Commission on Race
and Ethnic Disparities

Independent report

Education and training

Updated 28 April 2021

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Summary

Education is the single most emphatic success story of the British ethnic minority experience. Over the last half century, new arrivals to Britain have seized on the opportunities afforded by the state school system and access to university. The story for some ethnic groups has been one of remarkable social mobility, outperforming the national average and enabling them to attain success at the highest levels within a generation. Conversely, other groups experience lower than average educational outcomes which can have a significant impact on employment rates, earnings and general wellbeing. It is important to understand why these disparities arise and what can be done to reduce them.

As already noted, the Commission found the BAME acronym unhelpfully masking a complex picture, obscuring the different educational outcomes amongst different ethnic minority groups. Statistics which present collective BAME achievement in contrast to White achievement are largely redundant in helping to explain success or failure.

The picture of educational achievement across ethnic groups is complex, and different social, economic and cultural factors contribute to this: parental income levels, parental career and educational achievement, geography, family structure, and attitudes towards education within the family and wider community.

What is clear, however, is that strong early years support, good schools and evidence-based interventions can also improve educational outcomes across all groups and partly overcome other factors. Additionally, according to many respondents to our call for evidence, it is clear that all pupils should be equipped with a wider understanding of the UK which encompasses the contributions made by different groups, cultures and regions.

Taking the threshold of strong GCSE passes in English and maths, the White British group ranks 10th in attainment.[footnote 1] The Chinese and Indian ethnic groups outperform the White British group on this measure by wide margins. New evidence indicates that attainment is closely related to socio-economic status – once this is controlled for, all major ethnic groups perform better than White British pupils except for Black Caribbean pupils (with the Pakistani ethnic group at about the same level). [footnote 2]

A higher percentage of ethnic minority young people attend university compared with White British young people, but the latter have the best outcomes at top universities. This is partly a selection effect thanks to a smaller, and better qualified, percentage of White British young people going to university compared with other ethnicities. Of the main ethnic groups, the Black Caribbean group is the least likely to attend university after the White British group, while the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups are mostly likely.[footnote 3]

Too many people are dropping out of university or not getting graduate jobs several years after graduating. Better guidance is needed on course selection and we need to promote a wider range of attractive and rewarding alternatives to higher education.

Raising the status of technical and vocational education, providing more school-leaver apprenticeships and offering second chances for those who do not get on the

academic ladder at 16, or who fall off it at or after university, is not only a key social support net but also essential for providing the vocational skills of the future. They can provide alternative routes to success for all ethnicities.

The Commission acknowledges the impact that COVID-19 will have on widening educational disparities and the efforts underway from the government, schools, pupils and education practitioners to counteract this. Despite their best efforts, we know the educational impact of COVID-19 is significant. In the Education Policy Institute's (EPI) annual report in 2020 they stated that the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers had stopped closing for the first time in a decade.[footnote 4] The disruption school closure has caused in learning will require a sustained effort throughout children's remaining school years to repair. This chapter will establish the necessary action to tackle existing educational disparities and will set out the agenda for change to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The journey of the child

Patterns in educational and social attainment by ethnic groups vary throughout the journey through schooling:

- at early years, the White British group ranks joint 5th out of 18 ethnic groups alongside Mixed Other ethnic groups by the percentage of 4 to 5 year olds meeting expected development standards[footnote 5]
- at key stage 2, the White British group ranks 10th[footnote 6]
- at GCSE, the White British group ranks 10th in attainment (gaining a strong pass in English and Maths), closely following Black African and Other ethnic groups[footnote 7]
- at A level, the White British group ranks 8th in the percentage of 18 year olds attaining at least 3 A grades[footnote 8]
- attainment is highest for the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups up to and including A levels, while it is lowest among the White Gypsy and Roma and Irish Traveller groups

Figure 1: Percentage of pupils meeting attainment goals in early years, key stage 2, GCSEs and A levels, by ethnicity (18 ethnic groups)

Met expected standard at age 4 to 5 | Met expected standard at age 10 to 11 | Strong pass in GCSE English and maths | Achieved at least 3 A grades at A level

Chinese
Indian
Asian other
Mixed White/Asian
White Irish
Bangladeshi
Mixed other
Other
Black African
White British
Mixed White/Black African
White other
Pakistani
Black other
Mixed White/Black Caribbean
Black Caribbean
Irish Traveller
Gypsy/Roma

0 20 40 60 80

Percentage of pupils

Bar charts showing that pupils from the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups are consistently the most likely out of all ethnic groups to meet attainment goals throughout primary and secondary education.

Figure 2: Percentage of pupils meeting attainment goals in early years, key stage 2, GCSEs, A levels and degree, by ethnicity (5 aggregated ethnic groups)

Ethnicity	Met expected standard at age 4 to 5	Met expected standard at age 10 to 11	Strong pass in GCSE English and maths	Achieved at least 3 A grades at A level	Achieved at least a 2.1 at undergraduate level
Asian	69%	69%	51.9%	11%	70.5%
Black	68%	64%	37.8%	5.5%	58.8%
Mixed	72%	66%	43.8%	11.2%	76.6%
White	72%	64%	42.4%	11%	81.4%
Other	63%	61%	43.4%	10.2%	67.3%

0% 25% 50% 75%

Bar charts showing that pupils from the aggregated Asian ethnic group were most likely out of all ethnic groups to meet attainment goals in primary and secondary education. White pupils were most likely to in early years and at undergraduate degree level.

Table 1: Percentage reaching attainment thresholds by ethnic group, 2018 to 2019 school year

	4 to 5 year olds meeting expected development standards (%)	10 to 11 year olds meeting expected standard, reading, writing, and maths (%)	16 year olds getting a strong pass (grade 5 or higher) in GCSE English and maths (%)	18 year olds getting at least 3 As at A level (%)
Chinese	76 (3)	80 (3)	76.3 (2)	25.7 (1)
Indian	78 (20)	77 (19)	64.1 (15)	15.5 (8)
Asian Other	69 (11)	71 (12)	60.1 (9)	11.8 (5)
Mixed White and Asian	75 (10)	73 (9)	55.5 (6)	15.3 (3)
White Irish	74 (2)	73 (2)	54.9 (2)	13.8 (1)
Bangladeshi	67 (10)	70 (11)	50.3 (10)	7.8 (4)
Mixed Other	73 (16)	68 (14)	47 (10)	11.8 (4)
Other	63 (12)	61 (13)	43.4 (10)	10.2 (4)
All	71 (639)	65 (644)	43.2 (543)	13 (218)
Black African	68 (21)	67 (26)	42.9 (20)	6.1 (8)
White British	73 (410)	65 (426)	42.5 (375)	11 (122)
Mixed White and Black African	71 (6)	67 (5)	41.5 (3)	8.3 (1)
White Other	66 (45)	63 (43)	41.5 (28)	11.5 (10)
Pakistani	64 (27)	62 (29)	41.3 (24)	7.3 (8)
Black Other	66 (4)	60 (5)	33.7 (4)	5.4 (1)
Mixed White and Black	69 (10)	59 (10)	31 (8)	6.2 (2)

	4 to 5 year olds meeting expected development standards (%)	10 to 11 year olds meeting expected standard, reading, writing, and maths (%)	16 year olds getting a strong pass (grade 5 or higher) in GCSE English and maths (%)	18 year olds getting at least 3 As at A level (%)
Caribbean				
Black Caribbean	68 (5)	56 (7)	26.5 (7)	3.4 (2)
Irish Traveller	39 (0.7)	26 (0.5)	13.9 (0.2)	0 (<0.1)
Gypsy and Roma	34 (2)	19 (2)	6 (1)	0 (<0.1)

> Note: Publication of GCSE attainment in the 2019 to 2020 school year was cancelled due to COVID-19. Table ranked by GCSE attainment (number in cohort, thousands). Source: Ethnicity facts and figures.

Early years and primary education

Early years and primary school provide a foundation for the rest of a child's life. On average, 40% of the overall development gap between disadvantaged 16 year olds, using eligibility for free school meals (FSM) as the measure, and their peers emerges by the age of 5.[footnote 9] By 16 years old, disadvantaged children are 18 months behind their peers.[footnote 10] In 2018, 18% of school leavers left education at age 18 without reaching Level 2 attainment, with poor children twice as likely to do so.[footnote 11] These attainment gaps form early on and tend to widen throughout the course of a child's life. This widening matters as success in education at 16 years old is strongly predictive of later occupational, economic, health and well-being outcomes and to future social mobility.

The evidence on early years points to 3 major sources of disparity that runs throughout this report: family, geography and poverty. A child who is doing less well at 5 years old is nearly twice as likely to end up being excluded by the end of primary school, even after adjusting for socio-economic status and other factors.[footnote 12]

Between 2007 and 2016, the gap between disadvantaged students and their peers by the end of primary school narrowed by 2.8 months, and the gap by age 5 narrowed by 1.2 months. It is estimated that at these rates it would take around 50 years for the disadvantage gap to close completely by the time pupils take their GCSEs.[footnote 13]

The former Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield OBE, explains:

> "Last year 71% of 5 year olds were at the expected level of development for all those goals, which means that 29% were not – and this rises to 45% of children who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).[footnote 14] In total, that means there are 185,000 children each year who are not starting school ready to learn. There is significant regional disparity in the development levels of young children eligible for FSM; our research has found that a child qualifying for FSM in London is 30% more likely to be at the expected standard at the end of reception than a child in the Leeds City Region, Greater Manchester or in Merseyside."

There are significant differences between ethnic groups, with 34% of 5 year olds from Gypsy and Roma ethnic groups meeting the expected standard in development, followed by the Other ethnic group (63%) and children from the Pakistani ethnic group at 64%. The groups with the highest percentage of children meeting the expected standard are the Indian ethnic group (78%) and the Chinese ethnic group (76%).[footnote 15]

There is a large gulf between pupils eligible for FSM (55%) and the rest (73%). Typically, the biggest gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils within an ethnic group is among White Irish pupils (49% and 78%), with White British pupils close behind (53% and 76%).[footnote 16]

Taking into account the evidence, the Commission recognises the need for change in early years provision and reiterates that all 7 recommendations from the Children's Commissioner report, 'Best Beginnings in the early years report' (July 2020) should be enacted by the government.

The evidence on early years highlights the significant role that family and parental background have on the attainment gap. A research report, based on data from the Second Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, showed there are differences in attainment by family composition, although these are not broken down by ethnicity.[footnote 17] Without controlling for other factors, young people living with one parent (either in a single parent household or with an additional step parent[footnote 18]) achieved lower average scores at key stage 4 in 2015 than those living with both parents. However, once other factors such as deprivation were controlled for, this difference became negligible. The evidence suggests that although school interventions may be easier to deliver than those targeted at home, the relative contribution of schools is smaller than that of parental, family and student factors.[footnote 19] The contribution of parents to supporting a child's learning is significant and a stable home provides a supportive context for children to complete homework, ask for assistance and develop their confidence and wellbeing. There are many types of family units which can provide this type of support, but key is the need for stability and resilience.

The former Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield OBE, reiterated in her report 5 essential measures for a supportive family environment:[footnote 20]

- loving, nurturing relationships with parents and carers
- a safe home free from stress and adversity
- the right help to develop good language and other cognitive skills

- support to manage behaviour and regulate emotions
- good physical and mental health and access to healthcare

The Commission acknowledges the need for more imaginative support for families: investing in community support, expanding Family Hubs and providing services to improve family resilience[footnote 21] and good parenting.[footnote 22]

Secondary education

In 2019, the average GCSE Attainment 8 score for Black Caribbean (39.4) and Mixed White and Black Caribbean (41.0) pupils was over 5 points lower than the average for White British pupils (46.2), or over half a grade lower in each of the 8 subjects included.[footnote 23] At the same time, the average scores for Indian, Pakistani, and Black African pupils were above the White British average.[footnote 24]

In terms of the percentage of students achieving a strong pass in Maths and English at GCSE, the White British group ranks 10th in attainment, closely following Black African and Other ethnic groups.[footnote 25]

These statistics illustrate the limitations of the term BAME when examining educational outcomes, and challenge the perception that children from all ethnic minority groups are equally disadvantaged in the education system. Ethnic minority achievement is a more complex picture than is often realised. In light of this, the Commission looked at other factors that might be able to explain differences in attainment.

