement the recommendations put forward by the Early Years Healthy Development Review, particularly around exploring the idea of a “key contact” for families and supporting local authorities to identify how best to introduce families to their local hub. The Government should also follow the example of the Manchester system, where consistent and frequent contact with families enables early intervention. This will create a joined-up, universal early years support system that works for all parents, and most particularly those disadvantaged White parents whose children are falling off the ladder of opportunity from the very first rung.*

---

165 [Q324](#) Merle Davies

166 [Q327](#) Merle Davies

167 The Early Intervention Foundation, part of the What Works network, published a research briefing last year that found while there is no definitive research on the impact of initiatives such as Family Hubs, “there is a logical case for more holistic and joined-up approaches to delivering area-based family services which responds to concerns about a lack of service integration” (see: Early Intervention Foundation, [Planning early childhood services in 2020: Learning from practice and research on children’s centres and family hubs](#), 19 November 2020)

168 HM Government, [The Best Start for Life](#), 25 March 2021

## Family hubs: providing cradle to career support

91. We heard evidence that the home environment and parental engagement with children's education may influence outcomes throughout the educational life course.

92. Professor Matthew Goodwin said that we need to understand more about "the role of family breakdown and educational outcomes within this [disadvantaged White] community... I would like to see what is going on within these households, in terms of single-parent background and family breakdown as well".<sup>169</sup> Other witnesses drew our attention to the impact of family structure. Sonia Shaljean, founder of Lads Need Dads, called for a national study on the impact of fatherlessness, particularly with regard to White working-class boys who may lack positive male role models.<sup>170</sup> Edward Davies, Director of Policy at the Centre for Social Justice, noted the difficulty of comparing ethnicity, income and family stability. He highlighted the variation in marriage between socio-economic groups, saying that poorer communities are likely to have lower marriage rates than wealthier communities.<sup>171</sup>

93. There is also a debate around the role of aspirations, or culture, in the gap between disadvantaged White pupils and their peers. We heard from headteachers who reflected on "ingrained attitudes" to education in some disadvantaged White families.<sup>172</sup> Professor Steve Strand referred to an "immigrant paradigm" in his research as part of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.<sup>173</sup> Professor Strand suggested that this paradigm may explain why some ethnic minorities with a recent history of immigration to the UK "devote themselves more to education ... because they lack financial capital and see education as a way out of poverty". This may take the form of higher aspirations from students and parents. Teach First suggested that in families of "first or second-generation immigrants" education is "considered a valuable asset".<sup>174</sup> Professor Diane Reay, Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Cambridge, said that:

Black Caribbean British young people ... have had quite a number of generations in this country and have become quite like the White working class in the extent they have experienced a lot of failure through the system, and in their case that is compounded by racism.<sup>175</sup>

94. As Sammy Wright, a Social Mobility Commissioner, said care should be taken not to imply that "working-class parents do not care about their kid's futures".<sup>176</sup> Instead, evidence suggests that some disadvantaged White parents are disillusioned with education or value achievements outside of formal education.<sup>177</sup> Sometimes this is due to their own experiences in school.<sup>178</sup> It is important that families receive the support that they need, through effective parental engagement strategies.

---

169 [Q24](#) Professor Matthew Goodwin

170 [Q343](#) Sonia Shaljean

171 [Q208](#) Edward Davies

172 [Q158](#) Nick Hurn OBE

173 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [Ethnic, socio-economic and sex inequalities in educational achievement at age 16, by Professor Steve Strand](#), 31 March 2021

174 Teach First ([LBP0055](#))

175 [Q5](#) Professor Diane Reay

176 [Q102](#) Sammy Wright

177 Written evidence, see for example: the National Education Opportunities Network ([LBP0005](#))

178 Clementine Stewart ([LBP0054](#))

95. Many schools already go to great lengths to build relationships with families. Reach Academy Feltham said that:

... the only way to develop the academic potential of all who come into the school is to broaden what the school provides: if it is to achieve the best possible results, the school has to support its students and its families through the complexities and difficulties of life, as much as through the curriculum, because the former can prove a formidable barrier to the latter.<sup>179</sup>

96. Teach First highlighted a growing need for schools to provide this support, and called on the Government to “make additional funding available for schools that want to employ additional staff trained to run family support services or integrate services between schools and local authorities”.<sup>180</sup>

97. Schools working closely with a Family Hub model have the potential to build strong relationships with families, including disadvantaged White families, from birth to age 19, or from “cradle to career”. Reach Academy Feltham are developing one such “cradle to career” approach through Reach Children’s Hub and the schools work on parental engagement. Reach Academy Feltham explained how this helps the organisation build “deep, trusting relationships with students and families, which are consistent throughout the school”, adding that the academy’s leadership team “draw a direct line of causation from the depth of relationships developed with students and families to the results achieved by the students”.<sup>181</sup> Ed Vainker told us that teachers and parents “sign a pledge”, so parents know what they can expect from the school, and that the school carries out home visits where staff “sit and have a cup of tea” to help build relationships with families.<sup>182</sup>

98. Reach Academy called on the Government to “explore the most effective forms of support it could offer to (Children’s Zone/Hub initiatives)”.<sup>183</sup> Vainker said that they “would love to grow this model ... I have my fingers crossed that at some point there will be another free school round and we will be able to explore how that could have an impact in other communities”.<sup>184</sup> The New Schools Network also made recommendations about how future free school “waves” could incentivise schools to do something similar and “address many of the challenges faced by left behind white pupils”. They call for waves to:

- “Assess capacity and capability of individuals in the team, rather than the educational track record and capacity of an existing trust, to encourage new providers to enter the system”.
- “Provide additional pre-opening funding for new providers that lack the resource that existing trusts have”.
- “Remove shortened application criteria for trusts replicating their existing model and incentivise academy trusts to propose innovative and tailored approaches to local issues”.<sup>185</sup>

---

179 Reach Academy Feltham and Reach Children’s Hub ([LBP0023](#))

180 Teach First ([LBP0055](#))

181 Reach Academy Feltham and Reach Children’s Hub ([LBP0023](#))

182 [Qq 141 - 142](#) Ed Vainker

183 Reach Academy Feltham and Reach Children’s Hub ([LBP0023](#))

184 [Q156](#) Ed Vainker

185 The New Schools Network ([LBP0047](#))

99. Dr Javed Khan, Chief Executive Officer of Barnardo's, also linked the work of Family Hubs with better outcomes for disadvantaged White pupils, saying that they should be "universal and non-stigmatising at the point of access, so that anyone can ask for support, including those not known to statutory services". He added that they should be a "hybrid model of physical as well as digital", and "well integrated with other local services, including children's social care, health, education, the local jobcentre and the police".<sup>186</sup>

100. **We know that parents who are willing and able to engage with their children's education have a positive influence on it. But we must not assume that all parents have the knowledge and skills to do so. We also know that the potential of Family Hubs to deliver "universal and non-stigmatising" access to services is clear. Disadvantaged White children are falling behind in their early years and throughout education, and Family Hubs are well placed to provide wraparound help for families to prevent those gaps emerging**

101. **Schools are well placed to be trusted institutions that can support and work with Family Hubs to build strong relationships and help disadvantaged White parents and carers help their children. Organisations like Reach Academy Feltham demonstrate the potential of this model, providing support "from cradle to career".**

102. *The Department must ensure that disadvantaged White communities are a priority for support. Schools should be an important part of the work of developing Family Hub models, following the example of the Reach Children's Hub. The Department must help schools emulate this model by inviting applications to open free schools from organisations interested in creating their own 'cradle to career' pathway. The Department should explore what support will effectively help existing schools to build local partnerships in this way, as well as what resources schools need to build their own versions of parental engagement strategies such as those at Reach Academy Feltham, including parent-school pledges and home visits. Schools must have autonomy over the form of these parental engagement strategies, to take account of their local area's cultural nuances.*

103. For many pupils, schools are not the only organisations that deliver enrichment and education, as well as chances to socialise with peers. We believe that there is a role for civil society organisations and youth groups with regard to providing positive role models and social capital for disadvantaged young White people. Katie Sullivan of Regenerate UK (a youth organisation in South London), said that youth organisations form part of a "triangle" with families and schools to ensure that no young person is "falling through the cracks". She called for schools to have the capacity for a member of staff with a specific role to build connections with local youth services, which help develop disadvantaged young people's awareness of the "world of work and industries".<sup>187</sup> In left-behind areas, including those with high proportions of disadvantaged White young people, it may be challenging to provide positive role models,<sup>188</sup> and the "power of role models in our youth services is absolutely huge".<sup>189</sup> This may be particularly true for those young White men who lack positive male role models. Community organisations like Lads Need Dads use volunteers to create a "good, economical" model to support young boys who have absent fathers or limited access to male role models in Essex.<sup>190</sup>

186 [Q321](#) Dr Javed Khan

187 [Qq215 - 223](#) Katie Sullivan

188 [Q214](#) Matt Leach

189 [Q225](#) Edward Davies

190 [Q339](#) Sonia Shaljean

104. There is an important role for civil society organisations, such as youth clubs and youth services, working with schools and families to build social capital and provide positive role models for disadvantaged young White people. We were concerned to hear that funding pressures are having an impact on how well young people in some areas of the country are able to access these opportunities.

105. *The Department must ensure that schools have the capacity to build a triangle of support for disadvantaged young people between schools, youth organisations and families, and consider introducing guidance for a designated extra-curricular co-ordinator in all schools.*

## Breaking cycles of disengagement with education for disadvantaged White adults

106. Some parents in disadvantaged White communities may lack the skills and confidence they need to support their children's education. Claire-Marie Cuthbert, Chief Executive Officer of the Evolve Academy Trust, told us that her multi-academy trust is encountering "third generation unemployment" and "adult illiteracy and numeracy". She added that the "vast majority of our parents want to be able to help their children. They absolutely do. The problem is that for some of them they just do not know how to".<sup>191</sup> Problems with adult education create a vicious cycle for many disadvantaged White communities. Dr Sam Baars, Director of Research and Operations, Centre for Education and Youth, said that adult education is "crucial" and that "part of the solution is to focus on the adults, not the kids".<sup>192</sup>

107. In December 2020 we published our report, *A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution*.<sup>193</sup> We found that poor access to lifelong learning is a "great social injustice" and that around nine million adults in England have low literacy or numeracy skills. We found that adult community learning providers "bring learning to disadvantaged communities, providing a lifeline for adults furthest from qualifications and employment". We recommended that the "Department must set out an ambitious plan for a community learning centre in every town". We also recommended that the Government should introduce a skills tax credit for employers who invest in training for their workforce.

108. We were disappointed that the Government's response to our report did not take up our recommendations.<sup>194</sup> We do not believe that the Department has a levelling up programme for community learning. We will monitor the Department's work with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to "rejuvenate town centres and high streets", including its work on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which we hope will help more people in disadvantaged White communities back to learning. We need more ambition for community learning centres to give all adults, including disadvantaged White parents, a point of access for learning to help them help their children.

---

191 [Q182](#) Claire-Marie Cuthbert

192 [Q63](#) Dr Sam Baars

193 Education Committee, Third report of Session 2019–21, [A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution](#), HC278, 16 December 2020

194 Education Committee, Third special report of session 2019–21, [A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report](#), HC 1310, 10 March 2021

109. Given the number of disadvantaged White pupils leaving education every year without a strong pass in English and Maths GCSE, it seems that the impact of parental lack of confidence in learning will continue. Helping disadvantaged White parents with their learning could benefit disadvantaged White pupils.

