

The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of  
**Education, Children's Services and Skills 2013/14**

# East of England

regional report





Peterborough

Norfolk

King's Lynn

Norwich

Great Yarmouth

Downham Market

Lowestoft

Cambridgeshire

Mildenhall

Cambridge

Stowmarket

Suffolk

Ipswich

Bedford

Central Bedfordshire

Dunstable

Stevenage

Braintree

Colchester

Luton

Ware

Essex

Hemel Hempstead

Chelmsford

Hertfordshire

Watford

Brentwood

Southend-on-Sea

Southend-on-Sea

Thurrock

# Summary

The East of England stands out for the variability of provision and outcomes for different groups of pupils, with lower outcomes for poorer pupils. A child starting out in the East of England has a better than average chance of attending a good or outstanding early years provider. However, the chance of that child going on to a primary school that is at least good is among the lowest in the country. This continues into secondary school, where the chance of attending a good or outstanding school declines further. The prospect of finding good provision after secondary education reduces again: the quality of further education and skills providers in the region is the lowest in the country. However, this journey depends almost entirely on where the child lives. In Hertfordshire, the proportions of good or outstanding providers across the primary and secondary phases are above the national levels but in Norfolk and Suffolk they are below.

There is, however, reason to be optimistic. There has been a six percentage point increase this year in the proportion of good or outstanding primary schools in the region, which demonstrates a marked rate of improvement. Unfortunately this has not been replicated in the secondary phase, where the proportion of schools that are at least good has remained virtually static. Worse still, and in line with the national picture, the proportion of inadequate secondary schools has increased.

If we consider the standards children attain, again we see considerable variability. Children in the early years and at the end of Key Stage 1 attain outcomes similar to national levels.<sup>1</sup> However, while there has been relatively good improvement at Key Stage 2 in 2013/14, outcomes are just below the national level. At age 16, the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics is in line with the national level and has dropped less than in any other region this year. However, while children from an affluent family are likely to achieve outcomes that are broadly in line with the national level, their less advantaged classmates fare much worse. Children living in prosperous Hertfordshire attain good outcomes across all key stages, whereas those living in Peterborough, Luton, Suffolk and Norfolk achieve below national levels.

1. *Local area interactive tool*, Department for Education; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait). All attainment and progress data is provisional data for 2013/14 unless otherwise specified.

Schools need to focus on improving rates of progress between key stages in order to raise the standards pupils attain at the end of each key stage. This requires school leaders, including governors, to pay close attention to improving the quality of teaching. National and local leaders of education are an important driver of this improvement, but the East of England has too few in the areas that need them the most.<sup>2</sup>

The picture is no better for the region's most vulnerable children. The proportion of children's homes that are at least good is below the national level. Cambridgeshire has improved the overall effectiveness of its services for children in need of help and protection from inadequate to good. However, Norfolk's children's services remain inadequate and subject to intervention from the Department for Education (DfE).



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2. List published by National College for Teaching and Leadership; [http://apps.nationalcollege.org.uk/s2ssd\\_new](http://apps.nationalcollege.org.uk/s2ssd_new).

# State of the region

## Early years provision provides a firm foundation

1. At 86%, the proportion of good or outstanding childcare providers in non-domestic settings in the East of England is the second highest in the country. The proportion of all early years providers that are at least good is also above the national level. This good provision for the youngest children is beginning to translate into better outcomes. The proportion of children in the region attaining a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage increased substantially in 2013/14 and is now just above the national level. Hertfordshire and Thurrock are in the top 25% of all local authorities for this measure.

## Primary schools improving, but still a way to go

2. There has been a six percentage point increase in the proportion of good and outstanding primary schools since 2012/13, with the region improving at a faster rate this year than was seen nationally. Nearly all local authorities in the East of England

contributed to this increase. Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock each showed a substantial rise in the proportion of children attending a primary school that was at least good in 2013/14 (see Table 1).

