

Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee

12 January 2022

Achievement and Attainment of Children in West Sussex

Report by the Director of Education and Skills

Summary

Securing high achievement for all children and young people is essential in supporting them in developing the skills and knowledge they need to be successful and active citizens in society. Securing high achievement is within the power of schools and teachers but also is reliant on having the appropriate resources to meet the needs of pupils, along with a clarity of direction, policy and expectations set nationally by government. The local authority's statutory role and responsibilities in education are set out in the Education Act 1996. Whilst the local authority has a responsibility to promote high standards, its role in direct delivery and intervention is more limited.

Standards achieved by children and young people in West Sussex schools and Early Years settings are varied. There has been a history of underachievement in the primary sector based on the County's level of deprivation compared to the national average. The demographics across West Sussex are diverse with some areas of significant affluence and others of significant deprivation. Therefore, county wide averages mask the significant differences in levels of deprivation and rates of progress from individual pupils' starting points. Since 2016 there has been a significant improvement in outcomes across the primary school sector in West Sussex as measured by national test results but with much more that we need to achieve. Standards achieved by the time students reach GCSEs have traditionally been more positive with students showing positive progress through their secondary education. Disadvantaged pupils on average in all phases do not achieve as well as their non-disadvantaged peers.

During 2020 and 2021 education and learning has been interrupted for many due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Research suggests that, during this time, some students have fallen behind in their learning. However, the significance of the learning gap that is perceived to exist is unclear due to the cancelling of national testing and examinations over the two years. No national or local data exists that can quantify the detail of impact on learning caused by the pandemic.

This report aims to outline what we do know about the attainment and outcomes of our pupils and students on the lead up to the pandemic, and also what information and perceptions exist on how children have been performing during the two years of the pandemic. It also aims to draw together actions that have been undertaken by the local authority to support schools in focusing their attention on securing effective learning for all children and future plans of the local authority within its statutory role to maintain a focus on learning.

The focus for scrutiny

The Committee is asked to consider the attainment and achievement of children across West Sussex, the County Council's approach to addressing the attainment gap (within its statutory responsibilities), and if the plans and actions being taken are designed to contribute to championing high achievement for all children.

Key areas for scrutiny include:

- a) To identify any areas the Committee wishes to highlight to the Cabinet Member for consideration as part of the development of the Education and Skills Strategy to ensure the County Council is championing high achievement for all children, including any implications from Covid-19.
- b) To identify if there are any areas that the Committee may wish to consider for future scrutiny.

The Chairman will summarise the output of the debate for consideration by the Committee.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 The role of a local authority with respect of education is detailed in the Education Act 1996. Whilst a local authority has a responsibility to promote high standards for all pupils and promote the fulfilment of the learning potential for all, its powers and duties surrounding pupil outcomes are limited. Schools have the responsibility for ensuring that all children achieve well and the local authority has the power to intervene only where schools are causing concern and children's education and learning is at risk. These powers are covered by the National Schools Causing Concern protocol and only relate to maintained schools. With respect to assessment, a local authority's responsibilities are restricted to ensuring that the national assessment process is implemented and that a sample of teacher assessments at the end of key stage national assessments are moderated.
- 1.2 Over the period 2016-2019, the attainment of children in West Sussex provided for a mixed picture across the county's schools. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development (GLD) by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (at the end of Reception class), had been almost in line with the national average each year. For children reaching the end of Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and in mathematics had improved over that period and was in line with the national average in 2019, although the proportion achieving greater depth and above the expected standard was below. Whilst the results of the end of Key Stage 2 outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics showed good progress towards the national average between 2016-2019, they were still below the national average by 2019 in writing and mathematics. Key Stage 2 reading standards were in line with the national average in 2019 with respect to the proportion achieving the national standard, and above the national average in the proportion of children reading with greater depth and exceeding the national standard. However, where progress at Key Stage 2 had been significant over the three years, this is measured from a low baseline in 2016. The county's Key Stage 2 results,

based on the proportion of children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined, was below the national average and ranked 116 out of 151 local authorities in England by 2019. Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4, based on Attainment 8 scores, the measure used to standardise and provide comparative performance data for 16 year olds at GCSE, were higher in West Sussex than the national average throughout the period leading up to 2019, with the local authority being ranked 56 out of 151 local authorities in England. At all key stages, and beginning before children enter school, the disparity in the outcomes of disadvantaged children with their non-disadvantaged peers is not insignificant and are below that of disadvantaged children nationally and across the region.