110. *Our report on adult skills highlighted the decline in support for adult learners. Evidence suggested to us that disadvantaged White parents may particularly struggle with their own levels of education, which may impact on their children's learning. The Department must give more serious thought to how it may implement our previous report's recommendations to break the cycle of disengagement in some disadvantaged White communities by:*

- i) *Ensuring there is a community learning centre in every town*
- ii) *Incentivising employers to train their staff by introducing a skills tax credit.*



## 5 The school system

### Teacher training and recruitment

111. The best way for schools to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes is to improve the quality of teaching.<sup>195</sup> In 2011 the Sutton Trust found that the effect of high quality teaching is particularly important for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and that "over a school year, these pupils gain 1.5 years' worth of learning with very effective teachers, compared with 0.5 years with poorly performing teachers".<sup>196</sup> Professor Becky Francis said that:

Coming back to the issues about region and where working-class kids, particularly White working-class kids, are focused demographically, we know that there are issues about school teacher supply and retention, particularly around supply of subject expert teachers in those areas.<sup>197</sup>

112. Despite the Department's recent moves to improve teacher quality and recruitment, including the Early Career Framework and more recently the Department's further information on its reforms to teacher development,<sup>198</sup> some areas of the country still struggle to access support in recruitment and retention.<sup>199</sup> School leaders are also concerned about the Department's proposals to reduce bursaries for initial teacher training.<sup>200</sup> Investing in local training for teachers may support schools that struggle to recruit and retain staff.<sup>201</sup> It may also give disadvantaged White pupils in deprived areas role models that reflect their own experiences. Martyn Oliver, a Commissioner for the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, said that "having teachers and staff who can relate to the children is a massively important aspect of this. However... a good teacher is by far the most important influence".<sup>202</sup>

113. Witnesses told us about the potential of alternative routes into teaching, including degree apprenticeships. Postgraduate teaching apprenticeships are available, although UCAS says that as a new qualification there are "a limited number of vacancies".<sup>203</sup> Dr Tony Sewell, Chair of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, agreed that it is important to support teaching degree apprenticeships to help more disadvantaged pupils access the opportunity of becoming teachers,<sup>204</sup> and Professor Liz Barnes, Vice Chancellor at Staffordshire University, said that apprenticeship routes into teaching would help some areas attract local people to the profession. She said that this route would help attract specialist teachers and highlighted the NHS' use of apprenticeship routes.<sup>205</sup> Nick Hurn, Chief Executive Officer of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, said:

---

195 Education Endowment Foundation ([LBP0041](#))

196 The Sutton Trust, [Improving the impact of teachers on pupil achievement in the UK – interim findings](#), September 2011

197 [Q56](#) Professor Becky Francis

198 Department for Education, [Delivering World-Class Teacher Development](#), June 2021

199 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority ([LBP0017](#))

200 [Q168](#) Ruth Robinson

201 [Q273](#) Professor Liz Barnes

202 [Q421](#) Martyn Oliver

203 UCAS, [Postgraduate teaching apprenticeship](#), accessed 8 April 2021

204 [Q444](#) Dr Tony Sewell

205 [Q273](#) Professor Liz Barnes

I was lucky enough to be on a teacher apprenticeship trailblazing group and we missed a massive opportunity in that group. We talked about apprenticeships for A-level students into teaching over a seven-year course doing a year degree working within a school and learning to be a teacher. I thought that was a brilliant idea but that got quashed... There needs to be more innovative thinking with regards to keeping our best students in our most challenging areas and that is certainly a way to do that.<sup>206</sup>

114. Teach First made recommendations about supporting teachers and schools in disadvantaged areas, including:

- “Extending retention payments for early-career teachers to teachers trained through all routes and increasing the premium for working in disadvantaged schools”,
- “Providing greater access to high-quality CPD and qualifications for staff in disadvantaged schools”.
- Weighting funding increases and the covid-19 catch-up premium to schools serving disadvantaged communities where need is greatest.<sup>207</sup>

115. **Good teachers who understand disadvantaged White students’ needs and who can be good role models are central to raising this group’s outcomes. We know that teaching quality is worse in disadvantaged areas than in wealthier areas, with schools less likely to be rated good or outstanding by Ofsted for their quality of teaching. Schools in disadvantaged areas are also less likely to have experienced teachers, less likely to have teachers in qualified subject areas, and more likely to have higher teacher turnovers. The Department cannot take the current rise in applicants to teacher training during the pandemic for granted. Raising teachers’ starting salaries and the Early Careers Framework are welcome but there is more to do.**

116. *High quality teaching is particularly transformative for disadvantaged pupils. Over a school year, these pupils get 1.5 years’ worth of learning with high quality teachers, compared with 0.5 years with poorly performing teachers. To support the development of local teachers, we should incentivise highly commended initial teacher training providers (like Redcar and Cleveland TTP or Leicester and Leicestershire SCITT) to work with disadvantaged schools and develop top-class school-led routes. The Department must use its enhanced local area statistics to target recruitment and retention policies to schools that are struggling, particularly those in left-behind White communities. The Department must build on the existing postgraduate teaching apprenticeship scheme to make it more widely available and introduce an undergraduate teaching degree apprenticeship with a specific focus on developing teacher subject specialisms. The Department must introduce bursaries, retention payments and salary bonuses to attract good teachers to challenging areas and prevent flight of local talent. This will encourage a more diverse workforce that reflects the communities it serves, through introducing more local teacher training centres in deprived White communities.*

206 [Q168](#) Nick Hurn OBE

207 Teach First ([LBP0055](#))

## School funding

117. Dr Alex Gibson and Professor Sheena Asthana highlighted historic discrepancies in the distribution of school funding as a potential factor in the attainment gap for disadvantaged White pupils, saying:

... in contrast to the NHS funding formulae, which have increasingly responded to the shift in the pattern of deprivation away from major cities and towards peripheral coastal areas (Blackpool has the highest per capita funding for Hospital and Community Services), school funding is on average lower in coastal authorities and higher in large cities.<sup>208</sup>

118. In November 2020 the IFS published its annual report on education spending in England.<sup>209</sup> The report analysed how deprivation funding has changed over time and how the proposed National Funding Formula may change funding levels. The report found that over the last 10 years “spending per pupil has fallen faster amongst more deprived schools ... and the overall funding premium fell to about 25% by 2018–19”. The report adds that this “can be partly explained by the changing geography of deprivation, with faster falls in deprivation inside London and a school funding system that was slow to adjust to such changes” It adds that “in the long run, the new National Funding Formula should allow the funding system to adjust to changes in the pattern of deprivation” although in the short term “the overall pattern actually looks set to continue under existing plans for the National Funding Formula, with lower increases in formula allocations for schools in poorer areas”.<sup>210</sup> We are also concerned about the imbalance of some schools having significant surpluses while others struggle with deficits. We would like to see the Department do more to ensure that funding is evenly distributed to reach the pupils that need it.

119. There are concerns about the Government’s proposal to “level-up” school funding through minimum per-pupil spending. The EPI found that under the Government’s plans schools in deprived areas (including the north east, a largely White and deprived area) would benefit the least from funding uplifts, while schools without characteristics associated with additional funding under the National Funding Formula (generally schools without high levels of deprivation, for example) would benefit the most.<sup>211</sup>

120. Evidence suggested that the Department could improve the Pupil Premium and funding for disadvantaged students.<sup>212</sup> While the additional Pupil Premium funding is welcome, witnesses said that it could be better targeted. For example, Martyn Oliver, a Commissioner for the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, told us about the importance of not being “crude” in measuring disparities, and called on the Department to use a “micro-vision of disparity” to target funding to schools and wider services for children.<sup>213</sup> Professor Lee Elliot Major suggested introducing “regional weighting for pupil premium money for disadvantaged pupils providing significantly more money to turn around areas of multigenerational decline”.<sup>214</sup> The Office for National Statistics

208 Dr Alex Gibson and Professor Sheena Asthana (LBP0034)

209 Institute for Fiscal Studies, [2020 annual report on education spending in England](#), November 2020

210 Institute for Fiscal Studies, [2020 annual report on education spending in England](#), November 2020

211 Education Policy Institute, [Analysis: ‘Levelling up’ - what it really means for school funding](#), 2 August 2019

212 Written evidence, see for example Professor Lee Elliot Major (LBP0035)

213 [Qq 416 - 417](#) Martyn Oliver

214 Professor Lee Elliot Major (LBP0035)

have recently conducted research that shows the prevalence of income disparity not just between regions, but within neighbourhoods - indicating the importance of “knowledge of these local circumstances and detail”, with every local area having a “unique profile of income disparity”.<sup>215</sup>

121. We also heard about the potential of attributing funding according to duration of deprivation. Our predecessor Committee’s report, *A ten-year plan for school and college funding* (July 2019), recommended that the Department “should investigate how the Pupil Premium distribution could be made fairer so that allocations match more closely the child’s level and duration of deprivation”.<sup>216</sup> The report recommended that the Department review accountability measures for the pupil premium to ensure that schools always use it to help disadvantaged students.

122. We are also concerned about how the existing allocation is being used. According to the Sutton Trust, 34% of headteachers say their Pupil Premium funding is “being used to plug gaps in their school’s budget”.<sup>217</sup> The conditions of the pupil premium grant in 2021–2022 require schools to demonstrate “how their spending decisions are informed by research evidence” (condition 7) and use the strategy statement templates to publish their pupil premium strategy (condition 8).<sup>218</sup>

123. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities’ report called for greater targeting of funding according to need, asking the Government to “deploy additional funding that is targeted at measures which specifically aim to tackle disparities in educational outcomes for disadvantaged groups”. The Commission recommended additional funding to:

- “identify disparities ... by regions or local authority areas including drilling down to individual school level”
- “consider what additional data is needed to illuminate geographical variations and consider how the department can adopt a more holistic definition of need in the allocation of funding”
- “ensure that the funding uplift is sustained over time, to allow for long-term change in performance, avoiding short-term increases to funding”<sup>219</sup>

124. The Government is investing in additional funding for schools during the pandemic recovery. In June 2020 the Government announced £1 billion of funding to “help primary and secondary school pupils catch-up”.<sup>220</sup> The bulk of this (£650million) was a universal “catch-up” premium. A further £350million funded the National Tutoring Programme (NTP), which is “targeted at disadvantaged children”.<sup>221</sup> The Government has since announced another package of support. This includes a £302million Recovery Premium (to build on the existing pupil premium), and additional funding for summer schools.<sup>222</sup>

215 ONS, [Exploring local income deprivation](#), 24 May 2021

216 Education Committee, Tenth Report of Session 2017–19, [A ten-year plan for school and college funding](#), HC 969, 16 July 2019, p28

217 Sutton Trust, [School funding and pupil premium](#), 29 April 2021

218 Education & Skills Funding Agency, [Pupil premium: conditions of grant 2021 to 2022 for local authorities](#), 30 March 2021

219 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The Report](#), March 2021, p81

220 GOV.UK, [Billion pound Covid catch-up plan to tackle impact of lost teaching time](#), 19 June 2020

221 National Audit Office, [Support for children’s education during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic](#), March 2021, p12

222 GOV.UK, [New education recovery package for children and young people](#), 25 February 2021

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, total spending related to education across 2020–21 and 2021–22 in the pandemic is “currently due to be around £4.3 billion”, including £1.7 billion on catch-up and £1.5 billion on other support including the free school meals voucher scheme.<sup>223</sup> More recently, the Government announced an additional £1.4 billion of catch-up funding, of which £1 billion will be spent on enhancing tutoring in schools and colleges.<sup>224</sup>