Professor Steve Strand’s analysis for the Commission of the Second Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE2) has provided valuable insights into attainment in relation to ethnicity, socio-economic status, and sex.[footnote 26] His analysis of this nationally representative sample of students who took their GCSE exams in 2015 show the remaining ethnic disparities in attainment once differences in socio-economic status are taken into account.

> “The purpose in taking the socio-economic factors into account is not to ‘explain away’ any ethnic achievement gaps, but to better understand the root causes and therefore identify relevant policy interventions and action.”

(Strand, 2021)

Levels of socio-economic disadvantage are higher among some minority groups than the White British ethnic group. In England in 2016, 14% of White British pupils were eligible for FSM. This rose to 19% of Pakistani, 23% of Bangladeshi, and 25% of Black African pupils, and doubled to 29% of Mixed White and Black Caribbean, and 28% of Black Caribbean pupils.[footnote 27]

Coming from a struggling, low income family has an influence on life chances, both directly and indirectly. For example, those in low income households may face an increased risk of health and developmental problems, limited financial resources in the home, low parental education, reduced ability to help with homework and remote

learning, and other stresses such as higher crime rates in more deprived neighbourhoods.[footnote 28]

Strand's paper combines 3 factors – family income, parental education level and parental occupational status – to attain a socio-economic status score. The variation in attainment by these individual factors can be seen in Table 2, which also shows the differences by sex and ethnic group for the sample of students sitting their GCSE exams in 2015. For example, the gap in the percentage of students attaining a strong pass in GCSE English and Maths between children of parents with no qualifications (35.1%) and of those with a degree (73.5%), is much larger than the gap between the highest performing ethnic group (Indian, 72.1%) and the lowest (Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean, 49.7%).[footnote 29]

On the combined socio-economic status measure, the White British, Indian, and Asian Other ethnic groups had mean socio-economic scores above average. Black Caribbean, Black African and White Other ethnic groups were closely grouped just below the average. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups had the lowest average socio-economic status by some way.

Table 2: Key stage 4 results by ethnicity, sex and parental socio-economic classification from Professor Strand's submission

#Variable	Value	Group sample size	Best 8 score (Mean)	Level 2 English and maths %
Ethnic group (aggregated)	White	7,534	0.05	59.8
Ethnic group (aggregated)	Mixed	413	0.09	59.9
Ethnic group (aggregated)	Asian	937	0.20	62.5
	Black	743	-0.06	55.0
Ethnic group (aggregated)	Other	77	0.02	58.7
Ethnic group	White British	7,250	0.05	59.8
Ethnic group	White Other	284	0.15	59.2
Ethnic group	Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean	438	-0.24	49.7
Ethnic group	Black African and Mixed White and Black African	489	0.06	60.6

#Variable	Value	Group sample size	Best 8 score (Mean)	Level 2 English and maths %
Ethnic group	Indian	221	0.42	72.1
Ethnic group	Pakistani	337	-0.07	53.9
Ethnic group	Bangladeshi	230	0.13	61.1
Ethnic group	Other Asian and Mixed White and Asian	254	0.40	64.4
Ethnic group	Any other group	201	0.08	59.5
Sex	Boy	4,851	-0.08	54.7
Sex	Girl	4,853	0.21	65.2
SEC3	LTU, Routine and Semi-routine	2,658	-0.43	42.1
SEC3	Intermediate	2,832	-0.07	55.7
SEC3	Managerial and Professional	4,181	0.38	70.9
Parent education	No qualifications	819	-0.60	35.1
Parent education	Other qualifications	145	-0.42	42.6
Parent education	Some GCSE passes or equiv.	1,536	-0.33	45.8
Parent education	5+ GCSEs at A*-C or equiv.	1,670	-0.19	52.7
Parent education	A/AS levels or equiv.	1,384	0.02	60.8
Parent education	HE below degree (e.g. HND)	1,489	0.14	65.1
Parent education	Degree (for example, BA, BSc, MA)	2,634	0.54	73.5
Family income	Lowest 20%	1,846	-0.41	42.9
Family income	next 20%	1,684	-0.27	48.2

#Variable	Value	Group sample size	Best 8 score (Mean)	Level 2 English and maths %
Family income	Middle 20%	1,912	-0.11	56.5
Family income	next 20%	1,998	0.17	65.5
Family income	Highest 20%	2,263	0.52	73.0
All pupils		9,704	0.06	61.8

Tables 3 and 4 summarise the headline results from Strand's findings, looking at socio-economic status, sex and ethnicity.

Table 3 compares the mean Best 8 scores[footnote 30] for all combinations of ethnic groups, socio-economic status, and sex. Overall, the 2 lowest achieving groups were Black Caribbean and White British boys of low socio-economic status, and girls from these 2 groups were also the lowest achieving groups of girls. Pakistani boys and White Other boys from low socio-economic backgrounds also had below average scores.

Although Gypsy and Roma and Irish Traveller groups were not included as separate ethnic groups in this analysis due to their small sample size, we know that they are frequent outliers in attainment. In 2018 to 2019, the average Attainment 8 score for students from the Gypsy and Roma Traveller ethnic group was 19.1, while for the Irish Traveller group it was 26.6, compared with 46.2 for the White British group. [footnote 31]

Table 3: Mean Best 8 score by ethnic group, socio-economic status and sex compared with the mean for all pupils

Sex	Ethnic group	Socio-economic status: low (-1SD)	Socio-economic status: average	Socio-economic status: high (+1SD)
Boys	Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean	-0.77	-0.41	-0.06
Boys	White British	-0.68	-0.22	0.24
Boys	Any other ethnic group	-0.36	-0.08	0.21
Boys	Black African, and Mixed White and Black African	-0.08	-0.03	0.03
Boys	Pakistani	-0.44	0.12	0.68

Sex	Ethnic group	Socio-economic status: low (-1SD)	Socio-economic status: average	Socio-economic status: high (+1SD)
Boys	White Other	-0.35	0.06	0.46
Boys	Asian Other, and Mixed White and Asian	-0.11	0.2	0.51
Boys	Indian	0.03	0.18	0.33
Boys	Bangladeshi	0.07	0.25	0.45
Girls	Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean	-0.54	0.01	0.56
Girls	White British	-0.39	0.09	0.58
Girls	Any other ethnic group	-0.12	0.30	0.71
Girls	Black African, and Mixed White and Black African	0.12	0.27	0.43
Girls	Pakistani	-0.04	0.16	0.36
Girls	White Other	-0.20	0.33	0.86
Girls	Asian Other, and Mixed White and Asian	0.17	0.49	0.81
Girls	Indian	0.18	0.60	1.01
Girls	Bangladeshi	0.23	0.62	1.00

> Notes: (a) Mean Best 8 score: These figures show the difference between the mean score for the group and the grand mean score across all pupils (which is set to 0). Ethnic groups are sorted in order of the mean Best8 score for pupils of average SES.

Strand also compares groups by ethnicity and socio-economic status to the White British average of the same sex and socio-economic status, and finds the following headline result:

Overall, pupils from ethnic minorities perform better than White British pupils when accounting for socio-economic status.

Table 4: Mean Best 8 score compared with the mean for White British pupils, by ethnic group, socio-economic status and sex

Sex	Ethnic group	Socio-economic status: low (-1SD)	Socio-economic status: average	Socio-economic status: high (+1SD)
Boys	Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean	-0.09	-0.19	-0.30
Boys	White British	-	-	-
Boys	Any other ethnic group	0.32	0.15	-0.03
Boys	Black African, and Mixed White and Black African	0.60	0.19	-0.21
Boys	Pakistani	0.23	0.34	0.45
Boys	White Other	0.33	0.28	0.22
Boys	Asian Other, and Mixed White and Asian	0.57	0.42	0.27
Boys	Indian	0.70	0.40	0.10
Boys	Bangladeshi	0.75	0.47	0.21
Girls	Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean	-0.15	-0.09	-0.02
Girls	White British	-	-	-
Girls	Any other ethnic group	0.27	0.20	0.13
Girls	Black African, and Mixed White and Black African	0.52	0.18	-0.15
Girls	Pakistani	0.35	0.07	-0.22
Girls	White Other	0.19	0.24	0.29

Sex	Ethnic group	Socio-economic status: low (-1SD)	Socio-economic status: average	Socio-economic status: high (+1SD)
Girls	Asian Other, and Mixed White and Asian	0.56	0.40	0.23
Girls	Indian	0.58	0.51	0.43
Girls	Bangladeshi	0.63	0.53	0.42

> Notes: These figures show the difference in the mean score between the ethnic minority and White British students of the same sex and SES. Ethnic groups are sorted in order of the mean Best8 score for pupils of average SES.

There are only 2 exceptions to this rule: Black boys of high socio-economic status, and Pakistani girls of high socio-economic status. Both of these groups have significantly lower achievement than White British pupils of the same socio-economic background and sex. Strand's discussion of potential causes of these differences can be found in his report, published as an additional paper.

These educational benchmarks should be shared with educational practitioners to ensure they are helping every child to reach their potential.

Understanding disparities

What leads to success for some groups, and not for others? Professor Strand discusses the possible reasons for the success of some ethnic minority groups in his submission to the Commission, referencing the theory of the 'immigrant paradigm'.

> "The 'immigrant paradigm' (Kao and Thompson, 2003) suggests that recent immigrants devote themselves more to education than the native population because they lack financial capital and see education as a way out of poverty. [footnote 32]"

(Professor Steve Strand, University of Oxford, 2021)

This theory may account for the differences in attainment between Black pupils of Caribbean heritage and Black pupils of African heritage, despite similar levels of risk in terms of low socio-economic status, neighbourhood deprivation, prejudice, and poverty. The theory has been shown as responsible for better progression rates for ethnic minorities into post-compulsory education in England.[footnote 33]

Most Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean, pupils are third generation UK born, while many Black African pupils are more recent immigrants. The 2011 national population Census indicates that two-thirds of the Black African population were born outside of the UK, compared with 39.8% of the Black Caribbean population.[footnote 34] Those from the Black Caribbean ethnic group are from one of the longer-standing migrant groups in the UK, many from the Windrush generation arriving in the 1950s and early 1960s. It is suggested that minorities who have been long established in a country, particularly in a context of racial and socio-economic disadvantage, may be the least likely to be optimistic about the possibilities of social mobility and education to transform their lives.[footnote 35]

Although Indian and Pakistani migration was also high during the 1950s and 1960s, Strand suggests that ‘selective assimilation theory’ can explain why their attainment does not mirror the Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean group.

While Black Caribbean migrants in the 1960s predominantly moved into poor urban and inner city areas populated by the White British working class, Pakistani and Indian migrants of the same period had different patterns of migration. Indian migrants were more likely to be of high socio-economic status in their countries or origin, and migrated to a more diverse selection of geographical areas. Other groups such as Pakistani migrants, while tending to move predominantly to poor areas of inner cities where housing was cheap (like the Black Caribbean group), tended to have higher levels of ethnic segregation, retaining greater cultural homogeneity.

These findings demonstrate there is a ‘newcomer optimism’ at play, which suggests it is not just the immigrant status that is responsible for the relative success of Black African groups.

It is also important to highlight the lack of optimism seen in Black Caribbean and low socio-economic status White British groups is largely due to their circumstances and context of disadvantage – and that education initiatives need to focus on how to improve the motivation around education for these groups.

Despite the success of Black pupils of African heritage in the school system, some educationalists who gave evidence to the Commission argued that schools, teachers and the curriculum may display racial biases which can impact on students and their motivation to learn.