- 1.3 In 2020, due to the covid pandemic, national tests and examinations were cancelled and this cancellation has continued through 2021. No key stage assessments at Key Stages 1 and 2 were moderated and schools were not mandated to submit any pupil performance data to the Department of Education or to the local authority. There is no pupil performance data on academic outcomes in reading, writing or mathematics at Key Stage 1 or 2 for either year. At GCSE and A level, contingency arrangements were introduced, initially using a standard algorithm to award grades but subsequently requiring assessment centres and schools to submit locally assessed and teacher assessed grades. Whilst public data is available on GCSE and A level outcomes for 2020 and 2021, these are not being used by the Department of Education to compare school performance, or to compare performance generally with previous years' results where examinations were undertaken formally.
- 1.4 At the beginning of the academic year 2019, Ofsted also introduced a new inspection framework to guide its inspections of schools. Under this framework, schools were to be evaluated on the quality of provision and achievement across the curriculum, with the explicit judgement of a school's outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics being removed. This reflected Ofsted's view that too heavy a focus on data and achieving national test outcomes was diverting schools from the real substance of education, and that teaching to the test was risking narrowing the curriculum with the most negative impact potentially being felt by disadvantaged and the least able. Since introducing the new inspection framework, Ofsted inspectors have been encouraged not to look at schools' internal data to judge achievement and standards, but to observe children's learning and outcomes in lessons and through the scrutiny of their work. Whilst the inspection of schools was paused in April 2020, since September 2021 inspections have been re-introduced. However, due to the nature of the new inspection framework, and the lack of authentic examination and test data, there is limited moderated or verified information available on the academic performance in reading, writing or mathematics either nationally or through the inspection of local schools since Ofsted evaluative inspections restarted in September 2021. Ofsted undertook a survey during the period of Covid which included interviews with a sample of headteachers and some sampling of provision. The outcomes report (Covid 19: Briefing on Schools) indicated that children who were hardest hit by school closures and restrictions had regressed in some basic skills and learning. The report suggested that some older children had lost stamina in their reading and writing along with physical fitness, whilst others were showing signs of mental distress including an increase in eating disorders and self-harm.

2. Academic Performance and attainment in the Foundation Stage and Primary Phase

2.1 The last publicly captured data indicated that the proportion of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage reaching a good level of development by the age of 5 was in line with the national average. This had been so over the three years prior to the covid pandemic.

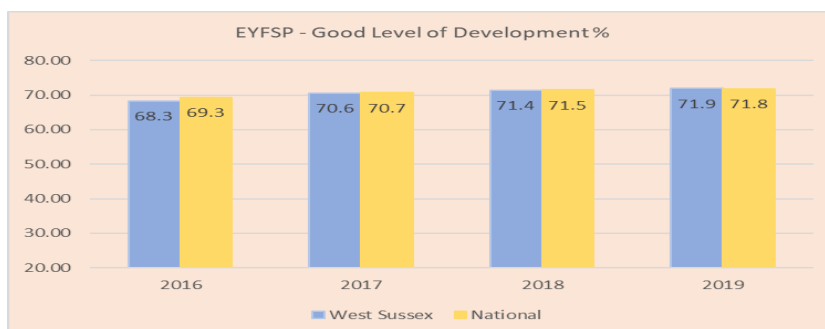


Table 1: Proportion of 5 yr olds reaching a GLD at the end of the Foundation Stage

However, on an average point score, the local authority ranked 109 out of 151 local authorities, reflecting the already significant discrepancy in the outcomes of our disadvantaged young children, with data on school readiness using the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) model indicating that whilst 71.4% of West Sussex 5 year olds have the health, emotional maturity and skills required to successfully settle into school, in line with the national average, only 52% of disadvantaged young children in West Sussex are similarly ready. This indicates a difference to both the national and regional averages of 57%. Already, as our children reach statutory school age, the discrepancy between our disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children is greater than that in neighbouring local authorities.

Early Years

2.2 A key strategy to close the gap that exists, is to ensure that those entitled to free early years provision and childcare at the age of 2 years take up the provision and those entitled to extended hours for 3 and 4 years olds similarly access the provision available for them. Whilst take up of Free Entitlement in the Early Years has fallen nationally and in West Sussex during the period of Covid-19, the take up of Free 2 year old places and 3 and 4 year old additional hours in West Sussex has remained higher than the national average.