3. Despite this improvement, at 77% the proportion of good or outstanding primary schools in the East of England is the lowest in the country. Five of the 11 local authorities in the region – Norfolk, Suffolk, Southend-on-Sea, Essex and Thurrock – are in the bottom quartile nationally for the proportion of children attending schools that are at least good. Only Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, local authorities that are all in the west of the region, are in the top half of the country for this measure.
4. Nearly 105,000 pupils (23% of children in the region) attend primary schools that are not yet good enough (see Figure 1). However, this represents a seven percentage point improvement between August 2013 and August 2014, meaning that over 30,000 more children are now in primary schools that are at least good.

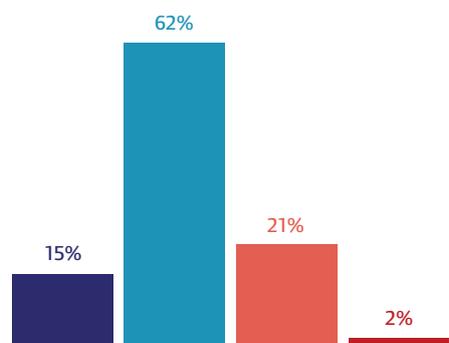
**Table 1: Percentage of primary and secondary pupils attending good or outstanding schools by local authority in the East of England**

Primary schools				Secondary schools			
Rank*	Local authority (education)	2014 %	Change from 2013 (%points)	Rank*	Local authority (education)	2014 %	Change from 2013 (%points)
6	Bedford	95	▼ -1	14=	Thurrock	93	▲ 1
24=	Central Bedfordshire	89	▲ 4	46=	Luton	83	▼ -1
60=	Hertfordshire	84	▲ 7	62=	Hertfordshire	79	▲ 5
91=	Peterborough	80	▲ 20	67=	Bedford	77	▼ -2
110=	Luton	76	▲ 6	82=	Essex	74	▲ 2
110=	Cambridgeshire	76	▲ 9	82=	Suffolk	74	▲ 1
119=	Thurrock	74	▲ 14	92=	Central Bedfordshire	72	▲ 16
119=	Essex	74	▲ 4	102=	Southend-on-Sea	69	▲ 1
125=	Southend-on-Sea	73	▲ 13	105=	Peterborough	68	▲ 14
131=	Suffolk	71	▲ 5	118=	Norfolk	63	▲ 1
131=	Norfolk	71	▲ 8	126	Cambridgeshire	56	▼ -23

\*Rank refers to the 2014 placing in relation to all 150 local authorities in England (excluding Isles of Scilly and City of London which each contain only one school).

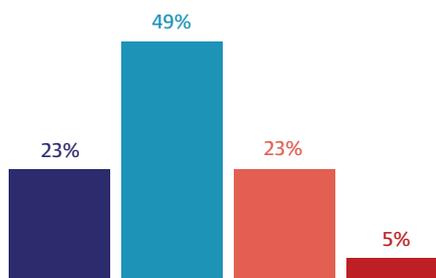
**Figure 1: Inspection outcomes by proportion of pupils, children or learners at 31 August 2014**

**Primary schools**



Overall effectiveness of primary schools in the East of England, latest inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (% of pupils).

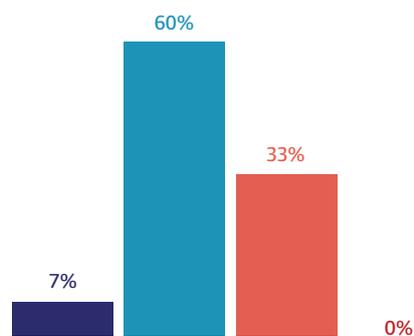
**Secondary schools**



Overall effectiveness of secondary schools in the East of England, latest inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (% of pupils).

