

# Learning

## Headlines

Educational attainment is influenced by family socio-economic status together with the quality of the schools that children and young people attend. Their attainment at age 16 is a powerful indicator of their chances of achieving future health and economic wellbeing.

Educational attainment continues to improve in Kirklees. In 2010 there was a gap between the best and worst performing localities of 19% at age five and age 16, both of these had reduced since 2009. Across Kirklees, a complex pattern exists of inequalities between different ethnic groups, different communities and different schools.

Girls' attainment is higher than boys throughout all stages of formal education, and the gap is widening.

## Why is this issue important?

A child's physical, social, and cognitive development during the early years strongly influences their school readiness and educational attainment, economic participation and health. Higher educational attainment is associated with healthier behaviour during childhood and into adult life<sup>1</sup> (p60, 66).

People with low educational attainment are more likely to experience disadvantage throughout their lives across a wide range of issues including income, employment, housing, healthy behaviours and health. Educational attainment is a strong predictor of life expectancy and loss of years of healthy life<sup>1</sup> (p81).

## Early Years Foundation Stage (age five)<sup>2</sup>

In the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2010 nearly 2 in 3 (62%) pupils achieved the expected standard, compared to 56% nationally. This built on good improvements in the past four years across all localities. The gap between the lowest attaining 20% of children and the rest continues to be 33%. The attainment of children eligible for free school meals has continued to improve. In 2010 nearly half (47%) achieved the expected level compared to 2 in 3 (65%) of those not eligible.

## Key Stage 2 (age 11)<sup>3</sup>

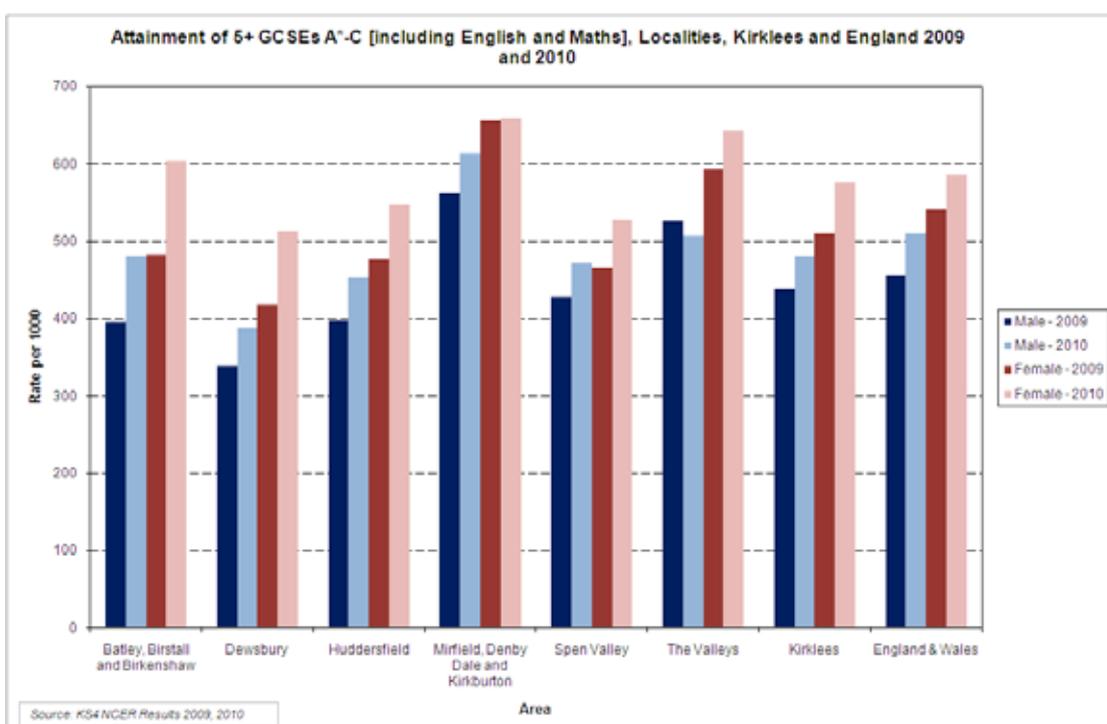
At Key Stage 2, 3 in 4 (75%) pupils achieved the expected level of attainment in English and Maths in 2010. The gap between boys and girls attainment was 8%.

## Key Stage 4 (age 16)<sup>4</sup>

At Key Stage 4 in 2010 more than half (53%) of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs grades A\*-C including English and Maths, increasing in each of the last four years. More than 99% of pupils left KS4 with at least one qualification.

Attainment at A level or equivalent continued to improve and was above the national average<sup>4</sup>.

Levels of persistent absence (pupils with 80% or less attendance) from school and provision of alternative full time education for pupils who are excluded continued to fall.