Table 2: Percentage take up of Two Year Old Free Entitlement

	2018	2019	2020	2021
England	72%	68%	69%	62%
West Sussex	80%	87%	84%	76%

Table 3: Percentage take up of 3 and 4 year old additional free hours of education and childcare

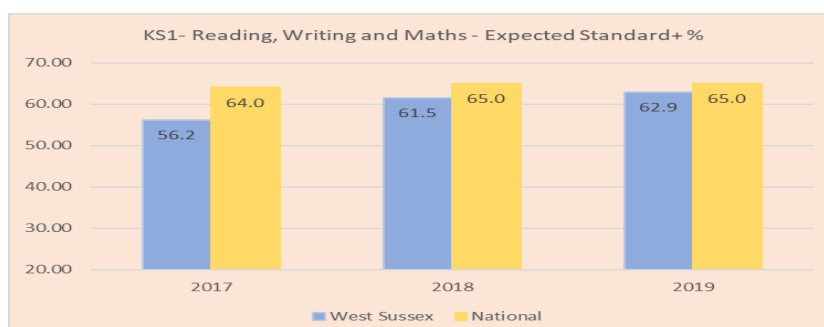
	2018	2019	2020	2021
England	94%	93%	93%	90%
West Sussex	95%	95%	94%	93%

- 2.3 Additional actions are being implemented by the local authority to address issues of school readiness, and to reduce the challenges of transition for children who neither have the skills or emotional readiness to integrate and settle into school. These actions are core to addressing some of the challenges facing children who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs.
- 2.4 Additional funding has been agreed with schools through the Area Inclusion and Improvement Boards (AIIBs) to fund an early years project on disadvantage to engage early years practitioners in our independent settings alongside Foundation Stage teachers in schools. The aim is to identify and share best practice in provision and learning to ensure smooth transition and the early identification of additional need. The West Sussex Schools Forum, a representative body from schools responsible for agreeing the use of the dedicated schools grant provided by the government, recently agreed to transfer £1.2m from the schools' grant into the High Needs Funding Block, a significant proportion of which is to pay for the local authority to employ additional staff to focus on early identification of SEND in the early years and to support transition. This is to ensure that children with additional needs are diagnosed and supported through their transition into appropriate mainstream school placements, thereby reducing the risk of underachievement and potential exclusion.

Key Stage One

- 2.5 Schools have had no nationally validated data for the end of Key Stage 1 since 2019 and have not been required to submit any data on pupil performance at the age of 7 years since that time. West Sussex performance in Key Stage 1 had been improving year on year between 2016-2019. By 2019, the proportion of children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 was broadly in line with the national average and with the local authority's results ranked 106 out of 151 local authorities, but higher in reading.

Table 4: Key Stage 1 results for the period 2017-2019



2.6 Although there has been no requirement to report end of Key Stage 1 data to the Department for Education or the local authority during the period of Covid, schools have been required to submit the results of their Year 2 phonic screening tests to the local authority, these being submitted by January each year. The figures for 2021 are not yet available but figures for 2020 indicate an increase in both boys and girls achieving the expected level of phonic knowledge by the end of year 2 compared with that of previous years. It also reflects improvement in the progress made in Year 2 where traditionally, a significant proportion of those not achieving the phonic knowledge in Year 1 have failed to reach the required standard by the end of Year 2.

Table 5: Phonic Screening Test data 2017 - 2020

		2017		2018		2019		2020	
		year 1	year 2	year 1	year 2	year 1	year 2	year 1	year 2
Working at the required standard	All pupils	79.7%	63.2%	81.7%	61.7%	80.8%	56.7%		79.7%
	Boys	76.1%	59.8%	78.3%	60.7%	77.6%	54.1%		76.7%
	Girls	83.6%	68.3%	85.2%	63.2%	84.4%	60.6%		83.1%
Working towards the required standard	All pupils	18.9%	32.0%	17.2%	33.9%	18.1%	38.7%		17.9%
	Boys	22.2%	34.2%	20.1%	34.4%	21.1%	40.0%		20.2%
	Girls	15.5%	28.7%	14.2%	33.1%	14.8%	36.8%		15.4%

2.7 Anecdotal evidence of the impact of Covid-19 on the achievement of children in Key Stage 1 was captured through a local survey of primary schools across West Sussex during October 2021 covering all Districts and Boroughs. Of those responding to the survey, feedback suggested that by the end of the academic year 2020-21 only 27% of pupils in Year 2 were felt to be at the level they were expected to be in reading; with only 5% in writing; and 20% in mathematics. With respect to disadvantaged pupils, schools responding to the survey indicated a view that only 18% were working at the level they had expected in reading; with 7% in writing; and 10% in mathematics. This potentially reflects the government's guidance during the pandemic that priority was given for face to face teaching in Key Stage 1 to younger children rather than those in Year 2.