125. This additional funding is welcome, but the National Audit Office (NAO) has raised concerns about how targeted it is. In March 2021 the NAO said that the NTP may “not reach the most disadvantaged children”. The NAO added that the Department had not “specified what proportion of children accessing the scheme should be disadvantaged”, and said that schools are “encouraged to focus on disadvantaged pupils, but are free to use their professional judgement to identify the children who would benefit most”. It adds that of “the 125,200 children allocated a tutoring place, 41,100 had started to receive tuition, of whom 44% were eligible for pupil premium”.<sup>225</sup> There seem to be geographic discrepancies in how the National Tutoring Programme is being used. Graham Archer, Director for Qualifications, Curriculum and Extra-Curricular, Department for Education, said that “We are seeing a slightly slower take-up in areas of the country where tutoring is seen as a less normal part of academic life—it is a slower take-up in the north than in the south”.<sup>226</sup>

126. The NAO called for the Department to monitor the long-term impact of the pandemic, with a “particular focus” on the most disadvantaged children and act on assessments of the catch-up programme to ensure funding achieves value for money and that “the National Tutoring Programme schemes are reaching disadvantaged children as intended”.<sup>227</sup>

**127. School funding has failed to keep pace with where deprivation is in the country, and as a result schools serving disadvantaged communities, including disadvantaged White communities, have suffered financially. The National Funding Formula promises to correct this, but the formula’s changes have not yet been fully enacted, and we have seen concerns that a “levelling up” funding uplift may risk further entrenching disadvantage.**

**128. Additional funding for disadvantaged students, including disadvantaged White students, is welcome, but is insufficient and insufficiently targeted and does not always reflect true level of need. This seems to have extended to the Government’s “catch-up” funding, with insufficiently targeted formulas and schemes that are not reaching the children, including disadvantaged White children, who need them most. Just 44% of the children who are using the National Tutoring Programme are eligible for free school meals, making this scheme a prime example of a Government initiative that is not getting to the children who need it most.**

**129. *The Department must do more to target funding to address attainment gaps, such as that which persistently affects disadvantaged White pupils. This should begin with reform***

223 Institute for Fiscal Studies, [30% of COVID-related spending on education in England due to come from existing budgets](#), 20 May 2021

224 Department for Education, [Huge expansion of tutoring in next step of education recovery](#), 2 June 2021

225 National Audit Office, [Support for children’s education during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic](#), March 2021, p12

226 Education Committee, Funding and financial management of schools - [Q46](#), Graham Archer, Director for Qualifications, Curriculum and Extra-Curricular, Department for Education

227 National Audit Office, [Support for children’s education during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic](#), March 2021, p13

*to the pupil premium, which should be weighted to account for persistent disadvantage, including in disadvantaged White communities, in line with our recommendation on better measures of disadvantage. The Department must also heed recommendations from the National Audit Office and keep its catch-up funding initiatives under close review, and introduce significant reform if take up of the National Tutoring Programme has not improved by the end of the school year. The Department should introduce changes to ensure the schools and pupils that most need the extra resource have access to it.*

*130. The Department must also acknowledge that due to funding pressures 34% of headteachers are using the premium to plug financial gaps in other parts of their operation. We note the Department's recent changes to the conditions of the pupil premium grant, but in the light of the Sutton Trust's findings about the number of schools using their grant to plug other gaps, we want to see more action. We will hold the Department to account for their progress, and should the reforms not be successful in ensuring this funding always directly benefits the most disadvantaged we will expect the Department to consider further measures. This should include ringfencing a percentage of the pupil premium grant to offer activities and enrichment opportunities to disadvantaged pupils, helping them access the same extra-curricular opportunities as their better-off peers.*



## 6 Destinations for disadvantaged White pupils

---

### Apprenticeships and skills: parity of esteem for vocational and technical education

131. We believe it is possible to reconcile the Department's justified insistence on a rigorous education for all with the need to ensure that quality and rigour are suited to the abilities and interests of all pupils. This is already the practice in countries such as Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Norway.<sup>228</sup> Progress on closing the disadvantage gap is stalling and it is time for the Department to rethink its approach.

**132. We support the Department's insistence that all children should benefit from an ambitious and challenging curriculum. A culture of low expectations is damaging for White working-class children. However, too many disadvantaged White pupils are leaving school without essential qualifications, and something needs to change to re-engage these learners in their education.**

133. When the Minister for School Standards, the Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP, gave evidence his solution for supporting disadvantaged White pupils was clear:

One of the issues in my view is the curriculum. A knowledge-rich curriculum is absolutely key, certainly up to the age of 16. As I said before, when we came into office only 7.9% of children on free school meals were taking the EBacc combination of those core academic subjects, and that has risen to 25.1%, although that is not high enough.<sup>229</sup>

134. We agree that all children deserve high expectations and a stretching curriculum. That said, the evidence we have received does not convince us that the Department's current approach will close the disadvantage gap for White working-class students. The statistics that the Minister cited on take-up of the EBacc relate to all pupils. For disadvantaged White pupils the percentage of pupils entering the EBacc in 2019 was 17.6%.<sup>230</sup> In 2019, just 3.7% of disadvantaged White pupils achieved a strong pass in the EBacc.<sup>231</sup> There is also some evidence that other subjects, such as Design and Technology, have been in decline since the introduction of the EBacc. The EDSK thinktank found that since 2010 subject entries to Design and Technology courses have fallen by 65%, and the number of Design and Technology teachers has also fallen.<sup>232</sup>

135. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report said that the number of young people leaving school without a pass in English and Maths GCSE is a "negative impact of the British system's narrow view of ability based on generic, cognitive-analytical aptitudes".<sup>233</sup> In 2019 the then Children's Commissioner found that the Government's

---

228 Professor Lee Elliot Major ([LBP0035](#))

229 [Q364](#) Nick Gibb

230 GOV.UK, [Key stage 4 performance 2019 \(revised\)](#), see 'National Characteristics tables (Excel Spreadsheet)', 6 February 2020

231 GOV.UK, [Key stage 4 performance 2019 \(revised\)](#), see 'National Characteristics tables (Excel Spreadsheet)', 6 February 2020

232 EDSK, [A Step Baccward](#), July 2019

233 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The Report](#), March 2021, p100

2013/14 education reforms “penalised disadvantaged children”. She concluded that the reforms changed “the incentives for schools to offer non-GCSE courses” which gave pupils a chance to gain a Level 2 qualification beyond GCSEs. This “closed off access to further study routes including vocational education and apprenticeships”.<sup>234</sup>

136. Evidence to our inquiry raised similar concerns for disadvantaged White pupils. It suggested that the curriculum may be disengaging this group.<sup>235</sup> It may lead to a “two-tier” system, where schools value vocational, practical and creative subjects less highly. Sammy Wright told us that while he supports the EBacc, it means that there is a “stratification of status to do with the subjects. It is very clear in any school that, if I am to be really blunt, vocational routes are for the thick kids”, and that we need a performance and accountability system that values “outcomes that are not simply narrowly academic”.<sup>236</sup> According to the London and South East Education Group, “academic targets sometimes outweigh the needs of students”, and colleges are working hard to help disadvantaged White students who leave school disengaged in education and without the qualifications they need.<sup>237</sup> As Claire-Marie Cuthbert said:

The main obstacle in raising achievement is the government’s failure to recognise that [the population of White working class pupils] has particular needs that are not being met by the National Curriculum or the school system as a whole.<sup>238</sup>

137. We welcomed the Government’s Skills for Jobs White Paper and Skills Bill.<sup>239</sup> We hope that it will deliver for those who do not go to university, including thousands of disadvantaged White pupils. There are positive recent policy changes, including T Levels,<sup>240</sup> which we hope this will raise the profile of skills-based routes in post-16 education. That said, we are concerned that the Department’s narrow focus on academic subjects as a benchmark for “success” in pre-16 education is a barrier for some schools and pupils, particularly in White working-class areas. This may relate to issues around parental views on education. Some disadvantaged White communities value skills and vocational routes more highly, which may lead to their children disengaging, or not seeing the value in, academic learning or higher education.<sup>241</sup>

138. As Dr Tammy Campbell has found in her research, teacher expectations of a pupil’s ability can affect their attainment, and in some cases pupils from low income backgrounds are “less likely to be judged favourably ... by their teachers”.<sup>242</sup> Low expectations are damaging for all pupils, and all pupils deserve a stretching education.

139. The Edge Foundation published a report outlining their plan for a 14–19 phase of education, with a baccalaureate-style award that recognises “achievements in all subjects”.<sup>243</sup> The Foundation cites work with the National Baccalaureate Trust on the National Baccalaureate for England, who are piloting an approach which “is designed to be

234 Children’s Commissioner, [Briefing: the children leaving school with nothing](#), September 2019

235 From written evidence, see for example Professor Liz Atkins ([LBP0011](#))

236 [Q83](#) Sammy Wright

237 London and South East Education Group ([LBO0064](#))

238 Claire-Marie Cuthbert ([LBP0053](#))

239 Department for Education, [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#), 21 January 2021

240 Department for Education, [Introduction of T Levels](#), 4 September 2020

241 From written evidence, see for example: NEON ([LBP0005](#))

242 Dr Tammy Campbell ([LBP0019](#))

243 Edge Foundation, [Our Plan for Schools and 14–19 Education Coherent, unified, holistic](#), July 2017, pp25 - 26

a single unified curriculum framework for all educational contexts that gives recognition to the full range of achievements, talents and learning experiences”. It blends academic and vocational qualifications, with tiers “from entry level to foundation, intermediate and advanced” to make it suitable for all young people. The National Baccalaureate for England will:

... encompass the development of the wider skills that employers demand most highly—areas like personal development, team working and communication. It will achieve this by breaking down the barrier between ‘curricular’ and ‘extra-curricular’ and including elements of community learning, personal challenges, music and dance grades, outward bound activities and at least 120 hours of experience in the workplace.

140. The University of Manchester has also called for an “Upper Secondary Education and Training Phase” lasting for three years between the ages of 16 and 19. This will bring together “academic and vocational post-16 sub-systems (including apprenticeships)”.<sup>244</sup> This would come alongside changing “accountability measures in KS4” to “promote wider achievement “ and build “clear pathways to Level 2 courses post-16” by extending vocational provision at KS4. The EDSK thinktank have also recommended the creation of a “new Upper Secondary ‘Baccalaureate’”, to take place between the ages of 15–18 involving “courses from a wide range of disciplines” with the option to mix subjects from “academic”, “applied” and “technical” pathways.<sup>245</sup> Without rungs in the technical education ladder below age 16, young people won’t be properly prepared to make fully informed choices post-16. Increasing the number of options before this age is necessary to feed the pipeline to successful technical education post-16.