## What significant factors are affecting this issue?

A wide range of interacting factors impact on a child's educational attainment. These include:

- Social factors, such as parental income, education and socio-economic status, postnatal depression, parental education, parental support and parent/child relationships.
- School/peer factors, such as the nature of the school and its' population.
- Individual child factors, including low birth weight, being read to every day, having a regular bed time at age three and individual children's ability, measured primarily in terms of prior attainment.

The most significant of these is the socio-economic status of the family<sup>1 (p 62)</sup>.

## Which groups are affected most by this issue?

### Gender

Locally, levels of attainment for boys was less than girls at all stages. At Early Years Foundation Stage the attainment of boys (53%) was consistently much lower than that of girls (69%). By Key Stage 2 the gap had reduced to 8%. The attainment of girls at Key Stage 4, for five or more A\*-C GCSEs including English and Maths was 58%, higher than that of boys by 10%. The gap had increased from 5% in 2008. Of particular concern was that the low rate for boys of 36% in the Colne Valley, which was lower than 2009. This contrasted with 69% for girls in the Holme Valley<sup>4</sup>.

### Ethnicity

At the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils of Asian Pakistani heritage were the lowest performing group, with just over half (54%) achieving the expected level compared with 2 in 3 (66%) of white pupils<sup>2</sup>. However, by the end of secondary school trends were improving for this group with nearly half of all pupils (47%) attaining five or more A\* - C GCSEs, including English and Maths. They remain lower than nationally for Asian Pakistani heritage pupils (49%) and lower than the average for all pupils.

Less than half (44%) of mixed white and black Caribbean heritage pupils achieved the expected level compared to just over half (53%) of white British heritage pupils<sup>4</sup>.

### Low income

For pupils eligible for free school meals, educational attainment was lower across all key stages. Just 1 in 3 (31%) pupils who were eligible for free school meals achieved the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 4 compared to nearly 2 in 3 (59%) of their peers. This was similar to nationally<sup>4</sup>.

## Looked after children

In 2009, the educational attainment of looked after children was lower than the national average. Achieving five or more A\* to C GCSEs at Key Stage 4 including English and Maths was 31% compared to 49% for our benchmarking group and 50% for care leavers in England. This was partly linked to instability in placements, poor attendance prior to coming into care and a range of learning, behavioural and emotional needs.

## Where is this causing greatest concern?

At Early Years Foundation Stage, attainment was lowest in south Huddersfield (52%), Batley, Birstall & Birkenshaw (58%) and Dewsbury (60%) although all had improved since 2009. It was highest in Mirfield, Denby Dale & Kirkburton (76%)<sup>2</sup>. In 2010 less than half of all pupils in Dewsbury (45% - improved from 37% in 2009) and south Huddersfield (46% - up from 44%) achieved five or more GCSEs grades A\*-C including English and Maths, compared to 2 in 3 (66% - unchanged from 2009) in Holme Valley.

There is wide variation across Kirklees for Asian Pakistani heritage pupils. 39% of Asian Pakistani pupils in Batley achieved five or more A\* - C GCSEs, including English and Maths compared with 63% in north Huddersfield. The largest improvement was amongst Asian Pakistani heritage pupils from Dewsbury, from 27% in 2009 to 45% in 2010.

## What could commissioners and service planners consider?

- Continue to improve the universal provision of educational opportunities for all children and young people, whilst targeting resources at specific groups based on need (proportionate universalism).
- Develop a stronger early intervention and prevention focus to ensure the root causes of poor attainment can be addressed and specific groups who are struggling are identified early and supported appropriately.
- The success already seen in reducing the variation between schools and groups must continue and this can be achieved through local initiatives, such as school to school networks. Development of school to school support and intervention should be targeted at schools likely to under-perform.

## References

1. Marmot, M. Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010. 2010.

<http://www.marmot-review.org.uk/>

2. Foundation Stage Profile 2010 Data Collection.

3. Department for Education Key Stage 2 return 2010.

NB Due to an industrial dispute the Key Stage 2 tests in 2010 were only administered in 54 out of 112 schools. The indicators tables include data for 2009, the last year for which data for all schools is available.

4. Key Stage 4 National Consortium for Examination Results 2010.

5. Department for Education Performance Tables 2010.

[http://www.education.gov.uk/cgi-bin/performancetables/group\\_10.pl?Mode=Z&Type=LA&Begin=b&No=382&Base=c&Phase=2&F=1&L=50&Year=10&Key=6&Order=asc](http://www.education.gov.uk/cgi-bin/performancetables/group_10.pl?Mode=Z&Type=LA&Begin=b&No=382&Base=c&Phase=2&F=1&L=50&Year=10&Key=6&Order=asc)