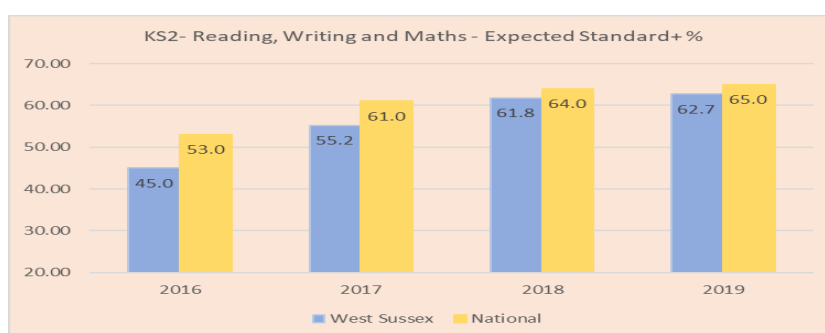
Key Stage Two

2.8 There have been no national tests at Key Stage 2 throughout the pandemic with the last formally assessed and moderated results being those for 2019. Internal school data and assessment is for teachers' use to inform their next steps in planning learning for pupils. Ofsted make the point of not looking at schools' internal data during inspections. It is therefore not possible for the local authority or for the Department for Education to provide an accurate and detailed analysis of the attainment and progress made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics through their primary education over the last two years, or how pupils have performed at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2020 or 2021. Analysis of the most recent published information and trends through to 2019 can provide an understanding of strengths and weaknesses at the time. More recent information the local authority holds on both school attendance through the pandemic, along with discussions with school leaders on their own perceptions of how pupils have coped educationally during the

pandemic, can provide a qualitative rather than quantitative analysis of the current situation.

- 2.9 Learning outcomes for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 have been traditionally low and much lower than ought to be expected. From a low base in 2016, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics have improved significantly in closing the gap with the national average. However, due to the relatively low levels of deprivation across the county as a whole, attainment ought to be higher. In 2019, the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 was below the national average and ranked 116 out of 151 local authorities. Whilst attainment in reading was in line with the national average for the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard, and above for the proportion reading with greater depth and exceeding the expected standard, it was below in writing and in mathematics.

Table 6: Key Stage 2 results 2016-2019



- 2.10 The attainment gap at the end of Key Stage 2 between disadvantaged pupils in West Sussex and their non-disadvantaged peers, based on the proportion achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is a key performance indicator within Our Council Plan 2021 – 2025. In 2019 the percentage was reported at 26% compared with a difference nationally of 19%. However, this gap varies across the county with some areas of the county being close to the national gap and others being well above. Whilst the differential was reducing in West Sussex at a faster rate than it was nationally, there was still more action needed. For Children in Need and those with care plans, attainment had risen significantly since 2016 with overall outcomes being higher in West Sussex than those achieved nationally by Children in Need, with the local authority ranked 61 out of 151 local authorities for its attainment among the vulnerable and children in need.

Impact of Covid

- 2.11 During the Covid pandemic, West Sussex schools and academies have maintained strong face to face teaching with higher levels of pupil attendance than nationally throughout the pandemic. This has been a particular feature for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils where, for most of the pandemic, school attendance has exceeded that of schools nationally and of our regional neighbours. For our children in care, throughout the pandemic when schools were not in partial lockdown, attendance has almost always been at or above 90%.
- 2.12 A local survey of primary schools was conducted across West Sussex during October 2021 covering all Districts and Boroughs. Of those who responded, it

was suggested that by the end of the academic year 2020-21, nearly 58% of pupils in Year 6 were felt to be at least at the level they expected pupils to attain in reading; 66% were felt to be at least at the levels they expected in writing; with 45% in mathematics. With respect to disadvantaged pupils, schools responding to the survey indicated a view that only 37% were working at the level they had expected in reading; with 27% in writing; and 30% in mathematics.

- 2.13 Whilst surveys are open to interpretation and can be subjective, the results would indicate that, from the perspective of primary schools, it is younger pupils who have been most affected in their learning through covid, particularly younger disadvantaged pupils. Whilst a significant minority of older pupils in primary schools were not at the levels teachers would have expected them to achieve based on previous knowledge and information held on their performance prior to covid, far more were achieving the levels they would have expected. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils falling behind the levels teachers were expecting of them were lower than that of younger children in Key Stage 1. This reflects the disruptive year in schools during 2020, along with the limited access to a full and broad practical curriculum in Key Stage 1 due to covid restrictions. It also reflects the prioritisation for face to face teaching children in Year 6 and along with the disadvantaged to prepare for their transition to secondary education. The local survey would reflect some of the findings of the Ofsted surveys undertaken nationally during 2020.
- 2.14 The local authority has focused its resources through the pandemic to keep schools open and to ensure that our most vulnerable children were able to access face to face teaching wherever possible. Throughout the pandemic, the local authority's link advisers have maintained regular contact with schools. Regular communication and the sharing of guidance, for example on planning virtual learning, assessing progress, and managing learning and safeguarding in schools. This aimed to keep schools open and provide detail on ideas and support mechanisms available to them.
- 2.15 During 2020 and 2021, the local authority has distributed over 1,600 laptop computers and mobile data packages to schools to support children accessing learning virtually. Funded by the Department for Education, and primarily targeted at secondary schools, West Sussex was able to make a significant number available to support disadvantaged pupils in primary schools. Significant professional development has been provided for schools around curriculum and early reading development to ensure that schools have access to the guidance and professional development they need in these areas through the pandemic.