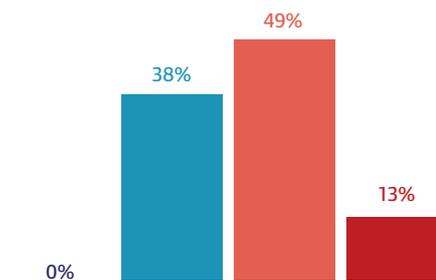


**Colleges**



Overall effectiveness of colleges in the East of England, latest inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (% of learners).

**Safeguarding**



Effectiveness of local authority safeguarding arrangements in the East of England, latest inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (% of children).



Explore inspection data directly at [dataview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk). Data View is a digital tool that allows Ofsted inspection data to be viewed in a simple and visual way. You can compare and contrast performance in inspections between regions, local authorities and parliamentary constituencies across all remits that Ofsted inspects.

## Secondary schools improvement is uneven

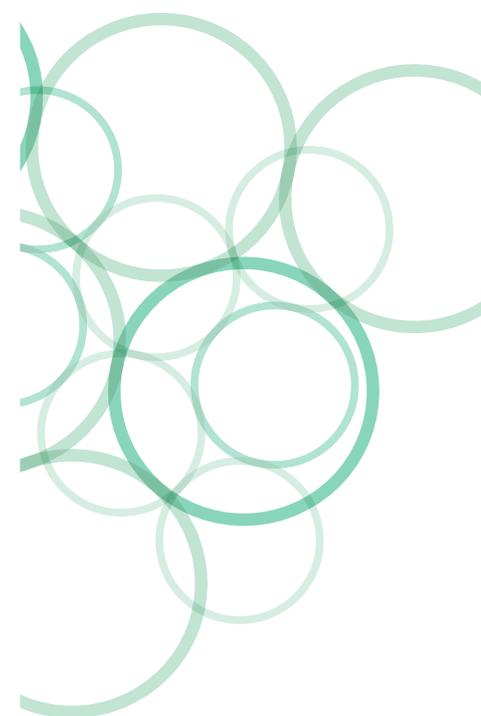
5. With no change since last year, at 70%, the overall proportion of secondary schools that are at least good in the East of England is slightly below the national level. However, there is considerable variation. Eight of the region's 11 local authorities improved their proportion of pupils attending good or outstanding schools. Three of these (Hertfordshire, Central Bedfordshire and Peterborough) made considerable gains.
6. While over a quarter of a million young people in the region attend secondary schools that are at least good, over 97,000 do not. Proportionately, children in Bedford, Hertfordshire, Luton and Thurrock are most likely to go to a good or outstanding secondary school and those in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Peterborough and Southend-on-Sea are least likely. Local authorities, academy chains and schools' senior leaders need to be more ambitious for their pupils and learn from good practice to improve the quality of secondary schools in these areas.

## Special schools are doing well

7. At 89%, the region is just below the national level for special schools judged good or outstanding. In these schools, high quality professional development ensures that staff have a detailed understanding of their pupils' needs. Staff adopt a range of teaching strategies and take a holistic, multi-agency approach to ensuring that their pupils make progress.

## Children from poorer backgrounds are served least well

8. Where a pupil lives in the East of England makes a great difference to the quality of schooling they are likely to receive. Disturbingly, only 60% of schools serving the most deprived parts of the region are good or outstanding, compared with 87% of schools serving the least deprived areas. A child in the most deprived area is three times more likely than a child in the least deprived area to go to a school that is less than good. But there are examples across the region of outstanding schools serving the most deprived areas from which others can learn. These include numerous primary schools but only seven secondary schools, including Denbigh High School in Luton and Burnt Mill Academy in Essex. Schools, local authorities, academy chains and the new Regional Schools Commissioner must maintain a relentless focus on ensuring that all children benefit from the opportunities a good education provides.