**141. *The Department must revisit the benefits of celebrating greater diversity of subjects in the pre-16 curriculum. The focus should be ensuring all pupils achieve the essential level of qualifications they need with academic rigour and high expectations, while acknowledging the value of vocational and skills-based subjects and their potential to engage otherwise disaffected groups, such as some disadvantaged White pupils. We are clear that this does not mean introducing a two-tier system, with practical subjects a poor alternative for children who are perceived to be less able. The Department must reform current accountability measures by widening the range of subjects that can count towards the EBacc to include subjects that have been in decline over the past 10 years, such as Design and Technology, and incentivise schools to celebrate all their pupils’ aptitudes and create a parity of esteem for vocational subjects alongside a rigorous academic offer.***

## Apprenticeships and reform to the levy

142. We are concerned by reports on a “middle-class grab on apprenticeships”, in which the number of apprenticeship starts in the most deprived areas has fallen year on year

244 University of Manchester, [Moving on from initial GCSE ‘failure’: Post-16 transitions for ‘lower attainers’ and why the English education system must do better](#), February 2021, pp7 - 8

245 EDSK, [Reassessing the Future \(Part 2\): The Final Years of Secondary Education](#), April 2021

since 2015,<sup>246</sup> although as the Social Mobility Foundation found, this may indicate a shift in opinion towards vocational training showing that the “general public believe vocational qualifications to be just as useful and desirable as a university degree—if not more”.<sup>247</sup>

143. We believe that the apprenticeship levy needs to be reformed.<sup>248</sup> According to the Centre for Social Justice, “the number of apprenticeships dropped by a quarter between 2014/15 and 2018/19”, and apprenticeships “lean too heavily towards highly qualified employees, and not enough towards school leavers”.<sup>249</sup> A House of Commons Library briefing paper found that 31% of apprenticeship starts were at intermediate level in 2019/20, a fall from 65% of all starts in 2013/14.<sup>250</sup> According to the Centre for Social Justice, 25.7% of apprenticeships starts at Level 2 came from “the most disadvantaged areas”.<sup>251</sup>

**144. *Level 2 apprenticeships are a vital stepping-stone for disadvantaged learners. The Department must investigate and address the falling numbers of apprenticeship starts from deprived communities, to ensure disadvantaged White pupils have equal access to the opportunities offered by skills-based routes. As the Centre for Social Justice recommends, the Government should “rebalance the levy so that it supports more young people”, and more of the levy’s funding should be directed to disadvantaged learners or on courses meeting the skills needs of our nation. Skills tax credits, for example, could be introduced to incentivise businesses to retrain workers without high-level qualifications and in our vital skills areas.***

## Careers education

145. Good careers education is important for disadvantaged White pupils to plan their future and focus on what they need to achieve in school, and schools should begin educating pupils about the options available to them from a young age. However, as the Government’s Skills for Jobs White Paper admitted, “there is no single place you can go to get government-backed, comprehensive careers information”.<sup>252</sup> The Government committed to improving the quality of careers education for all pupils in the White Paper. Yet we are concerned by reports of low levels of compliance with the Baker Clause.<sup>253</sup> As our predecessor Committee found in its report, *The apprenticeships ladder of opportunity: quality not quantity*, it is currently unclear how well compliance with the Baker Clause is enforced.<sup>254</sup> According to a written answer in April 2021, the Department plans to consult on enforcement of the Baker Clause, with proposals to “establish a new minimum

246 FE Week, ‘Middle-class grab’ on apprenticeships confirmed by new analysis, 20 May 2021

247 Social Market Foundation, [Not just other people’s children: what the public thinks about vocational education](#), April 2021

248 On 6 April 2017 the apprenticeship levy came into effect with all UK employers with a pay bill of over £3 million per year paying the levy. The levy is set at 0.5% of the value of the employer’s pay bill, minus an apprenticeship levy allowance of £15,000 per financial year. The levy is paid into an apprenticeship service account, and funds in this account have to be spent on apprenticeship training and assessment. See House of Commons Library briefing, [Apprenticeships and skills policy in England](#), Number CBP 03052 7 September 2020

249 Centre for Social Justice, [Trade secrets: how to reboot apprenticeships and kick-start the recovery](#), 10 August 2020

250 House of Commons Library, [Apprenticeship statistics for England](#), Number 06113, 30 March 2021

251 Centre for Social Justice, [Trade secrets: how to reboot apprenticeships and kick-start the recovery](#), 10 August 2020, p30

252 Department for Education, [Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth](#), January 2021, p45

253 Institute for Public Policy Research, [The Baker Clause One Year On](#), January 2019

254 Education Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2017–19, [The apprenticeships ladder of opportunity: quality not quantity](#), HC 344, October 2018

legal requirement about who is to be given access to which pupils and when”, as well as “making Government-funded careers support for schools conditional on Baker Clause compliance”.<sup>255</sup>

146. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) responded to the Skills Commission’s call for evidence on the Workforce of the Future and made recommendations as to how the Baker Clause could be better enforced. The AELP call for the Government to “crack down on non-compliance with the Baker Clause by instructing Ofsted to make it a material consideration as part of the inspection process”, making it impossible for schools that do not comply with the Baker Clause to get a higher grade than “Good” in their inspection. The AELP also recommend that school should have “a clear set of benchmarks, which explain in greater detail what compliance and good practice look like. Setting a minimum number of 3 interactions between pupils and representatives of training providers, apart from career fairs or exhibitions, would be a good place to start”.<sup>256</sup> Such interactions are useful, but as David Johnston MP points out they are too often used as little more than photo opportunities, and it is important that pupils have the opportunity for genuine work experience placements too.<sup>257</sup> We also believe that organisations such as Chambers of Commerce and local businesses could play a much stronger role in providing exposure to a range of career options.

**147. For too long many schools have failed to fully deliver their obligations under the Baker Clause. This must be more uniformly enforced to prevent many disadvantaged pupils, including disadvantaged White pupils, missing the opportunity to access a variety of careers. We will monitor Ofsted’s review of careers guidance in schools closely, and look forward to hearing Ofsted’s recommendations as to how schools could improve the careers guidance they offer their pupils, particularly with regard to ensuring that disadvantaged White pupils are aware of all their options on leaving school, including apprenticeships and higher education routes.**

**148. *The Government must conduct a significant review of Government-funded careers agencies to identify if they are focused on skills, building employer-school partnerships and helping those from White working class in schools in disadvantaged areas. The Government should bring forward measures to tie Government-funded careers advice support to compliance with the Baker Clause. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers have called for compliance with the Baker Clause to be linked to Ofsted judgements. We believe that a school’s Ofsted grade should be limited to “Requires Improvement”, should the school fail to comply with the Baker Clause.***

## Access to and participation in higher education

149. Disadvantaged White pupils have low participation rates in higher education (HE). We acknowledge the challenges faced by ethnic minority groups in terms of progression rates, attendance at higher tariff institutions, degree class and graduate destinations (as highlighted by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities).<sup>258</sup> We note that for 84% of disadvantaged White pupils that do not go to university, the question of continuation and success does not apply.

255 [PQ 174097](#), [on Schools: Vocational Guidance] 23 March 2021

256 AELP, [AELP response to the call for evidence on the Workforce of the Future Inquiry](#), 24 March 2021

257 The Times, [Letters to the Editor 25 May 2021, Options for reform of education - David Johnston MP](#), 25 May 2021

258 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The Report](#), March 2021, pp95–97



150. The current access and participation system is not addressing the needs of poor White communities. NEON found that strategic goals for disadvantaged White pupils are lacking, and in 2018/19 “an exploration of access and participation plans across the sector show that less than 20% of 124 HEIs referred to this group specifically”.<sup>259</sup> The OfS’ guidance for providers on access and participation plans defines ‘under-represented groups’ as all “groups of potential or current students where the OfS can identify gaps in equality of opportunity in different parts of the student lifecycle”.<sup>260</sup> The OfS acknowledges that “white British men and women from lower socio-economic backgrounds” are an under-represented group.

151. On 8 February 2021 the Secretary of State for Education wrote to the OfS to outline his strategic priorities, asking the OfS to “continue to consider broader factors, including socio-economic status and geographical inequality”, with a “focus on white boys on free school meals”.<sup>261</sup> The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities included a recommendation on access to HE. The Commission called for “stronger guidance” from the OfS to HE providers on “funding outreach programmes and placing university outreach staff in schools to help reduce disparities in applications at an earlier stage”. Should this guidance not affect application rates, the Commission recommended that the OfS should “look to regulatory or legal changes to ensure improved access and participation to higher education institutions”.<sup>262</sup> In 2019 the Office for Students found that universities were spending around £800 million on improving access and outreach.<sup>263</sup> The Commission’s Chair, Dr Tony Sewell, also told the Committee that the money that universities spend as part of their access and participation plans could be better spent on other initiatives, including boosting access to apprenticeships and initiatives “upstream” of higher education to support younger pupils with their career choices.<sup>264</sup>

152. **Accessing higher education is the “end of the funnel” for many pupils’ academic journeys. Evidence suggests that for disadvantaged White pupils the funnel narrows dramatically on leaving school. These statistics represent the outcome of accumulated educational disadvantage starting in early years and persisting through primary and secondary education. We share the Secretary of State’s concern about disadvantaged White pupils’ access to HE and support his directive to the OfS for including this group in its strategic priorities.**

153. *The OfS should review how it holds providers to account for ensuring all low-participation groups are equally supported into higher education. This should not just be about inclusion, but ensuring disadvantaged White pupils are also completing their courses and progressing on to skilled work and satisfying careers. The OfS should also implement a target for inclusion of pupils from disadvantaged White backgrounds, to ensure that White working-class students’ participation in HE is a key priority for all universities. At least some of the funding that universities currently spend on boosting*

---

259 NEON (LBP0005)

260 Office for Students, [Regulatory notice 1: Access and participation plan guidance - Guidance on access and participation plans for 2021 - 2022](#), 5 May 2020, pp16 - 17

261 Office for Students, [Guidance to the Office for Students - Secretary of State’s strategic priorities \(February 2021\)](#), 8 February 2021, p4

262 Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, [The report](#), March 2021, p99

263 Office for Students, [New ‘What Works’ centre to help universities cut equality gaps](#), 28 February 2019

264 [Q440](#) Dr Tony Sewell



*access and participation should be redirected to where it can be more effective: either through school-based initiatives “upstream” in pupils’ journeys or towards increasing take-up of apprenticeships and particularly degree apprenticeships.*

*154. The OfS should also commit to a report to Parliament in a year’s time to review progress against this measure and their targets and the Secretary of State’s request for a focus on disadvantaged White boys accessing higher education. The OfS should review how it classifies ‘under-represented groups’ to ensure it keeps pace with the current demographics of the higher education student population.*

## Conclusions and recommendations

---

### Introduction

1. For our inquiry we decided for pragmatic reasons to focus on FSM-eligible pupils. This is an imperfect measure, but data on FSM-eligibility and attainment is available for multiple cohorts at many stages of education, giving a good idea of the journey that disadvantaged White pupils go on. We know that this group does not map exactly on to 'White working-class', but this is a familiar term and one which occurred spontaneously from witnesses and written evidence. In this report we will use both 'White working-class' and 'disadvantaged White' to refer to White pupils who are eligible for FSM. (Paragraph 17)
2. The Department's current way of evaluating and funding disadvantage, relying on current and historical FSM-eligibility, does not take account of the full range of challenges facing disadvantaged White pupils. It also makes external scrutiny of Government initiatives challenging. To understand what causes the underachievement of disadvantaged White pupils we need to understand their needs and the barriers facing them. (Paragraph 18)
3. *Disadvantage is a gradient, not an 'either-or' of FSM-eligible or 'advantaged'. To support disadvantaged White pupils the Government must refine its key measures of disadvantage and widen public access to its statistics. This should be done in a way that protects pupil anonymity as a priority, for example by redacting figures where they reflect very small groups of pupils. Particularly importantly, the Department must consistently publish statistics that are as locally targeted as possible, at least at local authority or constituency level. These statistics must underpin the targeting of all interventions to those communities that most need them. In the short term, the Department should learn from the former Children's Commissioner's approach to capturing disadvantage by including statistics on the length of time children are FSM-eligible, and how other forms of disadvantage (for example, SEND, care experience, and local levels of deprivation) interact with this status. In the long term, the Department should work with other parts of Government to build a more sophisticated measure of how poverty affects children. This could draw on initial work by the Social Metrics Commission to develop a metric of poverty that provides a better understanding of the nature of poverty by drawing on lived experience and identifying those least able to make ends meet.* (Paragraph 19)
4. Our inquiry has shown that poor White pupils are far from "privileged" in education. (Paragraph 28)
5. *Schools should consider whether the promotion of politically controversial terminology, including White Privilege, is consistent with their duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Department should take steps to ensure that young people are not inadvertently being inducted into political movements when what is required is balanced, age-appropriate discussion and a curriculum that equips young people to thrive in diverse and multi-cultural communities throughout their lives and work. The Department*