Turning the Tide Initiative

- 2.16 In 2019, the local authority launched a major initiative 'Turning the Tide', focusing on improving teaching and learning and leadership in raising the achievement of disadvantaged children. Working in partnership with schools and the Durrington Research School in Worthing, 30 primary schools were chosen to take part, based on the disparity in outcomes between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils from national test data. The project involved professional development for senior staff and additional consultancy support provided by the Research School's Evidence Leads, comprising of senior teachers and practitioners in schools across Sussex and

Surrey. A further tranche of schools has been included into the project in the second year and, to date, 113 primary schools and academies have been engaged in the programme of training which has included training for leaders of disadvantaged learners, the use of evidence in developing a strategy for tackling disadvantaged underachievement, and attendance at a forum for Disadvantaged Leads in each school. Although quantifiable outcome data is absent due to the pausing of national tests for 7 and 11 year olds in 2020 and 2021, the project was reviewed in 2021 prior to a further extension. Feedback from schools on the evaluation indicates action and an improved whole school focus on tackling underachievement of disadvantaged pupils.

3. Academic performance and attainment in Secondary Schools

Key Stage Four

3.1 Although GCSEs have been awarded in 2020 and 2021, the basis upon which such awards have been made have been significantly different to that of previous years due to changes in the examinations and the assessment process through the pandemic.

Table 7: Key Stage 4 Progress 8 data for West Sussex Schools 2016-2019 (A school's Progress 8 score is usually between -1 and +1. A score of +1 means that pupils in that school achieve one grade higher in each qualification than other similar pupils nationally. A score of -1 means they achieve one grade lower. The average Progress 8 score of all secondary schools nationally is 0)

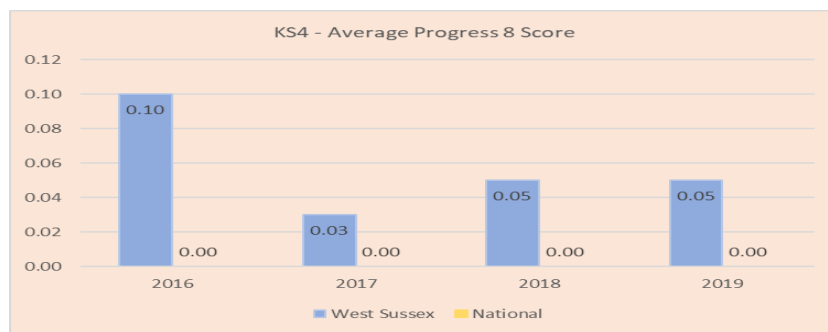
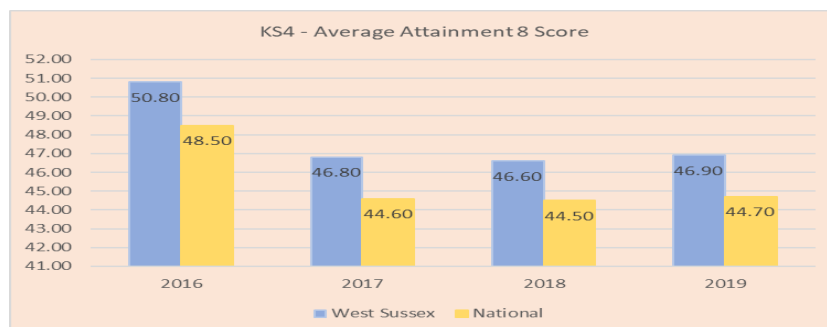
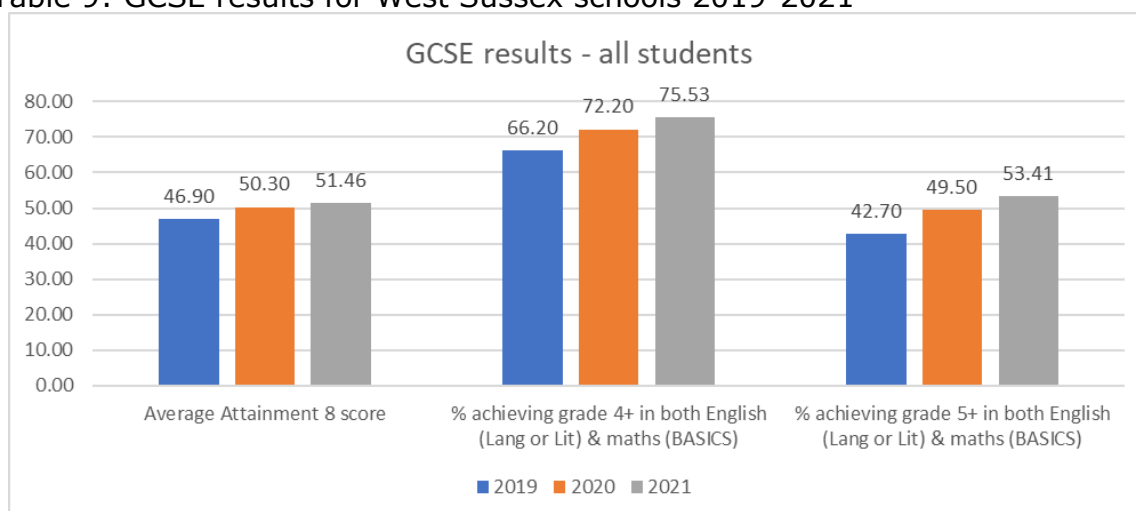