> “A large part of this depends on the underlying bias of teachers and those entrusted with delivering education to these children. If they do not challenge themselves to believe every child has the potential to be great, this comes across in how they teach, assess and grade the children, which also has a direct impact on how the children see themselves and view their own abilities. This has to be a concerted effort to challenge the possibility of teachers exhibiting unconscious bias in dealing with children from backgrounds different to their own, and being able to recognise and correct this.”

(call for evidence respondent)

It is very difficult to judge on a national level the extent to which racism could be a determining factor in educational outcomes amongst ethnic minority groups. However, the fact that ethnic groups within the same system can have quite

divergent educational outcomes, and that even within the major ethnic groups there are quite distinct trends, suggests that other factors may be more influential. Indeed, if there is racial bias within schools or the teaching profession, it has limited effect and other factors such as family structure, cultural aspirations and geography may offset this disadvantage.

Other research indicates that a range of factors outside of the school day can influence success in education, including pupils' educational aspirations, parents' educational aspirations for their child, pupils' academic self-concept (their perception about their own ability) and frequency of completing homework.[footnote 36] Previous research from Steve Strand has found that Indian students are the ethnic group most likely to complete homework five evenings a week (32% vs. 19% White British). [footnote 37]

A study by Strand and Joe Winston looking into the educational aspirations of 12 to 14 year olds in inner city comprehensive schools found that Black African, Asian Other and Pakistani children expressed higher aspirations than White British children in the study, who expressed the lowest aspirations.[footnote 38] According to Strand and Winston, the lower educational aspirations of White British pupils are tied to a lack of academic self-belief and low educational aspirations in the home. In addition, White parents were less likely to have paid for private tuition for their children compared to Asian and Black parents. 25% of White pupils had private tuition outside of school compared to 56% and 42% of Asian and Black pupils respectively.[footnote 39]

As we have seen, not all ethnic minority groups are succeeding. In particular, the Commission acknowledges the need to support Black Caribbean, Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Traveller of Irish Heritage, Gypsy and Roma, and Pakistani boys from low socio-economic backgrounds, and lower socio-economic status White British pupils. Nevertheless the level of success experienced by many ethnic minorities in the UK is outstanding and should be recognised as such.

Recommendation 6: Promote fairness – Replicate the factors of educational success for all communities
To this end, the Commission recommends that the government invests in research to understand what factors drive the success of high performing pupils' communities including Black African, Chinese, Bangladeshi and Indian ethnic groups, and how it can be replicated to support all pupils.

Geography is also an important factor. In some parts of the country, poorer pupils are over 2 full years of education behind their peers by the time they take their GCSEs, including in almost exclusively White places like Blackpool (26.3 months), Knowsley (24.7 months) and Plymouth (24.5 months).[footnote 40]

In contrast, there are very low GCSE disadvantage gaps concentrated in London, including in Ealing (4.6 months), Redbridge (2.7 months) and Westminster (0.5 months), all of which have high levels of ethnic minority representation. For White pupils on free school meals in London, the entry rate to university is now nearly 9 percentage points higher than any other region.[footnote 41] Progression to high tariff

universities is also higher in London than other regions, for free school meal children as well as non-free school meal children.[footnote 42]

Yet despite these many positive developments, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has stopped closing for the first time in a decade.[footnote 43] As already highlighted, according to the Education Policy Institute disadvantaged pupils in England are now 18.1 months of learning behind their peers by the time they finish their GCSEs, the same gap as 5 years ago.[footnote 44] The national gap in primary school attainment increased for the first time since 2007, which may signal that the gap is set to widen in the future. The next section looks at various ideas for closing the gap.

Is the UK the same as the USA when it comes to attainment and ethnicity?
In short: no. In terms of the difference in attainment between Black pupils and White pupils, Strand finds the mean Best 8 score[footnote 45] was 0.05 for White students and -0.06 for Black students, giving a difference of -0.11 standard deviations. This gap is statistically significant but small (approximately the difference between one grade in one subject).[footnote 46]

These results indicate an attainment gap approximately 8 times smaller than that found in the US. In the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Black students scored -0.81, -0.83 and -0.89 standard deviations below the mean for White students in maths at age 10, 14 and 18 respectively. They also scored approximately -0.72 standard deviations below the mean average for White students for reading at the same ages.[footnote 47] Issues of race disparity in attainment from the USA can not be presumed to be identical in the UK.

Closing the gap

This section will consider further explanations for the outcome gaps alongside the main ones pinpointed already (family and culture, geography and socio-economic status), and proposals to narrow them.

Whilst GCSE and A level attainment at age 19[footnote 48] has continued to fall from peaks in 2015 and 2017 respectively, both have increased compared with 2004 and 2010. Meanwhile, attainment for both GCSE and A level has improved for FSM and non-FSM children between 2010 and 2019, although the attainment gap has increased as a result of non-FSM children improving their attainment by a greater amount than FSM children.[footnote 49]

The Commission recognises the strides that have been made in raising educational attainment and closing social and ethnic gaps, and stresses the vital importance of maintaining the improvements in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The elements of great schools

Evidence presented from schools inspector Ofsted emphasised that with very few exceptions, good education for one kind of child is exactly the same as good education for another, irrespective of their sex, ethnicity, religion or other characteristics. Good curriculum, good teaching, good behaviour, good pastoral support, strong school culture, and high aspirations matter for all children.[footnote 50]

If some categories of children persistently underachieve, the biggest element of the solution is likely to be improving the school's core offering so that all children can do well, rather than simply applying interventions to certain children or groups of children, however they may be defined.

Ofsted's research on 'stuck schools' showed that even schools that have been rated less than 'good' for over a decade have the capacity to improve if school leaders focus on key elements: strong behaviour and discipline, an ambitious, well taught curriculum and early reading in primaries, often with the support of a strong multi-academy trust.[footnote 51] These are not costly interventions, but those schools unable to turn around were often fatigued by new initiatives, high turnover of staff and of pupils.

If the school's core offering is as good as it should be, then the number of children requiring individual or group-based intervention is minimised and more likely to be within the capacity of the school. Strengthening the 'core offering' is one of the building blocks of our education recommendations. This includes:

- good leadership and governance
- good curriculum
- good teaching
- good behaviour and culture
- good pastoral support
- high aspiration

Case study: Delta Academies Trust
There are 13,188 secondary pupils in the Delta Academies Trust, and 31% of these pupils are disadvantaged White British or White English. Below is the evidence we received from the Delta Academy.

In March 2016, Delta established new leadership and very rapidly introduced a series of systems, structures and policies designed to raise standards. These include: setting clear expectations, high-quality curriculum and quality of teaching, raising aspirations and engagement, and a well-developed programme of literacy intervention and vocabulary development designed to address a lack of literacy and literature in the home environment.

In the communities they serve, Delta academies have identified some common themes which significantly hold back this group of learners:

- multi-generational disaffection and low aspiration
- focus on instant gratification

- which in turn often leads to: parental debt, poor planning, lack of long-term aspiration, disconnection between the perceived benefits of education and future prosperity
- poor behaviour exhibited by pupils and a lack of engagement
- well-meaning professionals who address symptoms rather than following the more challenging actions and interventions that lead to improvement.
- low literacy levels in the communities they serve, with a limited culture of reading within the family home

Impact: Darton Academy (Barnsley)

Darton Academy was a special measures school, second lowest in the local authority in 2018. In 2019 it was the highest performing school in the local authority. Delta became responsible for running the school in June 2018 and it converted to an academy with the trust in October 2018.

The rapid rise for all students was mirrored in a rapid improvement for disadvantaged pupils for both progress and attainment, almost doubling the number of disadvantaged children getting a strong pass in GCSE English and maths. The progress of disadvantaged people improved by approximately a grade in English and three-quarters of a grade in maths, on average.[footnote 52]

Table 5: Delta Academies Trust – Examples of rapid improvement in one year – Darton Academy (Barnsley) - All pupils

	2018	2019	↑↓
Progress 8 score	Below average -0.46	Above average +0.37	↑ +0.83
Progress 8 score: English	-0.34	+0.77	↑ +1.11
Progress 8 score: Maths	-0.37	+0.37	↑ +0.74
Progress 8 score: EBacc	-0.47	+0.26	↑ +0.73
Progress 8 score: Open	-0.66	+0.23	↑ +0.89
Grade 5 or above in English & maths GCSEs	39%	54%	↑ +15.3%
Grade 4 or above in English & maths GCSEs	62%	72%	↑ +10.2%

Table 6: Delta Academies Trust – Examples of rapid improvement in one year – Darton Academy (Barnsley) – Disadvantaged pupils

	2018	2019	↑↓
Progress 8 score	-0.62	+0.03	↑ +0.65

	2018	2019	↑↓
Progress 8 score: English	-0.59	+0.36	↑ +0.95
Progress 8 score: Maths	-0.74	+0.02	↑ +0.76
Progress 8 score: EBacc	-0.58	-0.03	↑ +0.55
Progress 8 score: Open	-0.82	-0.13	↑ +0.69
Grade 5 or above in English & maths GCSEs	17%	34%	↑ +17.0%
Grade 4 or above in English & maths GCSEs	40%	54%	↑ +14.0%

Teacher and governor diversity

The teacher workforce is disproportionately White. In 2019, 85.7% of all teachers in state-funded schools in England were White British, and 1.5% were White Irish (out of those whose ethnicity was known).[footnote 53] These groups formed 78.5% and 1.0% of the working age population in the 2011 Census. But data from the School Workforce Census for England shows a positive trend, with workforce diversity (measured by the percentage of teachers that belong to an ethnic minority) increasing from 2010 (11%) to 2018 (14%).[footnote 54]

The literature has varying views on the importance of teacher diversity in ensuring success. Findings from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) suggest that teacher diversity makes it more likely that children of different backgrounds (whether ethnic, disability, class and so on) will have someone who understands their background and a role model to look up to.[footnote 55] Evidence on the impact of teachers from ethnic minorities in the UK is scarce, but studies on the effects of gender has found that children tend to value teachers, whether men or women, who are consistent and even-handed and supportive of them.[footnote 56]

Evidence also suggests there are other important factors that can support and raise the achievement of ethnic minority pupils such as equipping the school workforce with high-quality teacher training, investing in a wider school improvement agenda and the strengthening ‘core school offering’ (as previously referenced in this report).[footnote 57]

Experiences from the Commission’s call for evidence also highlight that although teachers from ethnic minorities are valuable in that they bring their lived experiences to the classroom and push for a broader curriculum, they can face pushback from other teachers in the ethnic majority. Responses illustrated issues in the classroom with senior White teachers missing opportunities to teach a more inclusive portrayal of British culture, and the failing to take advantage of students’ diverse backgrounds – even when these opportunities were suggested by their colleagues from ethnic minority backgrounds. The Commission recognises that adding to the curriculum

requires removing potentially important existing content. We also recognise that many teachers will not always have access to resources to teach a more inclusive portrayal of British culture. Teachers from all ethnic backgrounds should revel in the rich diversity of their peers and harness it to connect with an ever more diverse body of pupils.

Ethnic minorities are also under-represented in school governance. 94% of governors and trustees who took part in the National Governance Association (NGA) survey identified as White, 1% identified as Black, 2% identified as Asian, and 1% identified as having Mixed ethnicity.[footnote 58] However, those governors that are from ethnic minority backgrounds are also more likely to be younger, or parent governors. This indicates useful avenues to pursue for recruiting more people from minority backgrounds into these roles. The Commission acknowledges the positive impact of having governors with diverse backgrounds, skills, perspectives and life experiences. Diverse boards, that are reflective of school communities, can ensure that decisions taken are in the interest of all pupils, thereby increasing the confidence of parents and wider communities in these decisions.

It is the Commission's belief that all professions should seek to represent the communities they serve. Yet, we acknowledge that to fully understand the challenges and realities of workforce representation, more needs to be done to improve data collection, monitoring and quality of analyses.