*should issue clear guidance for schools and other Department-affiliated organisations receiving grants from the Department on how to deliver teaching on these complex issues in a balanced, impartial and age-appropriate way. (Paragraph 29)*

### The extent of the achievement gap for disadvantaged White pupils

6. Disadvantaged White pupils fall behind their peers at every stage of education. Every year, thousands of disadvantaged White pupils leave school without strong passes in English and Maths GCSE. We recognise the efforts that the Government has made to close this gap, but the Department has fallen victim to muddled thinking, and has shown little interest in exploring why disadvantaged White pupils underachieve relative to similarly deprived peers. As a result, the Department has not been able to target support and tackle specific barriers facing these groups. The Department must acknowledge that its reforms are not producing results, particularly for disadvantaged White pupils. A knowledge-rich curriculum is essential, but with progress on closing the disadvantage gap stalling, it is time to invest in a more targeted approach. (Paragraph 40)
7. Schools have an important role in how well disadvantaged White children recover from the pandemic. This relates to academic progress, emotional development, and good mental health. This is as true for disadvantaged White pupils as it is for other groups, particularly given NHS statistics indicate that around 18% of White pupils may suffer from mental health challenges. (Paragraph 44)
8. *The Government must develop a more rounded view of what children need and what positive outcomes for children are as we recover from the pandemic. Specifically, with regard to mental health, we believe that the Department must fast-track its commitments under the 2018 Green Paper, particularly with regard to ensuring all schools have a designated mental health lead or counsellor. All catch-up plans, including enrichment activities and longer school days, must include a specific role for activities that focus on mental health and wellbeing. These plans must also be targeted to those areas of the country where the disadvantage gap is currently greatest, particularly outside London. (Paragraph 45)*

### The influence of place

9. The Government has committed to 'levelling up', but there remain stark differences in educational outcomes in different parts of the country, which seem likely to be exacerbated by the differential impact of covid-19. Education is a part of a larger whole with regard to geographic inequalities. Without improvements to local job markets and infrastructure (including digital infrastructure), education faces an uphill battle to raise outcomes for disadvantaged White pupils in left-behind areas. Equally, creating opportunities is of limited use if education has not equipped local people with the skills to fill them. (Paragraph 57)
10. *The Department for Education must make itself central to levelling-up, and ensure that a focus on improving outcomes for children of all ages is a key part of any Government initiative to equalise opportunity and productivity across the country. Publishing all data on attainment measures on as localised a basis as possible, including by*

*neighbourhood, will be the beginning of demonstrating a commitment to levelling-up education by identifying specific communities that are struggling. The Department must co-ordinate its efforts with wider Government in a comprehensive strategy to tackle the root causes of underachievement. (Paragraph 58)*

11. We need a better solution to geographic disparities in education. The Government must acknowledge the diversity of challenges facing disadvantaged White communities and develop better ways to target support. We understand that Opportunity Areas are a relatively recent policy and it is difficult to evaluate them. We heard evidence about initial success, but we remain concerned about their value for money. (Paragraph 65)
12. *We were disappointed that the Department is investing another £18 million in a policy which is reaching limited numbers of pupils and seems to be generating little return on investment. We urge the Department to set out a clear methodology to define what the programme's success criteria are. These should emphasise that the funding is not to be spent on "convene-itis" and discussion, but should go to frontline services, using statistics to micro-target struggling communities, with explicit targets for:*
  - i) *Improving support for families, through targeting Family Hubs to deprived communities and closing the early years attainment gap*
  - ii) *Focussing resource to schools that most need it, through a better measure of disadvantage and funding that is micro-targeted to areas of need*
  - iii) *Channelling funding to schools that struggle to recruit and retain the best staff, through more local teacher training initiatives*
  - iv) *Ensuring all pupils get the best careers advice, particularly in areas where varied career options are less visible. (Paragraph 66)*
13. The free school system has failed to place new schools in areas of highest need and so has failed to reach left behind pupils, and should be encouraged in areas of disadvantage or deprivation. (Paragraph 69)
14. *The Department must take a more proactive role in directing the evolution of free schools. It is not enough to suppose that disadvantaged White communities in left-behind areas will have the same resources as inner-city areas to create their own outstanding schools. All future free schools must be established in areas where they will bring a specific benefit to the local community, and the Department should ensure there is a clear focus on targeting disadvantaged areas and should proactively encourage free schools in areas such as 'challenged white communities'. (Paragraph 70)*

### Supporting White working-class children and families: from cradle to career

15. Having access to high quality early years provision helps disadvantaged children, including White working-class children. Maintained nursery schools deliver consistently high outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, but they face financial difficulties. (Paragraph 79)

16. *The Government's announcement of continued supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools is welcome, but the underlying issues of short-termism and insufficiency remain and are more acute as a result of the pandemic. It is not enough for the Government to continually push a decision on the long-term future of maintained nursery schools back to the next spending review - the Government must decide how to guarantee their long-term future as soon as possible. The Government must also acknowledge the "threadbare" state of the early years system previous to the pandemic, and outline a long-term plan for the early years accompanied by a funding settlement for at least the next three years. (Paragraph 80)*
17. High-quality, joined-up education and health support for disadvantaged White families in the early years of their child's life is crucial and has demonstrable benefits. The Family Hub model is ideally placed to deliver continuity of support and care, helping disadvantaged White families build relationships with trusted contacts, navigate a complex system of entitlements, and identify problems early on. (Paragraph 87)
18. However, there are areas of the country, including those serving disadvantaged White communities, where families do not have this support. The Government's work on the National Centre, and investment of £14 million is positive, but children need this support now. (Paragraph 88)
19. *The Government must explain how the National Centre for Family Hubs will support the development of Family Hubs and should set out bold targets for every town to have a Family Hub using existing community assets where appropriate. (Paragraph 89)*
20. *All Family Hubs must have a clear strategy for the early years, with the aim of bringing services, including health visitors and early years educators, together into one place to make it easier for disadvantaged White families to navigate the system, particularly with regard to taking full advantage of their free entitlements. The Government must implement the recommendations put forward by the Early Years Healthy Development Review, particularly around exploring the idea of a "key contact" for families and supporting local authorities to identify how best to introduce families to their local hub. The Government should also follow the example of the Manchester system, where consistent and frequent contact with families enables early intervention. This will create a joined-up, universal early years support system that works for all parents, and most particularly those disadvantaged White parents whose children are falling off the ladder of opportunity from the very first rung. (Paragraph 90)*
21. We know that parents who are willing and able to engage with their children's education have a positive influence on it. But we must not assume that all parents have the knowledge and skills to do so. We also know that the potential of Family Hubs to deliver "universal and non-stigmatising" access to services is clear. Disadvantaged White children are falling behind in their early years and throughout education, and Family Hubs are well placed to provide wraparound help for families to prevent those gaps emerging. (Paragraph 100)
22. Schools are well placed to be trusted institutions that can support and work with Family Hubs to build strong relationships and help disadvantaged White parents

and carers help their children. Organisations like Reach Academy Feltham demonstrate the potential of this model, providing support “from cradle to career”. (Paragraph 101)

23. *The Department must ensure that disadvantaged White communities are a priority for support. Schools should be an important part of the work of developing Family Hub models, following the example of the Reach Children’s Hub. The Department must help schools emulate this model by inviting applications to open free schools from organisations interested in creating their own ‘cradle to career’ pathway. The Department should explore what support will effectively help existing schools to build local partnerships in this way, as well as what resources schools need to build their own versions of parental engagement strategies such as those at Reach Academy Feltham, including parent-school pledges and home visits. Schools must have autonomy over the form of these parental engagement strategies, to take account of their local area’s cultural nuances.* (Paragraph 102)
24. There is an important role for civil society organisations, such as youth clubs and youth services, working with schools and families to build social capital and provide positive role models for disadvantaged young White people. We were concerned to hear that funding pressures are having an impact on how well young people in some areas of the country are able to access these opportunities. (Paragraph 104)
25. *The Department must ensure that schools have the capacity to build a triangle of support for disadvantaged young people between schools, youth organisations and families, and consider introducing guidance for a designated extra-curricular co-ordinator in all schools.* (Paragraph 105)
26. Given the number of disadvantaged White pupils leaving education every year without a strong pass in English and Maths GCSE, it seems that the impact of parental lack of confidence in learning will continue. Helping disadvantaged White parents with their learning could benefit disadvantaged White pupils. (Paragraph 109)
27. *Our report on adult skills highlighted the decline in support for adult learners. Evidence suggested to us that disadvantaged White parents may particularly struggle with their own levels of education, which may impact on their children’s learning. The Department must give more serious thought to how it may implement our previous report’s recommendations to break the cycle of disengagement in some disadvantaged White communities by:*
  - i) *Ensuring there is a community learning centre in every town*
  - ii) *Incentivising employers to train their staff by introducing a skills tax credit.* (Paragraph 110)

### The school system

28. Good teachers who understand disadvantaged White students’ needs and who can be good role models are central to raising this group’s outcomes. We know that teaching quality is worse in disadvantaged areas than in wealthier areas, with schools less likely to be rated good or outstanding by Ofsted for their quality of teaching. Schools in disadvantaged areas are also less likely to have experienced



teachers, less likely to have teachers in qualified subject areas, and more likely to have higher teacher turnovers. The Department cannot take the current rise in applicants to teacher training during the pandemic for granted. Raising teachers' starting salaries and the Early Careers Framework are welcome but there is more to do. (Paragraph 115)