Table 8: Key Stage 4 Attainment 8 data for West Sussex Schools 2016-2019 (Attainment 8 measures the achievement of a pupil across 8 qualifications including mathematics (double weighted) and English (double weighted), 3 further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measure and 3 further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications)



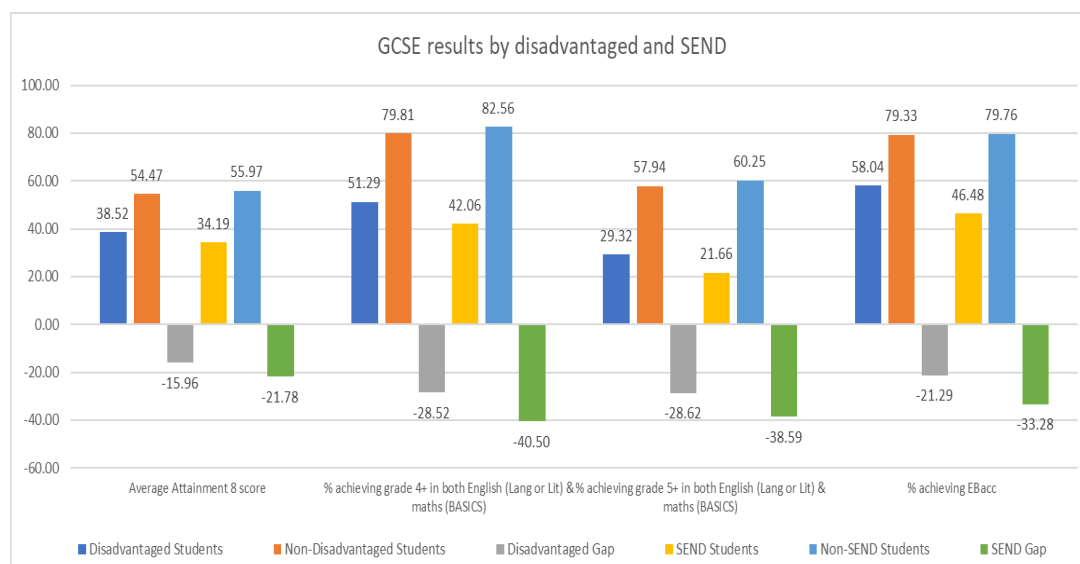
- 3.2 Across all national measures at GCSE and English Baccalaureate, West Sussex secondary schools have achieved well and above the national average over the period 2016-2019. Value added seen through Progress 8 scores saw West Sussex ranked 46 out of 151 local authorities. The average Attainment 8 score for those Children in Need was above the national average for Children in Need in 2019. It was above the national average for those Children in Need achieving a Grade 5 or above in English and mathematics and was well above average for those Children in Need achieving a Grade 4c or above in the English Baccalaureate, where West Sussex was ranked 28 out of 151 local authorities in England.
- 3.3 Although overall attainment measures at Key Stage 4 show a positive picture in GCSE and associated examinations, the differential progress and achievement of disadvantaged students against their non-disadvantaged peers continued the pattern seen in primary schools, albeit to a lesser extent. Where the national gap in Attainment 8 scores between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students runs at -13.6, in West Sussex, the gap is slightly wider at -16.24.
- 3.4 GCSE results in 2020 were initially awarded through the use of a national algorithm and this led to significant challenges from schools and the sector. The Department for Education subsequently altered the mechanism used to determine grades with much greater emphasis being given to teacher assessments to determine outcomes. This change saw a significant improvement in Key Stage 4 outcomes in West Sussex with almost a 10% increase on the previous results for standard pass GCSEs, Grade 9-4, and a 9.5% increase for a strong pass. In 2020, the average Attainment 8 score at Key Stage 4, including English and mathematics was 50.3 compared with 46.9 in 2019, a rise of 5.4 overall.
- 3.5 GCSE results in 2021 were awarded using a different methodology to that in 2020 and 2019's examinations. West Sussex saw a further rise in outcomes covering average Attainment 8 measures both at standard and strong pass GCSE grades including English and mathematics. As the 2020 and 2021 results not comparable to previous results or between schools due to the way in which the assessments and awards took place, there are no national comparative figures of substance.