In the case of the education system, DfE should:

- identify the most robust data sets that allow trends to be identified and comparisons to be made taking account of age, demographics, professional background and geography
- produce guidance on data collection, monitoring and analysis to better support understanding and drive policy interventions in this area, engaging and collaborating with local authorities across the UK because of the importance of local context and local data
- set clear expectations for governing boards on how to collect and publish data on board diversity as well as how to regularly review their membership and structure

The Commission would also welcome similar standards being applied to other public sector workforces. The Race Disparity Unit should coordinate such activity, building on previous work in this area, and reporting regularly on progress.[footnote 59]

School exclusion

Poor behaviour and inadequate discipline remains a serious problem in schools. Three-quarters of teachers say they commonly experience disruption in their school and two-thirds say they have considered leaving the profession because of poor pupil behaviour, according to a recent survey of teachers.[footnote 60] Permanent exclusion is a necessary tool to protect school safety and maintain high quality education and is not a measure that schools take lightly. It is a vital tool for head teachers and it is clear the Commission must support head teachers in using exclusion as an approach

to behaviour management when necessary. The guidance is clear that exclusion should only occur in cases where the behaviour of the child poses a risk to the safety of staff and other pupils or seriously disrupts the working of the school and the learning of others.

There are around 400,000 temporary exclusions every year and 8,000 permanent exclusions. In the 2018 to 2019 school year there were 438,300 temporary exclusions, and 7,900 permanent exclusions. The main reason given for school exclusions, both temporary and permanent, is persistent disruptive behaviour. In the 2018 to 2019 school year, 137,900 temporary exclusions were issued to children in all state-funded schools for persistent disruptive behaviour. This made up just over 30% of all temporary exclusions. Persistent disruptive behaviour is also the most common reason for permanent exclusions in state-funded schools, accounting for 2,800 (35%) of all permanent exclusions in the 2018 to 2019 school year.[footnote 61] It is worth noting that in the 2018 to 2019 school year, 15 permanent exclusions 90.2%) were due to racist abuse. For temporary exclusions, 4,889 of 440,000 (1.1%) were due to racist abuse. Both of these rates have remained roughly steady since 2014/15.

In the 2018 to 2019 school year in England, White Gypsy and Roma pupils (21.26%) and Irish Traveller pupils (14.63%) had the highest temporary exclusion rates, followed by Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils and Black Caribbean pupils. Pupils from the Chinese (0.56%) and Indian (0.88%) ethnic groups had the lowest temporary exclusion rates.[footnote 62] A similar pattern is seen in permanent exclusions, with a rate of 0.39% for Gypsy and Roma pupils, 0.27% for Irish Traveller pupils, with Black Caribbean (0.25%) and Mixed White and Black Caribbean (0.24%) pupils following closely behind.[footnote 63]

With regard to government action, the Timpson Review was published in 2019 making 30 recommendations to ensure exclusions are used appropriately. The Review acknowledged there is a limit to what can be known. There is no “optimum rate of number of exclusions” and exclusion rates may reflect qualities to do with the school or the social context within which the school sits.

The Review found no evidence of systemic or institutional racism, but instead pointed to complex factors when seeking to explore what drives the differences in rates of permanent exclusions and suspensions.[footnote 64]

On causation, sociological variables are listed among a “a range of interwoven, local factors” including differences between schools, poverty, and childhood trauma.

> “Both the literature review and others who spoke to this review highlighted how wider factors other than ethnicity may also drive these differences. Children may have a number of overlapping vulnerabilities such as poverty, SEN, unsafe family environments and poor mental health, which could all act as a multiplier effect and contribute to higher rates of exclusion”

(E Timpson)

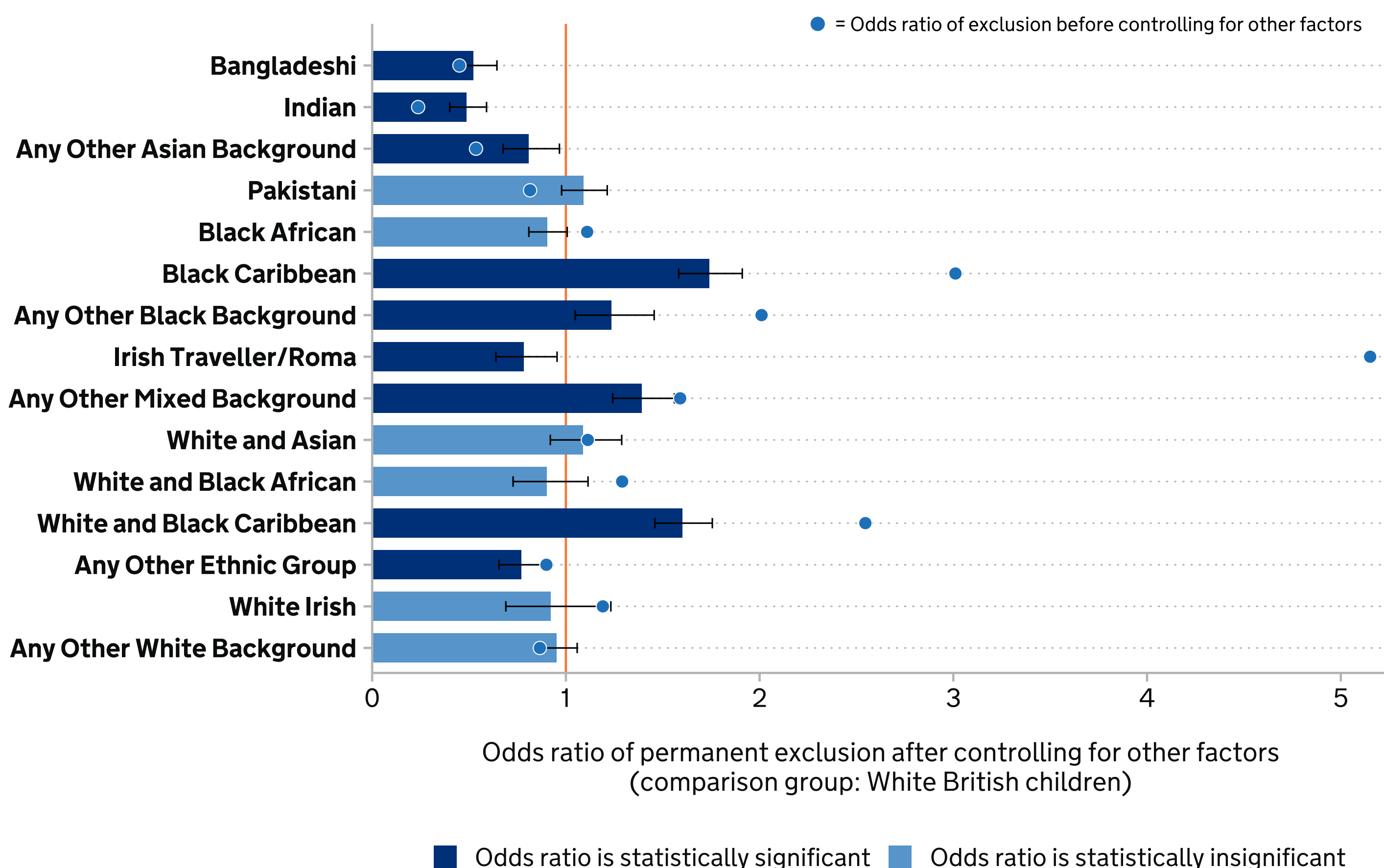
These are the same complex factors that we have also discussed: socio-economic status, family strain, community culture, climate and context along with peer pressure are all significant influences of behaviour. However, even when the Timpson Review

used ‘new odds ratios’[footnote 65] and controlled for other factors, permanent exclusion rates continued to remain high for Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils:

> “For some other children, the analysis finds their likelihood of exclusion remains higher than for White British children – although the association between ethnicity and exclusion is lower than the raw rates suggest. That is to say that other factors associated with exclusion partially explain the higher rates of exclusion for some groups. This includes Black Caribbean children, who the new analysis suggests are around 1.7 times more likely to be permanently excluded compared to White British children. This compares to a raw rate of permanent exclusion (before the data is adjusted) of 3 times higher. Similarly, children who are Mixed White and Black Caribbean are around 1.6 times more likely to be permanently excluded, which is lower than the unadjusted data that shows they are permanently excluded 2.5 times the rate than their White British peers.”

(p34, Timpson Review)

Figure 3: Odds ratio of permanent exclusion by ethnic group compared to White British group (England, analysis from September 2009 to July 2017, across 3 cohorts)



Bar chart showing the odds ratio of permanent exclusion by ethnic group compared with the White British group from 2009 to 2017.

> Source: Timpson Review of School Education (2019)

Taking Timpson’s findings into consideration, as well as what we heard from communities and education practitioners across the country, the Commission

believes the causes for ethnic disparities in the rates of exclusions and suspensions are complex and multifaceted, and can not be reduced to structural racism and individual teacher bias. Data shows, for example, exclusion rates are a much bigger challenge for Black Caribbean pupils than Black African pupils: in 2018/19 Black Caribbean pupils had a permanent exclusion rate of 25 in 10,000, compared 7 in 10,000 for Black African pupils.[footnote 66]

Successful interventions to decrease ethnic disparities in exclusion and suspension must consider the above data and tackle areas often ignored by policy. To be effective, policy action must investigate and understand what are the key causes of disparities and drivers of poor behaviour. It is clear to the Commission that exclusively addressing racism will not sufficiently meet the needs of the ethnic groups who are experiencing higher rates of exclusion or create the much needed policy intervention to support pupils. We've listed below what we know to be the necessary action to improve the exclusion rates and set out a positive agenda for change.

The Commission endorses the findings and recommendations in the Timpson Review of School Exclusion. In particular, we recognise the clear benefits and urge continued Government action in 6 key areas: extend funding to equality and diversity hubs (Timpson Recommendation 4), mandatory training on behaviour as part of teacher training and embedded in Early Career Framework (Recommendation 5), establishment of a Practice Improvement Fund to identify children in need of support and deliver good interventions (Recommendation 8), promote the role of alternative provision (AP) in supporting mainstream and special schools to deliver effective interventions (Recommendation 9), governing bodies, academy trusts and local forums of schools to review information on children who leave their schools and understand how such moves feed into local trends (Recommendation 19) and for the Ofsted to continue considering whether there are concerning patterns to exclusions, off-rolling, absence from school or direction to alternative provision and reflecting this in their inspection judgements (Recommendation 26).[footnote 67]

In line with Timpson's findings, we further recommend that the government review the provision and quality of alternative provision, ensuring all regions have access to centres where children can receive the support they need to engage in education and take positive next steps.[footnote 68] Exclusion should not be the end of a child's education, and we need to recognise that certain ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by higher rates.

As referenced in this report, a workforce which is representative of the community alongside the use of disaggregated data will help shine a light on these events, supporting leaders and school governors to monitor disparities and enact interventions. Within this, the Commission recognises that children with special educational needs (SEN) are more likely to be excluded[footnote 69] and that for any initiative or policy intervention to be effective, consideration must be taken on the ethnic disproportionality in the identification of SEN.

Along with the key areas from The Timpson Review[footnote 70], the Commission believes it is important for public reporting on this emotive issue to be much clearer in distinguishing between permanent and temporary exclusions, using the phrase 'suspension' instead of temporary exclusion. This would aid public understanding of exclusion rates in schools and the impact they have on certain ethnic groups. This

would aid public understanding of exclusion rates in schools and the impact they have on certain ethnic groups.

Further to these actions, we also applaud the greater interest in behaviour that recent governments have shown underlined by Tom Bennett's 2017 independent review of behaviour in schools and more support for behaviour initiatives to reduce the rates of exclusion overall.

Funding

In its 2019 Election Manifesto, the government committed to investing £14 billion over 3 years to increase funding for every primary and secondary school pupil in the country.[footnote 71] The Commission would like to see more of this investment utilised to help close gaps in educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in areas of high deprivation.