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9. Ofsted plays its part in challenging inequality between different groups and promoting greater ambition for the poorest children. During all school inspections, inspectors look at how well schools are supporting economically disadvantaged pupils and report on this. Additionally, in January 2014, Her Majesty's Inspectors undertook a review of outcomes in Southend-on-Sea for children eligible for free school meals. This authority had the largest gap in GCSE outcomes between pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils in 2012/13 in the region. The review found that expectations of what disadvantaged pupils can achieve were too low. The local authority had not focused its support and challenge well enough and too many schools had yet to make a difference to outcomes. This was despite central funding being made available through the pupil premium specifically to improve the achievement of these pupils. Although DfE data is not yet published, early results from the local authority indicate that in 2013/14 there has been a reduction in the attainment gap at Key Stage 2. Ofsted will maintain its focus on this group of pupils and work with all local authorities in the region to ensure that the gap narrows rapidly.

### Schools requiring improvement – a mixed picture

10. Her Majesty's Inspectors in the East of England have carried out 254 monitoring visits during 2013/14 to schools judged to require improvement. The seriousness with which schools are responding to the greater expectations of the 'requires improvement' grade can be seen in the higher proportion being judged at least good at the following inspection. Since September 2013, 71% of schools previously judged as requires improvement, both overall and for leadership and management, improved to at least good (compared with 67% nationally).
11. A common feature of these improving schools is an unrelenting focus on improving teaching, with coaching and mentoring to make this happen. Leaders ensure that there is a coherent link between their self-evaluation, school improvement planning and performance management. Governors play a strategic role, augmented by first-hand knowledge of what is going on in their schools and seek training to understand data and, therefore, ask the right questions of school leaders. The development of middle leaders to enable them to lead their areas effectively also contributes strongly to improvement.
12. Although schools that previously required improvement are getting better, this is counteracted by too many secondary schools declining in effectiveness. While the proportion of previously good primary schools that declined in their effectiveness reduced from 21% at 31 August 2013 to 17% at 31 August 2014, the proportion of secondary schools that declined from good increased from 18% to 22% over the same period. A common feature of these schools is a failure of senior leaders to take action to prevent a fall in standards. The quality of teaching is inconsistent, with low expectations and not enough challenge, especially for higher ability pupils. This is compounded by ineffective use of information about prior learning which fails to provide these pupils with the flying start they need in Year 7. Frequently, these schools are over-generous in their self-evaluation and rely too much on historic data to identify their current effectiveness. They miss what is needed now to

improve their pupils' education. Governance is also a common weakness in these schools, as are other aspects of leadership, for example of subjects.

13. While there are schools that require improvement right across the East of England, higher numbers are clustered around some areas. These include the urban areas of Peterborough, King's Lynn, Norwich and Ipswich. Additionally, and echoing the findings of Ofsted's 2013 report 'Unseen children', many weak schools are clustered around the coastal areas centred on Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Clacton and Southend-on-Sea.<sup>3</sup> In 15 of the region's parliamentary constituencies, at least 30% of schools are inadequate or require improvement.<sup>4</sup> That is more than 10 percentage points worse than the national level. Children growing up in these areas have only a seven in 10 chance of attending a good school. In Clacton over 60% of schools are less than good – the lowest proportion of any constituency in the region. Further notable clusters of schools that require improvement are also located in the south east of the region in locations bordering Greater London. Ofsted will focus its attention on these areas over the next year.