Table 9: GCSE results for West Sussex schools 2019-2021



3.6 Although there are significant limitations in making comparisons between results over the pandemic, when considering students who are disadvantaged or who have SEND, the gaps compared to the last examination results in 2019 show a narrowing of the gap between students who are disadvantaged or who have SEND with that of all students using the Attainment 8 measure including a standard Grade 4 pass in English and mathematics. For Grade 5 and above however, the gap has widened. It has been suggested by schools that this is the result of the pandemic suppressing the outcomes for those pupils who may have achieved a higher grade under a normal year. The return to formal examinations in 2022 may provide for a re-calibration of standards at the end of Key Stage 4 with more comparative analysis of standards against those achieved during the years prior to the pandemic. It is difficult at this stage to predict how this will work considering how examination syllabi covers two academic years and most students will have had disrupted learning in at least one of those years, missing elements of the syllabus expected to be covered. It may be further affected should additional covid measures have to be re-introduced into schools in 2022.

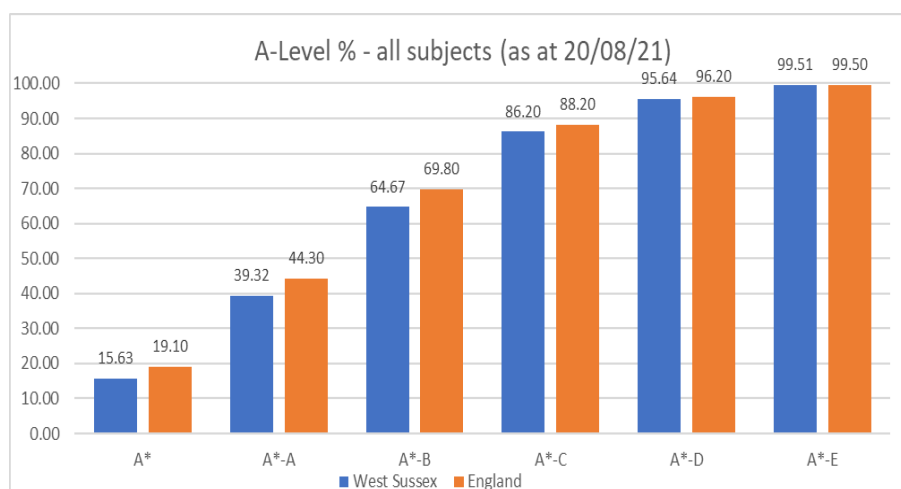
Table 10: 2021 GCSE data showing the gap between all students and those who are disadvantaged or who have SEND



A Level

3.7 Performance data at A level available to the local authority reflects only those students who have studied A levels in the County's school sixth forms. It does not include data on those West Sussex students who have undertaken their post 16 courses at either FE colleges or the 6th Form College in Horsham, or those who have travelled out of county to complete their post 16 courses in 6th Form Colleges or independent schools elsewhere. For those who have studied in West Sussex schools, A level results remain in line with those achieved nationally in 2021 albeit the proportion gaining the higher grades in 2021 was lower than that seen nationally.

Table 11: 2021 A level grades achieved in West Sussex school 6th Forms



3.8 During the period of Covid, West Sussex’s secondary schools have worked collaboratively to ensure that, as far as is possible, schools have remained open for face to face learning. The levels of attendance in secondary schools across West Sussex remained high throughout the pandemic and were the highest in England with attendance during the second half of the autumn term 2020 exceeding an average of 90%. Schools have made effective use of technology and the planning of lessons and interactions to run virtually alongside face to face teaching. Fourteen of the County’s secondary schools and academies have engaged with the local authority ‘Turning the Tide’ project on tackling the achievement gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged peers during the pandemic.

4 Challenges to be overcome from Covid

4.1 Covid has had a significant impact on schools and pupils. Nationally, it is being acknowledged that some children have fallen behind their trajectory of progress. In West Sussex, previous weaknesses in the achievement of disadvantaged children have been magnified and the perception of some headteachers is that the greatest impact has been on the youngest children. Ofsted acknowledges the challenge amongst the youngest learners who, without face to face teaching, have missed out on the learning of some of the basic skills and knowledge they need to successfully access the curriculum demands they face. Several research studies have similarly pointed to a loss of learning through the pandemic with [Mckinsey](#) suggesting that students could be up to 5 months behind in mathematics and 4 months in reading. The [OECD](#) suggests that while this potential learning loss may only be temporary, other elements that happen in the absence of traditional schooling, such as the curbing of educational aspirations or the disengagement from the school system, will have a long-term impact on students’ outcomes. [Ofqual](#) cites evidence from 10 studies suggesting that, when assessed during the autumn term of 2020, primary school pupils were generally a month or so behind expectations with disadvantaged primary school students being disproportionately behind. Research suggests some indication that primary school students were further behind expectations in mathematics than in reading and that younger primary school students were further behind expectations than older ones. The research also suggested that some older primary school students were actually ahead of expectations in reading.