As noted in this report, it is widely documented that socio-economic status is strongly implicated in low educational achievement. This is not to 'explain away' any ethnic achievement gaps, but to better understand the root causes and identify relevant policy interventions. Further evidence also shows that the link between funding and need has weakened in recent years: "pupils from more affluent backgrounds are attracting larger increases to funding rates compared with those from more disadvantaged backgrounds."[footnote 72]

It is the Commission's belief that there are too many funding streams that are not sufficiently addressing need. As noted before, EPI's annual report showed progress in closing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers stagnated before the COVID-19. The funding system as it stands cannot address this challenge or sufficiently deliver the levelling up agenda set out by the government, especially as education disparities may widen due to COVID-19. This analysis highlights the need for new policy levers to close the disadvantage gap and the necessity of an additional, targeted funding allocation to best support disadvantaged pupils.

For example, research indicates the groups with the lowest achievement at age 16 are White British and Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean students from low socio-economic backgrounds, who are scoring substantially below the average for all students (see Strand findings above).

> Funding allocation should consider how to best meet the needs of the most disadvantaged, including White British, Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean students from poor backgrounds who score substantially below the national average. It is particularly important to also consider the localities and schools where performance has been low over a period of time without signs of closing the attainment gap.

The work of the Social Mobility Commission highlights a postcode lottery, with gaps in educational outcomes between the most and least deprived families varying by local authority. There are large differences in disparities, even between local authorities

close by to one another. In North Dorset, a 37 percentile difference between education outcomes compares with 48 percentile differences in Poole and Bournemouth. Similarly, in Manchester the difference is 37 percentiles, compared with 48 in Trafford. On the North Yorkshire coast, East Riding reports a 39 percentile difference compared with 49 percentiles in nearby Scarborough.[footnote 73]

Funding should target the regions, towns and places that show the highest disparities.

Recommendation 7: Promote fairness – Invest in proven interventions through better targeted funding

Taking the evidence into account, the Commission recommends that the government deploys additional funding that is targeted at measures which specifically aim to tackle disparities in educational outcomes for disadvantaged groups.

This recommendation is not an attempt to alter the work of levelling-up funding for schools through the recently introduced National Funding Formula – the full benefits of this work have not yet had a chance to materialise.

Instead, it is a recommendation for new additional funding to systematically target disparities using proven interventions which the DfE should use in order to:

- identify disparities (ethnic, gender and socio-economic status) by regions or local authority areas including drilling down to individual school level, rather than using national data which masks geographical variation in the performance of particular groups
- 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 which do not support local authorities or schools to make structural changes and embed practice
- issue funding with clearly defined outcomes and use only proven practices and organisations where there is a track record of success – for example, the DfE's behaviour hubs, phonics hubs, and modern foreign language hubs which support the increase in students taking and passing the English Baccalaureate – in areas where social mobility is low
- support high-performing academy trusts with a track record of turning around schools to go into geographical areas with large disparities
- make the recruitment, development and retention of high quality staff in areas with high disparities a key performance target
- focus on increasing high quality early years provision – interventions to close disparities within an area should seek to ensure that children make the best start in their education. It is easier to improve educational outcomes in the early stages of

a child's life, and reduce inequalities between groups in this period, than attempting to do so in later years

- support the transition between primary to secondary as a key intervention point where services should be targeted – where appropriate, funding should be directed to family hubs, education welfare officers to support good levels of school attendance and mental health teams; and high quality careers provision should also be seen as a core element in any intervention to ensure that all children can realise their potential

DfE are best placed to determine how best to target any additional funding and initiatives to the areas that need it most. For example, it could be through increasing the weighting to the national funding formula (NFF) additional needs funding, or geographic funding factors, or using other area-based classifications such as:

"Area-based classifications such as the ONS' neighbourhood 'pen portraits' might be one way to better target funding towards those communities where attainment is lowest without introducing perverse incentives on schools."[footnote 74]

Building social and cultural capital – enrichment for all

This Commission embarked on its journey during the storm of COVID-19. This storm has swept away a decade of progress in closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. The gap at primary school has increased for the first time since 2007 and disadvantaged pupils in England are now 18.1 months of learning behind their peers by the time they finish their GCSEs.[footnote 75] It has also exacerbated pre-existing educational disparities already present in the UK - the truth is the full scale of the damage is not yet known. The Education Endowment Foundation estimated the disadvantage gap could widen by as much as 75% between March and September 2020.[footnote 76]

This is a once in generation challenge, requiring a once in a generation solution. Anything less will undermine the government's stated desire to level up.

We require a bold intervention to overcome what the Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation described as "the test of a generation" – that is, ensuring that today's children have every possible opportunity to succeed after being out of the classroom for much of the past year.[footnote 77]

> The Commission believes that the inspiration for such a bold intervention has existed in our ethnic minority communities for decades: extra hours education.

Migrant communities in the UK have long recognised the value of education. Many ethnic minority parents come from cultures with a profound reverence for good education, something that many in the White majority may take for granted. It is not surprising to ethnic minority people that more than half of privately educated children in London come from ethnic minority backgrounds.[footnote 78] This reverence for education has meant that, for generations, foreign-born parents have tirelessly toiled

to save up and offer their children access to the country's most elite institutions – a passport to a brighter future.

In the second half of the 20th century, the arrival of the Windrush generation and other migrations ushered in a rapid expansion of supplementary education. Ever since, extra hours of formal and non-formal education have helped millions of British children, over several generations, master their parents' mother tongue, get to grips with algebra, acquire knowledge about their faith's traditions and learn English through additional lessons. The social capital that these supplementary education providers give to children should not be underestimated.

Not only do they provide a forum for children to make new friendships, but they also offer the chance to learn new skills which are unaffordable to many. For example, learning to play musical instruments which can be the preserve of children at independent schools, or those who can afford to pay for private lessons. Supplementary education can also offer a window into a heritage, a culture and a language, not accessible in schools. This form of education plays an important role in enriching the sense of identity of many young Britons from diverse backgrounds. A 2010 survey showed that approximately half of supplementary schools supported children from Asian groups (Indian, Bangladeshi or Pakistani), 38% supported children from Black African groups, 22% from Black Caribbean groups and 22% groups from Europe. Other groups served include Middle Eastern (18 % of schools) and South East Asian (14% including Chinese, Vietnamese and Japanese).[footnote 79]

This is a proud feature of our educational landscape which is attributable to the hard work and resilience of our ethnic minority groups. It is crucial to remember that participation in education out of school hours in the UK is not nearly as strong as in many other societies. More time is spent learning out of school in not only Germany, South Korea and Japan but also Turkey, Albania and Bulgaria.[footnote 80]

The Commission is persuaded that the model of supplementary education should not rely on the ability of parents to buy extra hours of education, or solely on the goodwill of communities to organically provide it. There is good evidence that extra hours of educational support benefit children - especially those from deprived backgrounds.

A 2015 study of children in 7 different local authorities showed that at key stage 1, pupils who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) and receiving supplementary education outperformed their peers across all 4 main subjects (reading, writing, maths and science). At the other end of the education journey, pupils receiving extra hours of supplementary education did better at their GCSEs than those who did not. [footnote 81]

Mainstream education, to some extent, has recognised the benefit of more hours in school for children. Somewhere between a third and a half of schools already offer some form of longer school day.[footnote 82] This needs to be expanded, with the time being utilised to unlock more pupils' potential. The importance of additional time, beyond the mandated hours of school, is made clear by considering the value placed on after school clubs, holiday revision sessions and extracurricular activities. This additional time should be a core offer for all, instead of an unequal opportunity dependent on school and funding choices.

Studies from the USA suggest the same. After-school programmes have been found to significantly impact on student performance in reading and mathematics.[footnote 83] Out-of-school small group tutoring programmes where pupils receive around 40 hours per year has a 93% chance to produce benefits greater than the costs.[footnote 84]

As has become apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, the school is more than just a site of learning. For many families it is the opportunity for their children to have a dedicated place to study away from distraction. On average, across OECD countries, students who have access to a room for homework at school scored 14 points higher in reading than students without access to a room for homework.[footnote 85] Education systems with larger shares of students in schools that offer a room for homework tended to show better mean performance in reading, mathematics and science, even after accounting for per capita GDP.[footnote 86]

It is not just the academic performance of children that stands to gain from extra hours in the classroom. The Commission recognises that schools, with their autonomy and knowledge of their pupils, will be best placed to find a balance between academic work and extracurricular activities. In Manchester, a Saturday school educational programme for underachieving and disadvantaged pupils at Key Stage 2 led to teachers, parents, and musicians all observing that pupils were making noticeable improvements in behaviour, confidence, and the development of social skills – all valuable attributes required to succeed in the modern age.[footnote 87]

The OECD found that students who were enrolled in schools that offer more creative extracurricular activities (including music and art activities) performed better in reading, on average, across OECD countries (by 4 score points) and in 32 countries and economies, after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile. Countries whose schools offer more creative extracurricular activities tended to show greater equity in student performance.[footnote 88]

Both the educational benefit to children and the opportunity to nurture their social skills have never been more important than during this period in Britain's history. Here, many academies and free schools, which tend to outperform council-run schools, have used their autonomy to lengthen the school day. Indeed, the government recognised this trend and in 2016 announced up to £285 million a year to give 25% of secondary schools the opportunity to extend their school day to offer a wider range of activities for pupils, including more sport.[footnote 89] The Commission regrets the then government's decision, less than a year after this announcement, to renege on this commitment.[footnote 90]

Case study: Bedford Free School

- Breakfast Club starts at 7:45am through to the start of school day at 8:25am.
- The day runs from 8:30am to 4pm, Mondays to Thursdays. From 3:20pm to 4:00pm students do homework in a 'prep' session with tutors.
- From 4:00pm to 6:00pm the school remains open for homework support; revision sessions; subject interventions and tutorials; individual study activities and; library and ICT facilities.

Case study: Inspiration Trust

The Commission received the following case study from Inspiration Trust:

Extended days, as we have in most schools within Inspiration Trust, have numerous benefits – both academically and socially. Extended days provide access to high quality enrichment to disadvantaged pupils, who's parents might otherwise not be able to afford such activities. The enrichment provided broadens curriculum depth and can provide wider opportunities for pupils to experience increased music, arts and sports - curriculum areas which have multiple benefits, both socially and academically. There can be a positive impact for a wider community as pupils are able access the school day for longer, supporting pupils who might otherwise be potentially unsupervised in the community. This can reduce exposure to potential anti-social activity or threats to pupil safety.

Extended days also support working families, which will have a wider positive impact on the economy. Activities range from sports and arts clubs (such as football, drama and musical theatre) to providing wider cultural and social experiences. This might include debating clubs and cookery clubs for example. Extended days can also provide the opportunity for increased teaching and support - either in larger or smaller groups or 1:1. This can help pupils to 'catch up' academically. Some of our schools also use an extended day for homework club or prep - providing a quiet, productive environment for independent study. Many pupils simply do not have access to this at home. An added benefit here is that when pupils go home - the focus is on family time. Some of our schools have used the extended day to offer wider curriculum subjects, therefore increasing curriculum breadth.

There are however some challenges in delivering an extended day. The first of these would be cost. There is a budget implication from extending the day as increased levels of staff are required, whether the day is staffed by teachers or otherwise. Organisation of the day is also important. Breaks need to be built in to ensure the day works well for pupils and staff. There are also other logistical considerations. Ending the day later can lead to transport challenges for example. In the winter months it can also be difficult to deliver outdoor sports after dark, without access to the right facilities. It is also important to consider how to implement an extended day with due regards[footnote 91] to teacher workload. Participation is also key – it is essential to monitor engagement, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. As it is these pupils who will benefit most. This is more straightforward if the extended day is compulsory for all.

Quality assurance is also a challenge that schools need to consider. An extended day will only really be beneficial if the offer is high quality and tailored to the school context and pupileed. These challenges can all be overcome but do need to be considered.

However, the Commission acknowledges the significant challenges to successfully extending the school day. Extra provision will be costly – from the examples cited above, some of the extended hours is not free. It should be possible in a country like ours for every child to enjoy these provisions. We note that transport may not be as conveniently available for secondary pupils at later times. And the extra time at school may not be used as effectively as possible nationwide. But these kinds of concerns, however reasonable, pale into insignificance when considering the scale of the prize on offer.