### More children in inadequate secondary schools

14. Currently, there are 70 inadequate primary and secondary schools in the East of England; 27,000 children are receiving a poor standard of education. At 3% of all schools, this is the same as the national level. Of these schools, 58 became inadequate this year. However, virtually all inadequate schools re-inspected in 2013/14 improved in their effectiveness. While schools judged inadequate are being supported well, more needs to be done to prevent them falling into the spiral of decline in the first place through better oversight, support and intervention. Inadequate primary schools improve quicker than secondary schools – half of the primary schools inspected during 2013/14 improved to become good or outstanding, whereas just one previously inadequate secondary school was able to make this journey.
15. The number of pupils in inadequate primary schools reduced by nearly 3,500 in 2013/14 and is now just over 10,000. Children in Essex, which has the largest school population in the region, make up 40% of this number. However, Essex took its responsibilities in this area seriously by issuing the largest number of statutory warning notices of any local authority in the region this year (23). The situation in the region's secondary schools is worsening. There are 20 inadequate secondary schools attended by nearly 17,000 young people – a substantial increase from the 11,000 last year. In one local authority, Southend-on-Sea, 23% of secondary age pupils attend inadequate schools. On the face of it, Southend-on-Sea is one of the highest-performing local authorities at GCSE. However, this picture of performance is bolstered

3. *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on* (130155), Ofsted, 2013; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130155](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130155).

4. Broxbourne, Colchester, Ipswich, Rayleigh and Wickford, Peterborough, Harlow, Broadland, North West Norfolk, Waveney, Great Yarmouth, South West Norfolk, Rochford and Southend East, North East Cambridgeshire, South Basildon and East Thurrock, and Clacton.



by the grammar schools in the town that import a very large proportion of their pupils from outside the area. This leaves a large number of local children, often the most deprived, to suffer poor education in too many of the non-selective schools.

16. Common weaknesses in the region's inadequate schools include:
  - low expectations of pupils, in some cases particularly boys
  - ineffective support to improve teaching, frequently compounded by inaccurate self-assessment of the quality of teaching
  - not using data to track pupils' progress or link teachers' pay progression with impact on outcomes
  - not making effective use of the considerable funding to support underachieving and low-income groups.
17. The capacity of subject leaders to do their jobs well is also a weakness, particularly when senior leaders do not hold them to account. This is underpinned by ineffective training for governors who do not challenge the information they are given or promote improvement at a fast enough pace.

### Too early to tell the difference autonomy is making

18. The proportion of schools that have become academies has increased rapidly across the East of England. In 2009/10, there were only 17 secondary academies in the region; now there are 298, making up 74% of all secondary schools. However, this has not been evenly spread across the region.
19. There is little correlation between the proportion of secondary schools that are academies and the effectiveness of secondary schools in different parts of the region. Cambridgeshire now has the lowest proportion of good or outstanding secondary schools in the region but the highest proportion of secondary schools that are academies. Thurrock has the highest proportion of secondary schools that are at least good and the second highest proportion of secondary schools that are academies.<sup>5</sup> While Luton has the lowest proportion of secondary schools that are academies, it has the second highest proportion of secondary schools judged to be at least good.
20. Only Norfolk, Hertfordshire and Southend-on-Sea have a markedly higher proportion of academies judged good or outstanding compared with all secondary schools. In all other authorities, the difference is negligible. The challenge for the recently appointed Regional Schools Commissioner, who oversees the performance of academies, will be to get all academies to be as good as the best.

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5. Data on number and types of schools is from an Edubase extract on 3 September 2014.

21. In total there are 590 academies in the region. Of these, 126 have not yet been inspected. Of the 392 converter academies inspected, 86% are good or outstanding, while 47% of the 72 sponsor-led academies are good or better. This is not surprising given that broadly only good or outstanding schools are eligible to become converter academies, while poorly performing schools become academies through the sponsor route.
22. There are only 15 academy trusts operating five or more schools in the region. Although we are seeing examples of how trusts are beginning to make a difference, it is too soon to be able to draw any meaningful conclusions about the impact trusts are having as a group. The four largest trusts in the region, and the effectiveness of their academies, are set out in Table 2.