29. *High quality teaching is particularly transformative for disadvantaged pupils. Over a school year, these pupils get 1.5 years' worth of learning with high quality teachers, compared with 0.5 years with poorly performing teachers. To support the development of local teachers, we should incentivise highly commended initial teacher training providers (like Redcar and Cleveland TTP or Leicester and Leicestershire SCITT) to work with disadvantaged schools and develop top-class school-led routes. The Department must use its enhanced local area statistics to target recruitment and retention policies to schools that are struggling, particularly those in left-behind White communities. The Department must build on the existing postgraduate teaching apprenticeship scheme to make it more widely available and introduce an undergraduate teaching degree apprenticeship with a specific focus on developing teacher subject specialisms. The Department must introduce bursaries, retention payments and salary bonuses to attract good teachers to challenging areas and prevent flight of local talent. This will encourage a more diverse workforce that reflects the communities it serves, through introducing more local teacher training centres in deprived White communities.* (Paragraph 116)
30. School funding has failed to keep pace with where deprivation is in the country, and as a result schools serving disadvantaged communities, including disadvantaged White communities, have suffered financially. The National Funding Formula promises to correct this, but the formula's changes have not yet been fully enacted, and we have seen concerns that a "levelling up" funding uplift may risk further entrenching disadvantage. (Paragraph 127)
31. Additional funding for disadvantaged students, including disadvantaged White students, is welcome, but is insufficient and insufficiently targeted and does not always reflect true level of need. This seems to have extended to the Government's "catch-up" funding, with insufficiently targeted formulas and schemes that are not reaching the children, including disadvantaged White children, who need them most. Just 44% of the children who are using the National Tutoring Programme are eligible for free school meals, making this scheme a prime example of a Government initiative that is not getting to the children who need it most. (Paragraph 128)
32. *The Department must do more to target funding to address attainment gaps, such as that which persistently affects disadvantaged White pupils. This should begin with reform to the pupil premium, which should be weighted to account for persistent disadvantage, including in disadvantaged White communities, in line with our recommendation on better measures of disadvantage. The Department must also heed recommendations from the National Audit Office and keep its catch-up funding initiatives under close review, and introduce significant reform if take up of the National Tutoring Programme has not improved by the end of the school year. The Department should introduce changes to ensure the schools and pupils that most need the extra resource have access to it.* (Paragraph 129)

33. *The Department must also acknowledge that due to funding pressures 34% of headteachers are using the premium to plug financial gaps in other parts of their operation. We note the Department's recent changes to the conditions of the pupil premium grant, but in the light of the Sutton Trust's findings about the number of schools using their grant to plug other gaps, we want to see more action. We will hold the Department to account for their progress, and should the reforms not be successful in ensuring this funding always directly benefits the most disadvantaged we will expect the Department to consider further measures. This should include ringfencing a percentage of the pupil premium grant to offer activities and enrichment opportunities to disadvantaged pupils, helping them access the same extra-curricular opportunities as their better-off peers. (Paragraph 130)*

### Destinations for disadvantaged White pupils

34. We support the Department's insistence that all children should benefit from an ambitious and challenging curriculum. A culture of low expectations is damaging for White working-class children. However, too many disadvantaged White pupils are leaving school without essential qualifications, and something needs to change to re-engage these learners in their education. (Paragraph 132)
35. *The Department must revisit the benefits of celebrating greater diversity of subjects in the pre-16 curriculum. The focus should be ensuring all pupils achieve the essential level of qualifications they need with academic rigour and high expectations, while acknowledging the value of vocational and skills-based subjects and their potential to engage otherwise disaffected groups, such as some disadvantaged White pupils. We are clear that this does not mean introducing a two-tier system, with practical subjects a poor alternative for children who are perceived to be less able. The Department must reform current accountability measures by widening the range of subjects that can count towards the EBacc to include subjects that have been in decline over the past 10 years, such as Design and Technology, and incentivise schools to celebrate all their pupils' aptitudes and create a parity of esteem for vocational subjects alongside a rigorous academic offer. (Paragraph 141)*
36. *Level 2 apprenticeships are a vital stepping-stone for disadvantaged learners. The Department must investigate and address the falling numbers of apprenticeship starts from deprived communities, to ensure disadvantaged White pupils have equal access to the opportunities offered by skills-based routes. As the Centre for Social Justice recommends, the Government should "rebalance the levy so that it supports more young people", and more of the levy's funding should be directed to disadvantaged learners or on courses meeting the skills needs of our nation. Skills tax credits, for example, could be introduced to incentivise businesses to retrain workers without high-level qualifications and in our vital skills areas. (Paragraph 144)*
37. For too long many schools have failed to fully deliver their obligations under the Baker Clause. This must be more uniformly enforced to prevent many disadvantaged pupils, including disadvantaged White pupils, missing the opportunity to access a variety of careers. We will monitor Ofsted's review of careers guidance in schools closely, and look forward to hearing Ofsted's recommendations as to how schools

could improve the careers guidance they offer their pupils, particularly with regard to ensuring that disadvantaged White pupils are aware of all their options on leaving school, including apprenticeships and higher education routes. (Paragraph 147)

38. *The Government must conduct a significant review of Government-funded careers agencies to identify if they are focused on skills, building employer-school partnerships and helping those from White working class in schools in disadvantaged areas. The Government should bring forward measures to tie Government-funded careers advice support to compliance with the Baker Clause. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers have called for compliance with the Baker Clause to be linked to Ofsted judgements. We believe that a school's Ofsted grade should be limited to "Requires Improvement", should the school fail to comply with the Baker Clause. (Paragraph 148)*
39. Accessing higher education is the "end of the funnel" for many pupils' academic journeys. Evidence suggests that for disadvantaged White pupils the funnel narrows dramatically on leaving school. These statistics represent the outcome of accumulated educational disadvantage starting in early years and persisting through primary and secondary education. We share the Secretary of State's concern about disadvantaged White pupils' access to HE and support his directive to the OfS for including this group in its strategic priorities. (Paragraph 152)
40. *The OfS should review how it holds providers to account for ensuring all low-participation groups are equally supported into higher education. This should not just be about inclusion, but ensuring disadvantaged White pupils are also completing their courses and progressing on to skilled work and satisfying careers. The OfS should also implement a target for inclusion of pupils from disadvantaged White backgrounds, to ensure that White working-class students' participation in HE is a key priority for all universities. At least some of the funding that universities currently spend on boosting access and participation should be redirected to where it can be more effective: either through school-based initiatives "upstream" in pupils' journeys or towards increasing take-up of apprenticeships and particularly degree apprenticeships. (Paragraph 153)*
41. *The OfS should also commit to a report to Parliament in a year's time to review progress against this measure and their targets and the Secretary of State's request for a focus on disadvantaged White boys accessing higher education. The OfS should review how it classifies 'under-represented groups' to ensure it keeps pace with the current demographics of the higher education student population. (Paragraph 154)*

## Formal minutes

---

**Wednesday 16 June 2021**

Members present:

Robert Halfon, in the Chair

Fleur Anderson	Kim Johnson
Apsana Begum	David Johnston
Jonathan Gullis	Ian Mearns
Tom Hunt	David Simmonds
Dr Caroline Johnson	Christian Wakeford

Draft Report (*The forgotten: how White working-class pupils have been let down, and how to change it*) proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Draft Report (*Facing the facts: how the systemic underinvestment in de-industrialised communities in 'left behind' regions is bringing down the educational attainment of working-class pupils*), proposed by Kim Johnson, brought up and read, as follows:

### **Facing the facts: how the systemic underinvestment in de-industrialised communities in 'left behind' regions is bringing down the educational attainment of working-class pupils**

1. While this inquiry began with a focus on disadvantaged White pupils (specifically, those eligible for free school meals, or FSM), the evidence that we have received clearly indicates that this is an issue of class and often regional inequalities, rather than being about ethnicity.
2. Using “White working class” as a proxy for disadvantaged children is misleading. As written evidence to our inquiry explained, around 57% of British adults would describe themselves as working class, while children who are FSM-eligible account for around 14% of 16 year olds.<sup>1</sup> We must also remember that the ‘working class’, or disadvantaged groups, are multi-ethnic, with half of half of all Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children living in poverty in this country. For every £1 of White British wealth, Pakistani households have around 50p, Black Caribbean have 20p and Black African and Bangladeshi have 10p.<sup>2</sup> Conflating “working class” with FSM-eligibility is misleading and serves to downplay the deep racial inequalities that ethnic minority pupils and particularly Black pupils face in educational settings.
3. We also observe that pupils from White British backgrounds are statistically less likely to be FSM-eligible than pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. As the Runnymede

---

1 National Literacy Trust ([LBP0020](#))

2 The Runnymede Trust, [The Colour of Money](#), April 2020, p12

Trust pointed out in their written evidence, roughly one in ten White children are claiming free school meals, while the “figures for other, non white groups claiming FSMs are far higher”.<sup>3</sup> The Runnymede Trust adds that:

In reality, of those claiming FSMs just over one-in-five were Black pupils, just under one-in-five were pupils from a Mixed race background and 18% were Asian pupils with 11% being White students.

4. In reality, all ‘working class’ groups are being held back, but for some of those groups this is compounded by racism. When we scrutinised the data, it became apparent that there is a different narrative emerging to one about the ‘left-behind White working class’. In fact, the groups that have the lowest outcomes in education, for both FSM-eligible and non-FSM-eligible, are children from Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller backgrounds, who have consistently poor outcomes and deserve more targeted support. With reference to academic results, FSM-eligible boys from mixed White and Black Caribbean, and Black Caribbean backgrounds, sometimes achieve similar or lower scores to FSM-eligible boys from White British backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> For example, while FSM-eligible White British boys had lower Progress 8 scores in 2019 (an average of -1.02), FSM-eligible boys from a mixed White and Black Caribbean background scored lower in Attainment 8 (28.0, against 29.0 for disadvantaged White boys), and had lower rates of achieving a grade 9–4 (or pass) at English and Maths GCSE (29.7%, against 31.7% for disadvantaged White boys).

5. The challenges facing pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are not confined to academic outcomes. Written evidence also drew our attention to low teacher expectations for Black Caribbean students, disproportionate rates of exclusion for Black Caribbean and Mixed White/Black Caribbean students,<sup>5</sup> and disproportionate rates of children from BAME backgrounds in custody.<sup>6</sup> We must acknowledge these additional challenges, which have a significant bearing on life outcomes. For example, we know that young people excluded from school are more likely to be victims of crime, and four times as many young people excluded from school fail to gain any qualifications at age 16 compared to those who are not excluded (source: Crawford, Demack, Gillborn, Gillborn & Warmington, 2020).

6. Only addressing the barriers facing disadvantaged White students would systematically disadvantage other ethnic groups and increase racial educational inequalities. Much of the evidence we heard focused on addressing geographic and place-based inequalities, which can affect children of any ethnicity, and the need for investment to reverse the effects of years of austerity and a policy of managed decline for post-industrial areas that have suffered from systematic under-investment that has left the UK among the most geographically unequal countries in the developed world.<sup>7</sup>

7. The Institute for Fiscal Studies have found that school spending per pupil has reduced by 9% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20,<sup>8</sup> and the School Cuts Campaign estimates that there will be a £1.3 billion funding shortfall by 2022/23 compared

---

3 Runnymede Trust ([LBP0021](#))

4 See, for example, Office for National Statistics, [Key Stage 4 attainment 2019](#), 6 February 2020

5 Runnymede Trust ([LBP0021](#))

6 The Prisoners’ Education Trust ([LBP0012](#))

7 Institute of Fiscal Studies, [Levelling up: where and how?](#), 2 October 2020, p315

8 Institute for Fiscal Studies, [2020 Annual report on education spending in England: schools](#), 18 September 2020, p6



with 2015/16.<sup>9</sup> This reduction in funding, coupled with systematic de-industrialisation in ‘left-behind’ regions are key drivers of poor educational outcomes for disadvantaged communities, and we have received no convincing evidence that underinvestment in good, skilled, sustainable jobs in these regions is not the main driver of low educational outcomes for disadvantaged communities, including disadvantaged White communities. We were also very concerned about the potential impact of the Department’s decision to use data from the October 2020 census in place of the January 2021 census for allocations in 2020–21,<sup>10</sup> which has resulted in a stealth cut to pupil premium funding of around £133 million. It is useful to call for more targeting of resources, but what disadvantaged pupils really need is more of these resources, particularly in the face of cuts to funding specifically for disadvantaged pupils.<sup>11</sup>

8. Key to addressing these low outcomes is a focus on levelling up for all disadvantaged communities in ‘left-behind’ regions, through significant investment to improve equality of opportunity, productivity and prosperity across the UK – which in turn will significantly improve educational attainment for the most disadvantaged, including disadvantaged White communities. A Black child growing up in Hartlepool suffers from the same multi-generational poverty and lack of opportunity as a White child growing up in Hartlepool. These are geographic and class disparities, not racialised disparities and we have to understand this if we are to tackle them.