Recommendation 13: Promote Fairness – Build social and cultural capital – enrichment for all

The Commission recommends that the Secretary of State for Education, in collaboration with the government's education recovery commissioner, urgently considers phasing in an extended school day.

Led by evidence showing the positive impact of an extended school day for disadvantaged pupils, the phasing of the extended school day should, in the first instance, prioritise the most disadvantaged areas and communities.

The additional hours must provide all pupils with the opportunity to engage in physical and cultural activities, including working with local activity clubs. Participation in such activities will improve pupils' health and social capital. Further, such pursuits should be made more accessible to the most disadvantaged students.

In order to overcome the significant operational challenges of delivering an extended school day, advice should be sought from education practitioners, parents, pupils and key stakeholders such as teaching unions.

The following must be considered:

Management of the school building and operations: assessment of the impact of a longer school day to site maintenance, and all school employees who are responsible for the running of the school. Particular attention should be paid to ensure a longer day does not negatively impact teaching staff, or inadvertently increase disparities for others involved such as cleaners, caterers, and other site staff. The need for additional staffing, or longer hours, will have a staffing cost impact for schools . The impact that an extended school day may have on school's lettings income should also be considered. For those institutions with PFI contracts, consideration must be given to their contracted hours of use of the building.

Staffing: the current conditions of employment requires teachers to perform duties directed by the Headteacher for a maximum of 1,265 hours over 195 days a year. DfE must secure and allocate the necessary funding to ensure the contract maintains the same conditions of employment. They will also need to enter into meaningful engagement with trade unions to make this work. Recruitment and retention will be significantly affected if the current employment conditions of teaching staff are eroded or appear to be being eroded.

Curriculum sequencing: how extra hours of education may align with and support the curriculum.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): the effect on CPD time, which is often carried out after school hours, will also need to be factored in.

Transport schedules: the impact on urban transport activities including traffic patterns. This may require, for example, an increase in funding for public transport and a general change in bus routes and timetables.

Parental expectations: how additional hours can best support children, without causing undue stress to them or their family life, and best deliver on parental expectations of their child's school offer.

Protecting family time: the benefits and importance of family time are clear, and should be preserved. It is important to highlight that, at present, children on minimum school hours only spend 13% of a whole year in school.

Expectations on the standard core school hours: it is clear that each age group has different needs including the ideal amount of family time and time spent in school. In schools across England, there is little variation in the length of the school day, with both primary and secondary aged pupils typically in school from 9am to 3:30pm. It is important to consider how an extended school could support a change in the expected standard core school hour for different age groups.

Delivery on the standard core school hours: it is important to consider how best to support schools that are already struggling to deliver the current school hours.

Length of additional school hours: how best to meet the different needs of individual year groups, who require a different length of time in school

DfE will need to secure ongoing additional funding allocation to establish this recommendation as a permanent change in the way that schools currently operate. This will be imperative to successfully mainstream the extended school day.

This is a unique opportunity for DfE to improve current practices and ensure education practitioners are best equipped and rewarded for their time. Consideration should be given to how the change in additional school hours can support flexible working arrangements (which could make the profession more attractive to many), ensure staff are paid to teach the after-school time they deliver, and to retain their annual leave entitlement.

We also suggest that DfE work with key partners, such as UCAS and Ofqual, to explore how submission dates for higher education institutions, and dates for GCSE and A level results, can be adjusted to accommodate.[footnote 92]

We know from the evidence that additional school hours will disproportionately benefit the disadvantaged. Children in Bangladeshi and Pakistani households are the most likely to live in low income and material deprivation out of all ethnic groups. Yet Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils also have higher Progress 8 scores than the national average.[footnote 93] This move will build on this success further. Meanwhile White pupils in the North East currently have the lowest Progress 8 score of all pupils. Extra time in school has a chance to level up opportunity for these children and their peers in other White working-class communities across the country.[footnote 94] The answer therefore is not about bespoke interventions that single out ethnic minority groups from the White majority. It is about collectively raising standards for all children based on what works to boost opportunity. A rising tide really can raise all boats.

This also presents the opportunity to expose more children to what has become the preserves of those in private schools. The government can use extra hours in school to help pupils take off one pair of spectacles and see life through another lens.

Children become adults and workers but they also become neighbours, spouses, volunteers and voters. They should have the opportunity to navigate their way into the future by debating one another; acting out great scripts, mastering an instrument and playing a sport. Why should access to such rich, cultural capital only be reserved to those fortunate enough to draw on their parent's income? We are a mature, wealthy society that should be investing in our children equitably in every sense of the word.

School really is the best place for children during the day. Doctors from the Royal London hospital found under-16s are in the greatest danger of being stabbed between 4pm and 6pm, with 22% of all victims attacked then.[footnote 95] Getting children off the streets and in school during the late afternoon could not just change lives for the better in the long term, it could save some in the short-term. The Children's Commissioner has also found that children feel more confident in places where adults are around, and concluded children would be safer with 'more activities in youth clubs or extended schools'.[footnote 96]

The children with the least social capital, whose parents have the weakest networks and wealth stand to gain the most from extending the school day. Exposure to more education after a decade of raising school standards through phonics, greater school autonomy and now further funding is the best way to turn a COVID-19 social mobility malaise into a levelling up triumph.

Making of modern Britain: teaching an inclusive curriculum

The Commission considered the extent to which children acquire a proper grounding in the national story, including its multi-ethnic character, in secondary school.

The highly respected E. D. Hirsch Jr[footnote 97] in his book 'How to Educate a Citizen: the power of shared knowledge to unify a nation', argues that:

> "As with other parts of a shared-knowledge curriculum, the key issue is the integration of these perspectives into the common curriculum. Knowledge is not functional in language and culture until it is shared. Hence the key practical matter to settle is determining which are the specific elements of knowledge about … [listed ethnic groups] and other minorities that need to be shared going forward. In general, we need to answer another, similar practical question: What are the specific elements of the traditional shared knowledge of the nation, grade by grade, that we need to share along with this new material?"

Whilst this is a quote about the USA, the sentiment is universal. It is widely accepted that the school curriculum and the way it presents the historic past can be central to creating a sense of belonging amongst pupils and a belief they can contribute in the future. When those from different ethnic and social class backgrounds can see, hear and read about their heritage, and the contribution their forefathers and mothers have made to this country through the ages, they can identify themselves as a part of

British history. This is not about teaching the personal history of each individual but rather linking the story of different ethnic groups to a unifying sense of Britishness.

Taking in consideration the large number of respondents from our call for evidence, empowering young people with a greater understanding of the past is seen as required and long overdue. Ensuring all pupils have access to high-quality knowledge was identified as crucial to enable young people to better understand the present world, think beyond their individual experiences and participate in creating the future. Michael Young, a British Professor of Sociology of Education at UCL, argued:

> "'Powerful knowledge' is powerful because it provides the best understanding of the natural and social worlds that we have and helps us go beyond our individual experiences.[footnote 98]"

(Michael Young, 2013, page 196)

> "Knowledge is 'powerful' if it predicts, if it explains, if it enables you to envisage alternatives.[footnote 99]"

(Michael Young, 2014, page 74)

We believe that young people are entitled to a wider understanding of the UK which encompasses the local cultures of regions such as the North or the Midlands, the 4 nations that form the UK, as well as the Commonwealth and former colonies such as the West Indies, India and Pakistan. These countries and local areas have historically been 'defined' by their connection to the UK, but equally have played their role in defining 'Britishness' today. The telling of the story of Modern Britain has already begun in many schools and initiatives across the UK.

Case study: The Royal Mint and West India Committee – 'Diversity Built Britain'
The Royal Mint collaborated with the West India Committee in their Diversity Built Britain (https://www.royalmint.com/globalassets/kids/activity-packs/diversity-built-britain---black-british-history.pdf) campaign to raise awareness of the nation's diversity. Alongside the launch of a new 50p diversity coin that placed 10 million coins in circulation, The Royal Mint worked with the West India Committee to create education material for schools. The education resource packs that have now been circulated to all 18,099 primary schools in England and Wales are aimed at illuminating fascinating stories and accounts of important and inspirational Black people that have lived, worked and studied in the UK. They not only illustrate that our society has been diverse throughout our long history, but seek to create rich materials that raise educational attainment and aspirations for all.

Case study: Curriculum – Oak Academy
Oak National Academy is the government-backed online academy created to support home learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been creating high-quality material and lesson plans for use online for free. In their online hub of video lessons and resources, produced by teachers, they have set out model lesson plans that can be easily adapted in schools.

Oak's key stage 4 geography class on Liverpool is an invaluable example of how the story of the modern UK can be taught through the prism of local areas. One module, entitled 'Urban change in Liverpool' offers a particularly effective example of teaching

the impact of migration and diversity of the UK through materials, facts and historical accounts of a city or region. This material could be replicated for all regions and cities and tailored to earlier age groups in key stage 3.

In order to develop a sense of citizenship and to support integration and aspiration amongst all ethnic communities, we believe that pupils need to be exposed to the rich variety of British culture and the influences that have shaped it, ranging from the influence of classical civilisations, the European Enlightenment, the inflows and outflows of the British Empire, and the stream of new arrivals in the post-war period to the present day. There have been many calls for pupils to have a greater opportunity to learn about the Commonwealth contribution to the World Wars and the building of the post-war NHS, through to the significance of events such as the Bristol Bus Boycott in 1963 which shaped race relations legislation in the UK.

> "It involves equipping the populace with a clearer sense of how its history has led to modern Britain being populated by such a rich and layered collection of communities. As these communities blend ever further, it is a story that should instil pride within the British public"[footnote 100]"

(Professor Samir Puri on the telling of the national story)

It is also important that pupils in the UK learn that the literature and language of the country has changed over time, both influencing and being influenced by the relationship to the Empire. Commonwealth writers such as Derek Walcott and Andrea Levy have been influenced by British cultural traditions but have created their own style becoming great writers in their own right. Learning about the way cultures change over time, and how other writers have drawn inspiration from outside their immediate country, can help young people appreciate the past, and see themselves in it, rather than reject it as exclusionary.

British history is not solely one of imperial imposition – Commonwealth history and literature reveals a more complex picture, in which ideas travelled in multiple directions, cultures mixed and positive relations formed that today underpin diaspora around the world, which many ethnic minority children in the UK will feel part of. All this makes up the British story, our story, which has episodes of both shame and pride.

As novelist Chimamanda Adichie expressed:

> "Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and humanise. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity. [footnote 101]"

Experiences from the Commission's call for evidence also highlight the need to tell the multiple, nuanced stories that have shaped the country we live in today:

> "Students should be taught about all famous and important people in the society and these famous people should come from every race, religion, class and creed, so that by the time students leave school they have a rounded understanding of the contributions made by ethnic minorities, how they fit into society and the

contribution ethnic minority people have made to the fabric of the society and the history, (present and future narrative) of the UK."

(call for evidence respondent)

"When children from different ethnic groups and socio-economic status groups can see themselves in books they read and in resources they use in a positive and celebratory manner, this can have a huge positive impact on engagement with learning."

(call for evidence respondent)

A well-sequenced, knowledge-rich curriculum, based around subject disciplines, can help students to acquire a sense of place and a framework for understanding cultural diversity. The national curriculum seeks to reflect this multi-layered story and is the product of years of dialogue and research, but not every school is able to deliver it in the way that is proposed. We heard that many schools and teachers do not have the knowledge or confidence to teach the kind of history suitable for a multi-ethnic UK and need additional support to do so. There is a clear need for better, high quality resources that teachers can use and trust.

Providing such a resource would also help schools to ensure they are teaching the story of the UK in a balanced way. We heard examples of some schools using materials which reflected narrow political agendas or gave a biased picture of historical and current events. Without further research it is impossible to judge how widespread this may be, but it is important that education practitioners teach in a way that is politically impartials, in line with their statutory obligations, and respects all pupils.