- 4.2 Much of this research is difficult to quantify in relation to national standards and outcomes. This lack of quantifiable impact will remain until such times that the national tests and examinations are re-introduced or local authorities are given the mandate to moderate school and teacher led assessment.

5 Implications for the local authority

- 5.1 The local authority, whilst having limited direct responsibility for accelerating the learning of pupils and students, does have a responsibility for championing the rights of all children to achieve as well as they can. This is driven through ambition, a strategy and influence. It is not driven through direct delivery which is outside the statutory role and responsibility of a local authority.
- 5.2 Through our established strategies for [School Effectiveness 2018-22](#) and [SEND & Inclusion 2019-24](#), the local authority's ambition and influence is being implemented in targeted ways through training, support and intervention to improve outcomes for children and young people. By the end of the autumn term 2021, and following the reintroduction of Ofsted inspections of schools, the number of schools and children attending schools that are deemed good or outstanding has risen further from the 87.6% in March 2020 when Ofsted inspections were paused, and now sits at 88.39%. Almost 88% of children in West Sussex now attend schools and academies rated Good or Outstanding, the highest figure in over five years. Through our SEND & Inclusion Strategy, the local authority is sharing inclusion data and is challenging schools on performance and provision for particular groups of pupils including those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or have SEND. The collaboration between the local authority, our schools and academies, and the Durrington Research School in tackling the teaching and leadership to close the disadvantaged gap will continue to challenge underachievement.
- 5.3 The local authority is about to embark on a major new strategy for Education and Skills to set the ambition and drive for education and learning to cover the next four years. Central within this will be to draw together existing strategies on the effectiveness of schools and both SEND & Inclusion, but also to set out a strategy for the Early Years, for tackling the barriers facing disadvantaged children, overcoming the challenges of transition, and securing skills and pathways into education, employment or training post 16. A key focus will be to reflect on the different challenges faced across the Districts and Boroughs, with a much greater oversight of the children's learning journey from birth through into adulthood. There is no doubt in the level of challenge we all face but also no doubt in the commitment of all those responsible for children in West Sussex, that this is a challenge that can only be addressed through collaboration and engaging together.

6. Resources

- 6.1 The Council has provided the required and appropriate resources through the budget setting process for this part of the service.
- 6.2 In June 2020 the government announced a one-off universal £650 million catch-up premium for the 2020/21 academic year to ensure that schools had the support they needed to help all pupils make up for missed learning due

to COVID-19. Out of this national allocation £9.393m was allocated to all the schools within the county.

- 6.3 In February 2021, a further one-off £302m recovery premium for the 2021/22 academic year was also announced by the Department for Education. This grant is to be paid in four payments. To date only the first two payments have been announced and these have included a further £1.421m for West Sussex Schools.

7. Issues for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to consider the information in this report and the evidence provided by the subject matter expert at the meeting on the County Council's approach to achievement and attainment of Children in West Sussex and how the plans and actions being taken are designed to contribute to championing high achievement for all children.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Not applicable – this is a report to provide detail to the Committee of current work that is underway. A consultation will be carried out as part of the development of the Education and Skills Strategy at the appropriate time.

9. Risk Implications and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Attainment gap for disadvantaged children widening and therefore not achieving their full potential	Attainment gap for disadvantaged children at Key Stage 2 is a key performance indicator within Our Council Plan. Through the established strategies for School Effectiveness 2018-22 and SEND & Inclusion 2019-24 , the local authority's ambition and influence is being implemented in targeted ways through training, support and intervention to improve outcomes for children and young people. A strategy for Early Years will also be included within the Education and Skills Strategy that will be developed later this year, recognising the importance of school readiness to enable children to successfully transition into school. This is core to addressing some of the challenges faced by children who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs.

10. Other Options Considered

- 10.1 Not applicable – this is a report for information.

11. Equality Duty

- 11.1 Every child has the right to a good start in life and should not be discriminated against due to learning needs, disabilities, gender or race.

12. Human Rights Implications

- 12.1 All children and young people have the right to an appropriate education that meets their individual learning needs and which supports their emotional and mental wellbeing.

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Background Papers - None