9. We also contest claims that family structure has some kind of specific bearing on the attainment of disadvantaged White children. Government data shows that 18.9% of Black households are made up of a single parent with dependent children—the highest percentage of all ethnic groups for this type of household.<sup>12</sup> Asserting that cultural factors are a significant factor is vague, lazy and lacks basis in evidence. All disadvantaged families, across the board, face disproportionate barriers to engagement with schools and other support services, and the Department must do more to support all these families, particularly those in left-behind regions. While some sources, including the widely discredited report from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, may talk about an “immigrant paradigm”, we saw no compelling evidence that this has any impact on the educational under-achievement of disadvantaged White pupils, and also note that many ethnic minorities have lived for many generations in the same areas and suffer from the same systemic disadvantages as White communities living in the same areas. We were deeply concerned at the publication of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report, particularly its offensive assertion that structural racism no longer exists. We do not believe that report should be used as a framework for addressing disparities in education.

10. On the issue of higher education, while relatively high numbers of students from BAME backgrounds do go to university, not only are they more likely to drop out without completing their degree, but even when achieving the same or better degree outcomes they are still less likely to be represented in the workforce. The Office for Students should focus its efforts on geographic-based targets, which will be more effective at targeting the

9 Schools Cuts Campaign, [IFS: School cuts research fairly represents the facts](#), Accessed 15 June 2021

10 Department for Education, [Policy Paper: Pupil Premium](#), March 2021

11 Schools Week, [Pupil premium change: Labour accuses government of £133m ‘stealth cut’](#), 23 April 2021

12 GOV.UK, [Families and households](#), 28 August 2020



barriers faced by working-class communities, including majority White communities, in left-behind areas by identifying the challenges they're facing and dismantling the existing barriers.

11. It is not enough to suppose that punishing schools for struggling to comply with the Baker Clause is a solution to a lack of employment opportunities in some areas. This issue will only be solved through significant and state-planned and funded investment. Punishing schools for not connecting pupils to the meagre opportunities that currently exist will not help, or be effective in closing the attainment gap and getting working class pupils into decent jobs.

12. To be clear, we care deeply about improving the educational attainment and life opportunities of White working class children, alongside all disadvantaged children. But to make recommendations which pit different groups within our multi-ethnic working class against each other in a struggle for meagre resources is to do an injustice to our most disadvantaged children, including specifically White communities that have been 'left behind'. If we do not recognise the true causes of their disadvantage, we cannot hope to dismantle them. Instead, we must engage with the evidence, which demonstrates clearly that systemic underinvestment and multi-generational deprivation are the primary drivers of educational under-attainment in left-behind communities—where the majority of the White working class reside. Our recommendations must seek to address these challenges and dismantle these barriers if we are to materially improve the educational attainment levels and life chances for disadvantaged White children—and indeed all communities—in these areas.

13. What all disadvantaged pupils, including disadvantaged White pupils, need is more investment. From the underfunding of the childcare and early years sector,<sup>13</sup> to devastating cuts to youth services,<sup>14</sup> to the dearth of meaningful career opportunities in many left-behind neighbourhoods and discrimination in the labour market, through to years of Conservative Government cuts to school funding—changes that do not involve an increase of funding are not going to deliver the change that these pupils (of all ethnicities) desperately need.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Chair's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.—(*The Chair.*)

Amendment proposed, to leave out "Chair's draft Report" and insert "draft Report proposed by Kim Johnson".—(*Kim Johnson.*)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided:

13 Early Years Alliance, [New data shows ministers knew early years was underfunded](#), 14 June 2021

14 Guardian, [Youth services suffer 70% funding cuts in less than a decade](#), 20 January 2020

**Ayes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Kim Johnson  
Ian Mearns

**Noes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question, put and agreed to.

*Ordered*, That the Chair's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 5 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 6 read.

Amendment proposed, in line 7, leave out "greater" and insert "different" ".—(*Fleur Anderson*.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Kim Johnson  
Ian Mearns

**Noes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

Question negatived.

Paragraph 6 agreed to.

Paragraphs 7 to 21 read and agreed to.

With the leave of the Committee, a single Question was put in relation to paragraphs 22 to 29.

Motion made, to leave out paragraphs 22 to 29 and insert the following new paragraphs:

Blaming the educational underachievement of White working-class communities on the concept of 'White Privilege' or critical race theories, rather than the systematic deindustrialisation and underinvestment of

successive Conservative governments, is a red herring. Reviewing its use in the classroom, and in publicly funded bodies that work with children, will do nothing to materially improve the lives of White working class communities or the educational attainment of White working class pupils. We have seen no evidence in this inquiry that the idea of White Privilege affects outcomes for disadvantaged White pupils, but there is a wealth of evidence behind the articulation of White Privilege as a concept, as well as evidence that shows that a lack of investment is a key driver in limiting educational attainment outcomes for White working class pupils.

Recent comments from the Minister for Equalities. Kemi Badenoch, about “pernicious stuff being pushed”,<sup>[1]</sup> as well as the report from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities and its recommendation that the Department should publish guidance for schools on “how to tell the multiple, nuanced stories that have shaped the country we live in today”<sup>[2]</sup> show a clear ideology beginning to form that borders on an authoritarian attack on freedom of speech and an insidious attempt to prevent racialised communities from articulating their experiences of racism.

[1]HC Deb, 20 October 2020, Column 1012, [Commons Chamber]

[2] Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, The report, 31 March 2021, p93—(*Kim Johnson.*)

Question put.

The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Kim Johnson  
Ian Mearns

**Noes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

Question accordingly negatived.

Paragraph 22 read.

Question put, That the paragraph stand part of the Report.

The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

**Noes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Ian Mearns  
Kim Johnson

Paragraph 22 accordingly agreed to.

Paragraph 23 read as follows:

White Privilege is used in the context of discrimination and racism and the challenges that people from ethnic minorities face. We recognise the importance of openly discussing and addressing racism in all its forms. Like the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, however, we are concerned that the phrase may be alienating to disadvantaged White communities, and it may have contributed towards a systemic neglect of White people facing hardship who also need specific support. It also fails to acknowledge the damage caused by other forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism and the marginalisation of people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds. Some research from the United States also suggests that learning about White Privilege may reduce sympathy for White people who are struggling with poverty. According to a 2019 US study: “White privilege lessons may lead some people to see a hierarchy in which Whiteness is always privileged to the same degree irrespective of individual-level variability, such as growing up in an impoverished situation

Amendment proposed, in line 7, leave out “It also” and insert “It was noted during our evidence hearings that a lot of children in these disadvantaged white communities aren’t aware of their own disadvantage.[1] This is a problem. As a committee we believe that the use of terms such as ‘White Privilege’ doesn’t help this matter. This is coupled with the fact that there is an industry which has emerged to support these other groups in a form that isn’t available for disadvantaged white pupils. White Privilege also”

[1] See, for example, Qq 266–271 Rae Tooth—(*Tom Hunt*.)

Question proposed, That the Amendment be made.

Amendment proposed to the proposed amendment, in footnote 1, at end insert “and The Telegraph, Primary school pupils should learn about white privilege, says RE teachers’ organisation, 15 June 2021”.—(*Jonathan Gullis*.)

Question put, That the Amendment to the proposed Amendment be made.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes, 6</b>	<b>Noes, 4</b>
Jonathan Gullis	Fleur Anderson
Tom Hunt	Apsana Begum
Dr Caroline Johnson	Ian Mearns
David Johnston	Kim Johnson
David Simmonds	
Christian Wakeford	

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put, That the proposed amendment, as amended, be made.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes, 6</b>	<b>Noes, 4</b>
Jonathan Gullis	Fleur Anderson
Tom Hunt	Apsana Begum
Dr Caroline Johnson	Ian Mearns
David Johnston	Kim Johnson
David Simmonds	
Christian Wakeford	

Proposed amendment, as amended, accordingly made.

Question put, That paragraph 23, as amended, be added to the Report.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes, 6</b>	<b>Noes, 4</b>
Jonathan Gullis	Fleur Anderson
Tom Hunt	Apsana Begum
Dr Caroline Johnson	Ian Mearns
David Johnston	Kim Johnson
David Simmonds	
Christian Wakeford	

Paragraph 23, as amended, accordingly agreed to.

Paragraph 24 read.

Question put, That the paragraph stand part of the Report.

The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

**Noes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Ian Mearns  
Kim Johnson

Paragraph 24 accordingly agreed to.

Paragraph 25 read.

Amendment proposed, at end add “Organisations which are in receipt of taxpayer money should have full regard to their duties under the Equality Act 2010, and should consider whether the concept of White Privilege is consistent with those duties.—(*Tom Hunt.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

**Noes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Ian Mearns  
Kim Johnson

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put, That paragraph 25, as amended, stand part of the Report.

The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

**Noes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Ian Mearns  
Kim Johnson

Paragraph 25, as amended, accordingly agreed to.

With the leave of the Committee, a single Question was put on paragraphs 26 to 28.

Paragraphs 26 to 28 read.

Question put, That paragraphs 26 to 28 stand part of the Report.



The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

**Noes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Ian Mearns  
Kim Johnson

Paragraphs accordingly agreed to.

Paragraph 29 read as follows:

Schools must have clear guidance that they should not promote politically controversial terminology, including “White privilege”. The Department should take steps to ensure that young people are not inadvertently being inducted into political movements when what is required is balanced, age-appropriate discussion and a curriculum that equips young people to thrive in diverse and multi-cultural communities throughout their lives and work. The Department should issue clear guidance for schools and other Department-affiliated organisations receiving grants from the Department on how to deliver teaching on these complex issues in a balanced, impartial and age-appropriate way.

Amendment proposed, leave out “Schools must have clear guidance that they should not promote politically controversial terminology, including “White privilege””, and insert “Schools should consider whether the promotion of politically controversial terminology, including “White Privilege”, is consistent with their duties under the Equality Act 2010”.—  
(*Jonathan Gullis.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

**Noes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Ian Mearns  
Kim Johnson

Question accordingly agreed to.

Paragraph 29, as amended, be added to the report.

Question agreed to.

Paragraphs 30 to 36 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 37 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 38 to 50 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 51 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 52 to 68 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 69 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 70 to 102 read and agreed to.

Paragraph—(*Fleur Anderson*)—brought up, read the first and second time and added (now paragraph 103).

Paragraph—(*Fleur Anderson*)—brought up, read the first and second time and added (now paragraph 104).

Paragraph—(*Fleur Anderson*)—brought up, read the first and second time and added (now paragraph 105).

Paragraphs 103 to 112 read and agreed to (now paragraphs 106 to 115).

Paragraph 113 read, amended and agreed to (now paragraph 116)

Paragraphs 114 to 123 read and agreed to (now paragraphs 117 to 126).