**Table 2: Number of academies and inspection outcomes for the four largest academy trusts in the East of England**

	No. of academies	Not yet inspected	Good or outstanding	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Active Learning Trust	11	10	0	1	0
Academies Transformation Trust	11	5	3	3	0
Ormiston Academy Trust	13	6	6	1	0
Academies Enterprise Trust	15	0	8	6	1

## Improving outcomes, but more still to do

23. The East of England is seeing improvements in outcomes for primary school pupils. Data for 2013/14 shows a six percentage point increase in the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1. This was the largest rise of any of the regions, although at 73% overall it remains a little below the national level.
24. At Key Stage 1, the East of England was the joint highest performing region this year, with the proportion of pupils achieving Level 2 or above in writing (87%), speaking and listening (91%) and mathematics (93%) all above the national levels (see Figure 3). In reading (90%) and science (91%), performance was in line with national levels. Hertfordshire is in the top quartile nationally for these measures, while Peterborough and Luton are in the bottom quartile.

**Table 3: Key Stage 1 attainment in the East of England compared with the national level**

	Proportion of pupils achieving Level 2 or above (%)	
	East of England	England
Reading	90	90
Writing	87	86
Mathematics	93	92
Speaking and listening	91	89
Science	91	91

- 25. Encouragingly, the East of England has seen the joint highest percentage point increase of pupils attaining at least Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 between 2012/13 and 2013/14. However, at 77%, the proportion remains slightly below the national level.
- 26. In 2012/13, the proportion of pupils making expected progress between Key Stages 1 and 2 was a substantial weakness in the region. Eight of the 11 local authorities were in the bottom quartile nationally for progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2013/14, this position improved slightly: now six local authorities are in the lowest quartile for the proportion of pupils who make expected progress in writing and mathematics, but weaknesses in pupils' progress in reading remain a concern in eight local authorities.

**Figure 2: Pupil attainment at ages five, seven, 11 and 16**



Data for 2014 is provisional  
 Benchmark levels: Early Years Foundation Stage – achieving a good level of development (%)  
 Key Stage 1 – achieving Level 2+ reading (%)  
 Key Stage 2 – achieving Level 4+ reading, writing and maths (%)  
 Key Stage 4 – achieving at least 5 GCSEs A\* to C or equivalent including English and mathematics (%)  
 All attainment and progress data are provisional data for 2013/14 unless otherwise specified.  
 Source: Local authority interactive tool, Department for Education; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait).

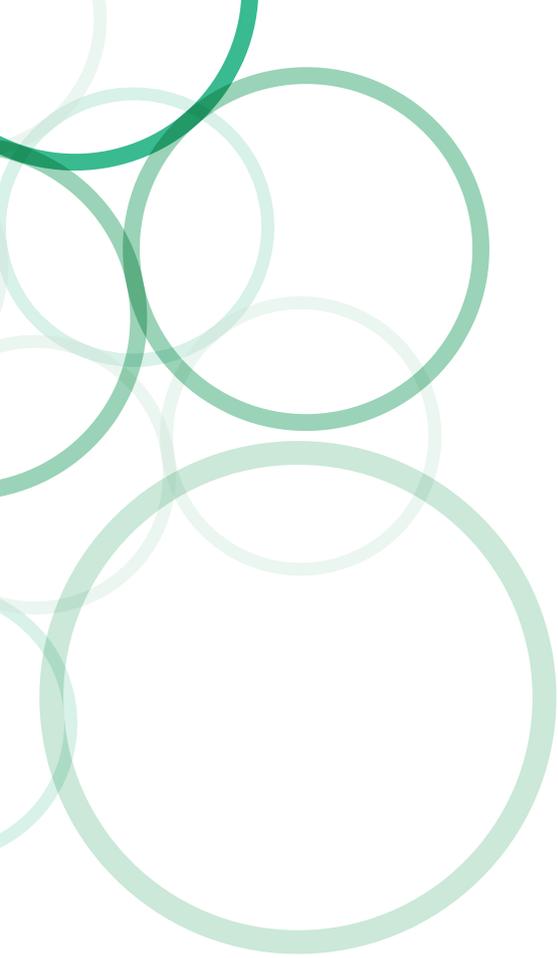
Explore how children and young people performed in assessments and tests at different ages and in different regions through our online regional performance tool; <http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk/regional-performance>.