Understanding different perspectives and contested events is also central to the study of history and should help to equip pupils to navigate a world of 'fake news' and clashing opinions and truths. Taking evidence into consideration, the Commission would welcome the government to set school leadership expectations around political neutrality and transparency on curriculum design. The Commission also recognises the need to better understand whether schools are teaching in an impartial way and recommends the DfE commission and publish research in this area.

Recommendation 20: Achieve inclusivity – Making of modern Britain: teaching an inclusive curriculum

The Commission recommends that DfE work with an appointed panel of independent experts to produce a well-sequenced set of teaching resources to tell the multiple, nuanced stories that have shaped the country we live in today. The resources should be embedded within subjects in the statutory curriculum. These quality resources should include lesson plans, teaching methods and reading materials to complement a knowledge-rich curriculum.

Using these examples, DfE, supported by the panel of experts, should design and produce a credible, high-quality, online national library that is continually updated. This online library will complement and enhance the content and quality of lessons taught in all schools, so that all children can learn about the UK and the evolution of our society.

The panel of experts should include experienced headteachers, representatives from subject associations and examining bodies, directors of national museums, and representatives from relevant ethnic minority stakeholder groups such as the government's Windrush Cross-Government Working Group.

Higher education

Data on entry rates to higher education showed that in 2020 White students were the least likely to go to university at 32.6%, followed by students from the Mixed (39.0%), Black (47.5%), Asian (53.1%) and Chinese (71.7%) ethnic groups.[footnote 102]

Male White British pupils eligible for FSM are the least likely of all the main ethnic or social groups to progress to higher education by age 19, at just 12.7%.[footnote 103] This progression rate has fallen slightly for the first time since 2011 to 2012. However, as just noted, for White students eligible for FSM in London, the entry rate has pulled away from that in other parts of the country, and is now nearly 9 percentage points higher than any other region.[footnote 104]

In line with Professor Strand's findings for attainment, most ethnic minorities do relatively well in accessing higher education, including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In the 2018 to 2019 academic year, 66.9% of Black African young people had progressed to higher education by age 19, including 59.0% of those eligible for free school meals. Only the Chinese ethnic group has a higher progression rate for FSM students to higher education at 72.8%.[footnote 105]

Table 7: Progression rates to higher education by age 19, 2018 to 2019 school year

	FSM	All other pupils	Total	Odds ratio between FSM and all other pupils
Chinese	72.8%	79.8%	79.3%	0.68
Black African	59.0%	69.7%	66.9%	0.63
Bangladeshi	58.6%	67.8%	64.9%	0.67
Indian	57.2%	73.0%	71.7%	0.49
Asian Other	57.1%	70.5%	68.8%	0.56
Any Other Ethnic Group	55.9%	61.3%	59.9%	0.80
Pakistani	47.1%	59.5%	56.5%	0.61
Black Other	40.8%	56.0%	52.1%	0.54

	FSM	All other pupils	Total	Odds ratio between FSM and all other pupils
Mixed White and Black African	39.9%	54.7%	51.5%	0.55
White Other	37.2%	47.9%	46.6%	0.64
Mixed Other	33.6%	56.4%	52.3%	0.39
Mixed White and Asian	33.2%	59.1%	55.2%	0.34
Black Caribbean	31.8%	48.5%	44.7%	0.50
Unknown	28.6%	45.8%	43.0%	0.47
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	21.1%	40.3%	35.8%	0.40
White Irish	20.9%	57.9%	53.0%	0.19
White British	16.0%	40.9%	37.9%	0.28
Traveller of Irish Heritage	6.3%	10.2%	7.6%	0.59
Gypsy and Roma	3.8%	6.1%	5.2%	0.61
Total	26.3%	45.1%	42.5%	0.43

> Source: Department for Education, 2020. Note that progression rates can be volatile over time due to the very small number of pupils in some categories. Odds ratio calculated by CRED Secretariat. Odds ratios measure how likely one group is to progress to university compared to another group. For example, Indian students on FSM are just under half as likely to progress to university as Indian students who aren't on FSM. The closer to 1, the more equal the odds are between two groups.

While Black African and Black Caribbean pupils are more likely to progress to university than White British students, Black students are also the most likely out of the aggregated ethnic groups to attend low tariff universities. In 2018 to 2019, Black entrants were 1.7 times as likely to go to low tariff institutions as White entrants. [footnote 106]

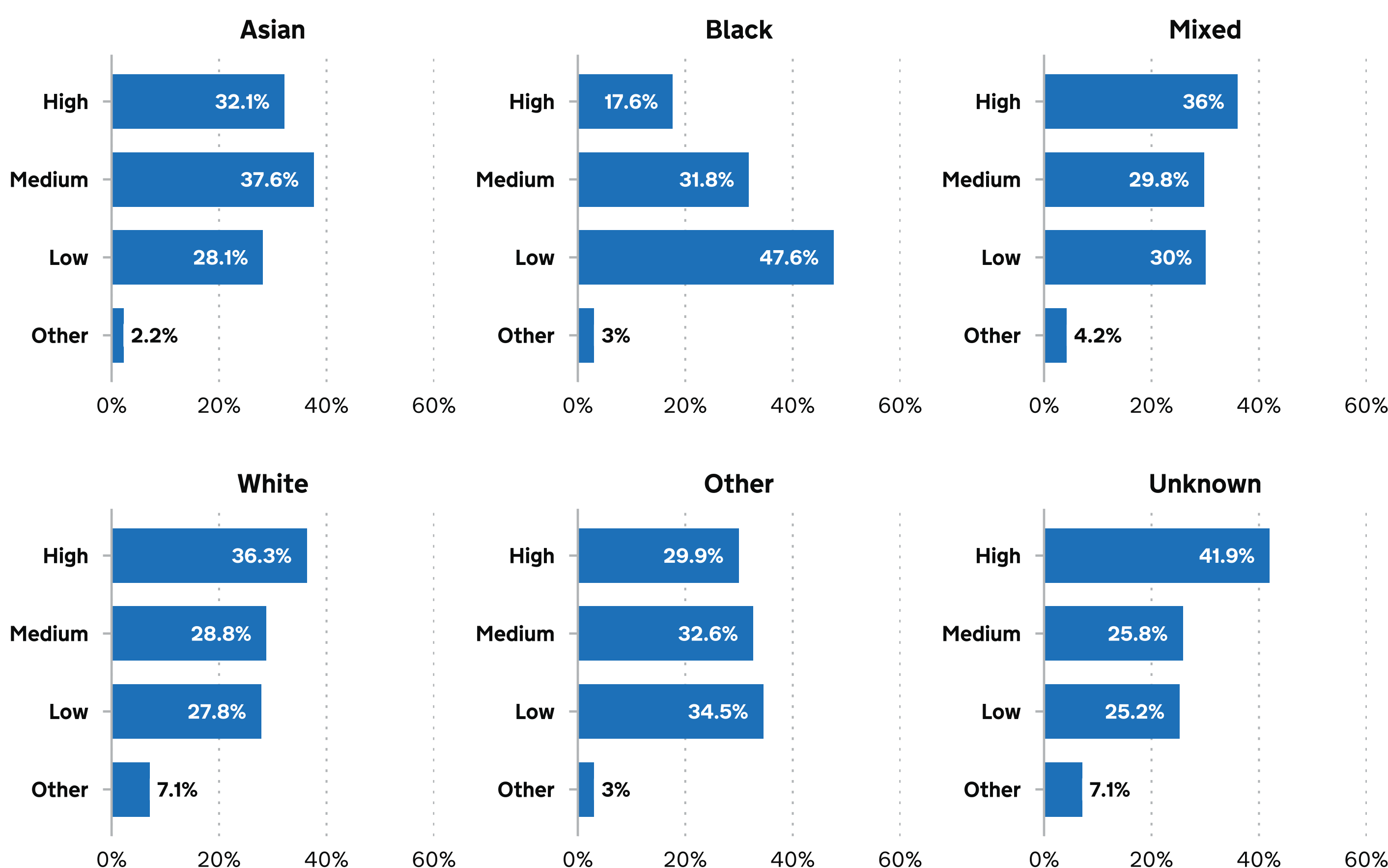
Meanwhile in the same year 36.3% of White university entrants went to high tariff providers – the highest percentage of all ethnic groups (where ethnicity was known), followed by 36.0% of entrants with Mixed ethnicity. This is in part a selection effect, due to the higher rates of progression to university among ethnic minorities. But only

17.6% of Black entrants went to high tariff providers – the lowest percentage out of all ethnic groups.[footnote 107]

In terms of overall progression, Black Caribbean pupils are the least likely of the main ethnic groups to progress to the more elite high tariff universities by age 19. This progression rate of 5.2% is less than half the overall national figure of 10.9% of all pupils.[footnote 108]

So, although Black students are progressing to university at healthy rates, they tend to be clustered in the lower tariff institutions as shown in the graph below. Likewise, although Asian students have much larger rates of progression to higher education than both White British and Black students, many are clustered in mid-tier universities.

Figure 4: Percentage of each ethnic group entering low, medium and high tariff providers (UK, 2018 to 2019 academic year)



Multiple bar charts showing the proportion of university entrants of each aggregated ethnic group entering low, medium and high tariff providers.

Different graduate outcomes

Once at university, ethnic minority students - with the exception of Asian students - are more likely to drop out, have lower levels of attainment, and lower earnings after graduating. The highest overall non-continuation rate at 15.5% is found amongst Black students. For 'other providers' (those that are not high tariff providers) Black students have the highest non-continuation rates at 17.0%, followed by students from

the Other ethnic group (14.2%) and the Mixed ethnic group (13.9%). For White students in these providers, the non-continuation rate was 10.9%.[footnote 109]

This pattern holds true even for those in STEM subjects, which are generally viewed as being secure routes to success: Black students had the highest non-continuation rates for STEM students at higher tariff providers, and Black STEM students in providers with medium to low tariffs had the highest non-continuation rates overall. [footnote 110]

Black students also struggle when it comes to degree class: the most recent data (2018 to 2019) shows White students with the highest percentage of first class degrees at 31.5% and Black students with the lowest percentage at 14.5%. Asian students (23.0%) and those with Mixed ethnicity (26.2%) came in the middle.[footnote 111]

The pattern continues into graduate earnings 10 years after completing a first degree, although more detailed ethnic groups in the data highlight the position of Pakistani and Bangladeshi graduates too. For the cohort that graduated in 2006/07, there are 5 ethnic groups with median earnings less than £30,000: Black African (£29,200), Bangladeshi (£28,500), Black Caribbean (£28,500), other Black ethnic groups (£27,000) and the Pakistani ethnic group (£25,600). The White ethnic group has median earnings of £31,000 and median earnings for various Mixed, Indian and Chinese ethnic groups are all above £33,000.[footnote 112]

One explanation is that students entering low tariff universities are less able to compete against those from higher tariff universities and are therefore less likely to secure employment in their chosen career. As ethnic minorities are disproportionately more likely to attend these universities, this may limit their employment choices and earnings in later life.

Another explanation is that ethnic minority students, and especially Black students, from lower social status backgrounds are not being well advised on which courses to take at university. About 40% of Black African people and 39% of people from the Bangladeshi ethnic group are overqualified for their roles, compared with 25% of White workers.[footnote 113]

National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), the country's leading independent social research institute, undertook a series of focus groups on behalf of the Commission. The issue of needing access to networks and good careers guidance came through strongly.

Those in high-skilled occupations had typically made more use of formal support services, including university careers services, alongside informal sources of support. [footnote 114] They were more likely to have studied subjects with a clear career trajectory (such as medicine, teaching or accountancy, and typically took up industry placements, work experience, or benefited from informal mentors before and after graduation.[footnote 115]

In contrast, those in low-skilled occupations had relied more heavily on informal information and support and reported limited or negative experiences of formal support services. This group either did not access university careers support or tried to do so after completing their degree (at which point the support was no longer

available).[footnote 116] Generally, this group studied degree subjects with multiple or less obvious career trajectories (such as sociology, business or creative arts).