Paragraph—(*Fleur Anderson*)—brought up and read, as follows:

There are also concerns about the amount of the funding which fall short of Sir Kevan Collins' recommendations, which included 100 extra hours of teaching per pupil and would have cost around £15bn, which is a long way from the new package of recovery measures announced by the government. Sir Kevin Collins has called the plans "half-hearted", and stood down from his post as commissioner after just four months. In his resignation letter he said that the funding 'falls far short of what is needed. Not enough is being done to help vulnerable pupils, children in the early years or 16- to 19-year-olds. Above all, I am concerned that the package announced... betrays an undervaluation of the importance of education, for individuals and as a driver of a more prosperous and healthy society".

Question put, That the paragraph be read a second time.

The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 4**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Ian Mearns  
Kim Johnson

**Noes, 6**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson  
David Johnston  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

Question accordingly negatived.

Paragraph 124 read and agreed to (now paragraph 127).

Paragraph 125 read, amended and agreed to (now paragraph 128).

Paragraph 126 read and agreed to (now paragraph 129).

Paragraph 127 read, amended and agreed to (now paragraph 130).

Paragraphs 128 to 147 read and agreed to (now paragraphs 131 to 150).

Paragraph 148 read (now paragraph 151).

Amendment proposed, line 24, at end insert “Outreach to increase participation and wider access is important, but taxpayers’ should not be funding schemes that exclude applicants on the basis of their ethnicity or skin colour”.—(*Dr Caroline Johnson.*)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided:

**Ayes, 3**

Jonathan Gullis  
Tom Hunt  
Dr Caroline Johnson

**Noes, 7**

Fleur Anderson  
Apsana Begum  
Kim Johnson  
David Johnston  
Ian Mearns  
David Simmonds  
Christian Wakeford

Question accordingly negatived.

Paragraph 148 agreed to (now paragraph 151).

Paragraphs 149 to 151 read and agreed to (now paragraphs 152 to 154).

Summary read.

Amendment proposed, paragraph 1, line 13, at end insert “To be clear, our findings are not that the white working class are held back because of the gains made by minority groups, but that white working class children are losing out because of decades of underinvestment, and this should be recognised and addressed. Addressing the range of factors disadvantaging this group will raise the attainment of all groups and this is our aim”.—(*Fleur Anderson.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes, 4</b>	<b>Noes, 6</b>
Fleur Anderson	Jonathan Gullis
Apsana Begum	Tom Hunt
Kim Johnson	Dr Caroline Johnson
Ian Mearns	David Johnston
	David Simmonds
	Christian Wakeford

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed, paragraph 18, line 24, leave out “We agree with the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities that current discourse around White Privilege can be divisive and”.—(*Fleur Anderson*.)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes, 4</b>	<b>Noes, 6</b>
Fleur Anderson	Jonathan Gullis
Apsana Begum	Tom Hunt
Kim Johnson	Dr Caroline Johnson
Ian Mearns	David Johnston
	David Simmonds
	Christian Wakeford

Question accordingly negated.

Amendments made.

Summary, agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

The Committee divided:

<b>Ayes, 6</b>	<b>Noes, 4</b>
Jonathan Gullis	Fleur Anderson
Tom Hunt	Apsana Begum
Dr Caroline Johnson	Ian Mearns
David Johnston	Kim Johnson
David Simmonds	
Christian Wakeford	

*Resolved*, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

[Adjourned till 23 June 2021 at 9.30 am

## Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Tuesday 13 October 2020

**Professor Lee Elliot Major**, Professor of Social Mobility, University of Exeter; **Professor Matthew Goodwin**, Professor of Politics and International Relations, University of Kent; **Professor Diane Reay**, Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Cambridge

[Q1–34](#)

**Mary Curnock Cook OBE**; **Professor Becky Francis**, Chief Executive, Education Endowment Foundation; **Dr Sam Baars**, Director of Research and Operations, The Centre for Education and Youth

[Q35–73](#)

### Tuesday 03 November 2020

**Henri Murison**, Director, Northern Powerhouse Partnership; **Sammy Wright**, Social Mobility Commissioner, Social Mobility Commission; **Dr Alex Gibson**, Senior Research Fellow, University of Plymouth

[Q74–117](#)

**Liz Bayram**, Chief Executive, Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY); **Jonathan Douglas**, Chief Executive, National Literacy Trust; **Ed Vainker**, Chief Executive Officer, Reach Academy

[Q118–156](#)

### Tuesday 17 November 2020

**Helena Mills CBE**, Chief Executive Officer, BMAT Education; **Nick Hurn OBE**, Chief Executive Officer, Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust; **Clementine Stewart**, Vice-Chair of Governors, Langford Primary School; **Claire-Marie Cuthbert**, Chief Executive Officer, Evolve Trust; **Andrew Smith**, Chief Executive Officer, Learning Pathways Academy; **Ruth Robinson**, Executive Principal, Swindon and Nova Hreod Academies

[Q157–203](#)

### Tuesday 01 December 2020

**Edward Davies**, Director of Policy, Centre for Social Justice; **Matt Leach**, Chief Executive Officer, The Local Trust; **Miriam Jordan Keane**, Chief Marketing and Sales Officer, The National Citizen Service; **Katie Sullivan**, 'Get Active' Youth Work Co-ordinator, Regenerate UK; **Suzanne Wilson**, Research Fellow in Social Inclusion and Community Development, University of Central Lancashire

[Q204–246](#)

### Thursday 07 January 2021

**Professor Liz Barnes**, Vice Chancellor, Staffordshire University; **Chris Millward**, Director for Fair Access and Participation, Office for Students; **Rae Tooth**, Chief Executive, Villiers Park Educational Trust; **Dr Graeme Atherton**, Director, The National Education Opportunities Network (NEON); **Karen Spencer MBE**, Principal, Harlow College

[Q247–293](#)



### Tuesday 26 January 2021

**Dr. Javed Khan**, Chief Executive Officer, Barnardo's; **Merle Davies**, Director, Blackpool Centre for Early Child Development; **Sonia Shaljean**, Managing Director, Lads need Dads; **Louisa Reeves**, Head of Impact and Evidence, I CAN; **Claire Smith**, Talk Halton Project Lead, Halton Borough Council

[Q294–348](#)

### Tuesday 09 February 2021

**Rt Hon. Nick Gibb MP**, Minister of State for School Standards, Department for Education; **Vicky Ford MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, Department for Education

[Q349–411](#)

### Wednesday 19 May 2021

**Dr Tony Sewell CBE**, Chair, Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities; **Martyn Oliver**, Commissioner, Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities; **Professor Steve Strand**, Professor of Education, University of Oxford

[Q412–482](#)

## Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

LBP numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Asthana, Professor Sheena (Director of the Plymouth Institute of Health and Care Research, University of Plymouth) ([LBP0034](#)); Gibson, Dr Alex (Senior Research Fellow, University of Plymouth)
- 2 Atkins, Professor Liz ([LBP0011](#))
- 3 Barnardo's ([LBP0065](#))
- 4 Barnes, Professor Liz (Vice Chancellor, Staffordshire University) ([LBP0059](#))
- 5 Billingham, Mr Luke (Head of Strategy, Reach Academy Feltham & Reach Children's Hub) ([LBP0023](#))
- 6 Blackpool Centre for Early Child Development ([LBP0063](#))
- 7 Bowen-Viner, Ms Kate (Senior Associate, The Centre for Education and Youth) ([LBP0002](#))
- 8 CBE, Jean Gross ([LBP0043](#))
- 9 Campbell, Dr Tammy ([LBP0019](#))
- 10 Cartwright, Mr Nick; Cartwright, Mrs Olorunteleola; Wallace, Mr Roy; and Wallace, Ms Adree ([LBP0010](#))
- 11 Cowley, Alan and Leigh, Steve, Engagement in Education Ltd; Goodall, Dr Janet, Swansea University; Hurn OBE, Nick, Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust; de Muschamp, Mrs Debra, Iris Learning Trust; and Hopkins, Grant, formerly Lockwood Primary School ([LBP0027](#))
- 12 Child Rights International Network (CRIN) ([LBP0025](#))
- 13 Crew, Melanie (Policy Manager, National Literacy Trust) ([LBP0020](#))
- 14 Cuthbert, Claire-Marie (Chief Executive Officer, Evolve Trust) ([LBP0053](#))
- 15 Department of Education ([LBP0044](#))
- 16 Dickinson, Emma (Principal Policy Office—Employment and Skills, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority) ([LBP0017](#))
- 17 Education Committee ([LBP0052](#))
- 18 Education Endowment Foundation ([LBP0041](#))
- 19 Edwards, Professor Peter (Professor of Inorganic Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, University of Oxford) ([LBP0048](#))
- 20 Elliot-Major, Professor Lee (Professor of Social Mobility , University of Exeter) ([LBP0035](#))
- 21 Head, Mr Michael ([LBP0004](#))
- 22 Haytor View Primary School ([LBP0061](#))
- 23 Hernandez, Ms Alex (Public Affairs Manager, Catholic Education Service) ([LBP0014](#))
- 24 I CAN Children's Communication Charity ([LBP0031](#))
- 25 Jonsson, Terese (Policy Officer, Prisoners' Education Trust) ([LBP0012](#))
- 26 Knott, Theo (Education Programme Manager, NESTA) ([LBP0016](#))

- 27 Leckie, Professor George ([LBP0008](#))
- 28 Local Trust ([LBP0039](#))
- 29 Lock, Mr Stuart (CEO , Advantage Schools) ([LBP0009](#))
- 30 London and South East Education Group ([LBP0064](#))
- 31 MP, Philip Davies ([LBP0049](#))
- 32 Mazhari, Dr Tuba (Research & Policy Officer, The National Education Opportunities Network (NEON)) ([LBP0005](#))
- 33 McGoh, Mr Jon (Producer, Mercurial Pictures) ([LBP0003](#))
- 34 McPhillips, Andrew (Chief Economist, The Northern Powerhouse Partnership) ([LBP0058](#))
- 35 Men and Boys Coalition ([LBP0033](#))
- 36 NALDIC (National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum) ([LBP0036](#))
- 37 National Citizen Service ([LBP0062](#))
- 38 Ofsted ([LBP0042](#))
- 39 Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) ([LBP0057](#))
- 40 Scouts ([LBP0060](#))
- 41 Skerritt, Samuel (Head of Content and Communications, New Schools Network) ([LBP0047](#))
- 42 Smith, Mr Laurie (Trustee and company secretary, Let's Think Forum) ([LBP0007](#))
- 43 Smyth, Karin ([LBP0040](#))
- 44 Social Mobility Commission ([LBP0046](#))
- 45 The Northern Powerhouse Education Consortium ([LBP0018](#))
- 46 St Christopher's Fellowship ([LBP0024](#))
- 47 Stewart, Clementine (Local Governing Board Vice Chair, Langford and Wilberforce Partnership) ([LBP0054](#))
- 48 Sutton Trust ([LBP0029](#))
- 49 Teachfirst ([LBP0055](#))
- 50 The Bell Foundation ([LBP0026](#))
- 51 Treloar, Mr Nick (Research and Policy Officer, The Runnymede Trust) ([LBP0021](#))
- 52 Turner, Robert ([LBP0050](#))
- 53 United Learning ([LBP0056](#))
- 54 Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN) ([LBP0045](#))
- 55 Universities UK ([LBP0030](#))
- 56 University of Central Lancashire; West Lakes Academy; Dropzone Youth Projects; and Furness Academy ([LBP0028](#))

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

---

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

### Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Getting the grades they've earned: Covid-19: the cancellation of exams and 'calculated' grades	HC 617
2nd	Appointment of the Children's Commissioner for England	HC 1030
3rd	A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution	HC 278
4th	Appointment of the Chair of the Office for Students	HC 1143