The focus groups also highlighted the impact that being the first in the family to go to university can have on a person's career prospects: participants could feel alone in navigating their way to high-skilled employment, as their families were unable to provide practical careers guidance or support.

Across all ethnic groups and occupations, young people highlighted the need for better careers advice and planning at schools and universities (through alumni networks, inviting employers to schools, and effective careers advice).[footnote 117] Relevant insider knowledge is often not available to those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Elite universities, for example, often look for evidence of extra-curricular activity such as volunteering when selecting students.

The Commission proposes improvements to the quality of, and access to, careers advice for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This builds on the measures to drive change in tackling inequalities between ethnic groups in higher education announced by the government in February 2019.[footnote 118] The measures announced gave the Office for Students (OfS) more powers to scrutinise institutions' access and participation plans. All universities now have to publish data on admissions and attainment, broken down by ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background, to shine a spotlight on those making good progress and those lagging behind.

Attainment at A level in schools and colleges is the most important factor influencing entry to the highest tariff courses and universities. The Commission received advice from OfS noting longstanding patterns of attainment in schools, coupled with perceptions of financial cost and belonging in higher education, influence family and community expectations.

Measures to reduce attainment gaps need to be tackled early by engaging young people while their expectations are still forming, engaging teachers and parents, providing them with career guidance, and removing the academic, financial and cultural barriers to meeting their ambitions, rather than assuming that ambitions themselves are low.

This requires targeted and sustained engagement with young people, schools and families to create pathways into higher education, rather than one-off interventions, and this is best delivered in or close to schools and colleges.

It should also be noted that a report commissioned by Gatsby Charitable Foundation into improving career guidance in England noted 8 Gatsby benchmarks of good careers guidance including: a stable careers programme, learning from career and labour market information, addressing the needs of each pupil, linking curriculum learning to careers, encounters with employers and employees, experiences of workplaces, encounters with further and higher education, and personal guidance. [footnote 119]

Recommendation 15: Create Agency – Empower pupils to make more informed choices to fulfil their future potential

We recommend stronger guidance is issued by the Office for Students (OfS) to higher education institutions on funding outreach programmes and placing university outreach staff in schools to help reduce disparities in applications at an earlier stage. Funding should be informed by evidence-led practice and targeted at the 8 elements of good careers support to ensure that more children are able to apply to high-tariff institutions. This funding should be evaluated and monitored to assess whether it is having an impact on application rates.

If guidance from OfS does not lead to strengthened funding for such initiatives, then OfS should look to regulatory or legal changes to ensure improved access and participation to higher education institutions.

Apprenticeships, vocational education and lifelong learning

Data in the higher education section above shows that (1) academic students are not getting into the top universities at the rate that they should, and (2) non-academic students are heading to lower tier universities and dropping out. This is particularly true for Black students.

A thriving university sector is vital for this country and should be even more open to those with the relevant abilities and aptitudes from all backgrounds. But young people appear to be over-investing in university degrees that are not leading to the high status professional jobs they've been led to expect.

There are satisfying and well-rewarded careers that do not require academic qualifications, at least at the entry level, and are often better paid than low level graduate employment. Longitudinal survey and interview data in England revealed that those with degrees were less likely to be in work at the ages of 22 to 23 than those who left school to enter employment at 18.[footnote 120]

More routes into a variety of skilled jobs and a wider definition of 'skill' will benefit UK society and particularly the less affluent who have not all benefited from the great expansion in higher education. Peoples' talents are wide and varied but we tend to overvalue the cognitive and undervalue others.

Around 40% of young people do not achieve a good pass in English and maths that is required to move into the academic stream at school or sixth-form college.[footnote 121] A recent academic paper finds that young people from this group tend to feel like failures despite demonstrating good attainment in other GCSE subjects.[footnote 122] It is believed that pupils' academic self concept (their belief in their own abilities) in turn impacts their success in education.[footnote 123] This is an example of the negative impacts of the British system's narrow view of ability based on generic, cognitive-analytical aptitudes.

The Commission welcomes the government's recent Skills for Jobs white paper and the greater focus on the more than half of school leavers aged 18 who do not go on

to university.[footnote 124] It also commends the government's increasing support for traineeships and apprenticeships announced in the recent 2021 Budget.

The government has in recent years been paying more attention to those who are not heading for university and a series of measures and reports.[footnote 125] These all suggest that there is now an infrastructure in place to deliver credible non-university options. This is partly driven by employer and economic necessity, especially with more restrictive immigration rules now in place.

It is vital that ethnic minority young people do not see their future only through a higher education lens. Responses from the Commission's call for evidence highlighted the importance of promoting vocational training options such as apprenticeships, as well as academic routes.

Apprenticeships provide an opportunity to combine work with classroom study, with the possibility to move into full-time academic work later in life if their ambitions pivot in that direction at a later stage. The Commission commends organisations and employers (such as those highlighted in the case studies) who reach out to and provide high quality apprenticeship opportunities to young people.

The Commission is concerned by the evident disparities in the take-up of apprenticeships across age and ethnicity. The data shows that:

- young ethnic minority people are under-represented in the apprenticeship system, including both school leavers and those who take up apprenticeships in their early 20s[footnote 126]
- in London, before the levy was introduced (2015 to 2016) those from the Black ethnic group were well represented in apprenticeships overall – however, they were also more likely to be clustered in lower level and lower paid apprenticeships[footnote 127]
- higher level apprenticeships are dominated by employees aged over 25 – the levy introduced in 2017 has reinforced the bias to investing training money in existing employees at the higher level 4 and 5 vocational training level rather than the level 2 and 3 more suitable for school leavers[footnote 128]

There appears to be a mixture of stronger traditions of understanding and respecting the apprenticeship system in White British families and an exaggerated respect for the academic route as the only path to success and economic safety on the part of ethnic minorities.

There also seems to be a mixture of prejudice and ignorance about apprenticeships in ethnic minority families. A survey by Youth Employment UK earlier this year found that 33% of Black respondents had never had apprenticeships discussed with them, compared with 13% of White respondents.[footnote 129]

This minority bias has overlapped with the thrust of public policy which has been to send as many school leavers as possible into academic, usually residential, higher education, with a corresponding neglect of other pathways.

Recommendation 16: Create agency – Open up access to apprenticeships

The Commission recommends that the government conducts a highly targeted apprenticeships campaign to persuade young people to do apprenticeships in growth sectors. Our view is that such a campaign could be of particular benefit to young people who face discrimination or disadvantage and currently lack access to in-depth information about the full range of career pathways.

Such a campaign could use a range of mechanisms to attract young people, such as relatable young role models, employer testimonies, data on potential earnings and career progression. It could explore the impact of factors that influence a young persons' career choices such as: parental engagement, peer influence, access to information on different career routes, employer links with students, and 'people like me' and be delivered in partnership with further education colleges, Jobcentre Plus, youth hubs in community spaces, and careers hubs in schools.

A two-phased approach to roll out is proposed: first, pilots to be undertaken and evaluated in left behind areas across England; and second, a national roll out of a well evidenced, highly targeted campaign which focuses on getting young people into a new job as part of an apprenticeship, and rewards providers for successfully achieving this.

DfE and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should work in partnership with the Youth Futures Foundation to:

- co-fund the design of the campaign
- put out a call for further education colleges working in partnership with local employers and the community to apply to be considered for pilots
- commission an independent evaluation of the pilots, one which includes identifying 'what works' as part of its findings

Case study: Rolls-Royce STEM Education Outreach Programme
Rolls-Royce, a world leading industrial technology company, has committed to "advancing STEM subjects among the scientists and engineers of tomorrow" and has a target to reach 25 million people by 2030 with their STEM education programmes and activities.

As part of this objective, they conduct extensive outreach year-round with schools, partners and students through their STEM Ambassadors who champion the full range of their early career pathways. Examples of this outreach include Primary Engineer, careers Q and A sessions and the Big Bang UK.

The 'Rolls-Royce Schools Prize for Science and Technology' is the company's flagship programme and is open to all schools in the UK. It celebrates excellence in STEM teaching and learning, showcases best practice through its annual awards event and supports teachers' continuous professional development.

In addition, Rolls-Royce offers various apprenticeship programmes where apprentices receive a combination of on-the-job training with digital learning and practical skills development as they study towards nationally-recognised qualifications or a range of degree programmes.

Case study: PwC
PwC offers accounting and technology flying start degree programmes. The 4-year programmes fast track applicants' careers in business, accounting and finance, and technology.

Following the accounting route, students will receive 3 paid work placements with PwC during the programme that are built into the university's academic year and last for just one term in each year. The programme places them on track to becoming an ICAEW Chartered Accountant – ensuring they complete 80% of their ICAEW exams during the degree.

Technology apprentices study towards a full BSc degree in Computer Science or Software Engineering, depending on the University attended, and are also able to gain the relevant apprenticeship qualification. During the programme they will spend periods of work based learning in the business working on cutting-edge digital and technology client projects at PwC. This programme is a fully funded degree apprenticeship, therefore, negating the need to pay tuition fees, and as a PwC apprentice from day one, a salary is paid throughout.

For both the accounting and technology routes, the students could secure their future career with the firm.

As a way of improving the accessibility of the programmes, PwC conducts a wide range of activities such as their social mobility community programme and their 'Virtual Insights Week'. They also help students to develop their employability skills through the 'employability hub' which provides them with virtual tools to support them to develop key employability skills from online applications and assessments, video interviews, assessment days.

Case study: The Sutton Trust
The Sutton Trust supports young people from less advantaged backgrounds to access leading universities and careers. They run programmes in partnership with universities and employers that give students practical advice and leave them feeling inspired and more confident about their future.

So far, over 41,000 people have taken part in one of the Sutton Trust's programmes with each of those individuals becoming part of the Sutton Trust alumni community.

One of their programmes is the 'Apprenticeship Summer School' which they deliver in partnership with employers. As part of the programme, students get an in-depth understanding of degree apprenticeships, what they involve and whether a degree apprenticeship is the right choice for them. They also hear from current apprentices, experience networking opportunities, attend sessions hosted by employers and learn the different application processes employers use.

Lifelong learning and alternative routes must also be central to the labour market of the future for those who do not stay on the academic ladder aged 16, and for those who have progressed on the ladder but have not found satisfactory employment subsequently.

Lifelong learning has been much talked about in the past 20 years but for most of that time we have seen adult education and re-education both at higher education

levels and at higher manual and technical levels in freefall (the adult education budget has fallen by about two-thirds from 2003 to July 2019).[footnote 130]

The increase in tuition fees in 2012 led to a sharp reduction in the number of mature students at university, which undermined the government's often repeated claim that the participation in higher education of people from disadvantaged backgrounds has continued to rise.[footnote 131] This may be true among school leavers, but not for students aged 21 and above, who are more likely to be from disadvantaged groups, come from ethnic minority backgrounds, have a disability, or have non-traditional qualifications.[footnote 132]

Now we do have a chance to make lifelong learning a reality, key both for an adaptable economy and for those second chances in individual lives. The recently announced Lifetime Skills Guarantee will mean that all individuals are guaranteed state support for any level 3 training and a 3 or 4 year loan guarantee will also soon be available for those who want to change direction and retrain in later life with a part-time course at their local further education college or university.

These changes go some way to redressing the bias towards the funding of the academic route, and offer opportunities for training that are currently only available to university undergraduates studying conventional degrees.

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21. Here we define family resilience as the ability to overcome factors associated with low attainment such as low socio-economic status, in order to succeed.
22. In July 2020, a major new review into improving health outcomes in babies and young children was launched. Led by early years health adviser, Andrea Leadsom MP, the review will look at reducing inequalities in young children from birth to age 2-and-a-half. The Commission met with Andrea Leadsom MP to discuss the upcoming review and looks forward to seeing the findings and recommendations from this activity.
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29. Due to small sample sizes, the Chinese ethnic group is included in the Other Asian and Mixed White and Asian grouping.

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