27. These relatively poor rates of progress explain why Key Stage 2 outcomes in 2013/14 remained below the national level in all but three local authorities in the region: Hertfordshire, Southend-on-Sea and Essex. The Key Stage 2 performance of Luton, Peterborough, Suffolk, Norfolk and Bedford is particularly poor. To improve this, school leaders and teachers will need to have higher aspirations for what pupils can achieve and support them in doing so by improving the quality of teaching.
28. Several major policy changes had a large negative impact on the national GCSE results this year. The benchmark proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics nationally, for example, declined from 60.8% in 2012/13 to 56.1% in 2013/14; a drop of 4.7 percentage points. The East of England suffered the smallest fall of any region (3.3 percentage points); it achieved 56.5%, making it the third highest-achieving region in 2013/14, behind London and the South East. However, this was mainly achieved due to strong outcomes in four higher-attaining local authorities: Hertfordshire (65.8%), Southend-on-Sea (61.8%), Thurrock (57.4%) and Central Bedfordshire (56.4%). The other seven local authorities were below the national level and some, for example Peterborough, Bedford, Suffolk and Norfolk, were significantly so.
29. The proportion of pupils making expected progress in secondary schools in English and mathematics is closer to national levels in far more local authorities than found in primary schools. However, if the region is going to improve outcomes for its children and young people further then this too needs to increase across all areas of the region. For English, only Hertfordshire is in the top quartile of all local authorities for the proportion of pupils making expected progress. Bedford and Suffolk are in the bottom quartile. For mathematics, the picture is a little better: Luton, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Hertfordshire are all in the top quartile for the proportion of pupils making expected progress; Peterborough is in the bottom quartile. Overall, the rate of progress is a little above national rates.

## Disadvantaged pupils are not served well in the East of England

30. Despite being a relatively affluent region, the East of England serves children from low-income families badly. Data for 2013/14 is not yet available, but based on 2012/13 figures, four of the 11 local authorities (Central Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk) are in the bottom quartile for outcomes at Key Stage 2 for pupils eligible for free school meals. Only 54% of these children from low-income families achieved the national benchmark of Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2. This is the lowest of all the regions in the country and 22 percentage points below outcomes for all pupils nationally.





31. Similarly, GCSE outcomes at age 16 are too low for pupils eligible for free school meals. All but four local authorities (Bedford, Essex, Hertfordshire and Luton) are in the bottom quartile nationally for outcomes at Key Stage 4. Only 32% of 6,600 pupils from low-income families achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics, compared with 38.1% nationally for this group and 61% for all pupils. This is the joint lowest outcome in the country with the South West region. Worryingly, in four local authorities this proportion declined from 2011/12.<sup>6</sup> Only Luton exceeded the national level for the proportion of children eligible for free school meals attaining at least five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics. All but one local authority in the region have attainment gaps wider than the national level, with Southend-on-Sea having the widest gap between children eligible for free school meals and their more affluent peers.<sup>7</sup>
32. There are more than 6,000 looked after children in the region. They face significant challenges: they are much more likely than their peers to be excluded from school; more than two-thirds have special educational needs; and mental health and emotional well-being are issues of concern for 39%. In 2012/13, the East of England Key Stage 2 results for looked after children were the worst in the country in mathematics and writing, and second worst in reading. Only 14% of looked after children achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics in 2012/13, which was just below the poor national figure of 15%. In 2014/15 Her Majesty's Inspectors in the East of England are focusing on looked after children in Ofsted inspections and challenging local authorities and virtual headteachers to improve on these poor outcomes.

## Leaders setting expectations and driving improvement

33. An uncompromising focus by senior leaders on improving teaching and developing leaders at all levels helps schools to improve their effectiveness. Leaders set the vision, ambition and expectations for what they want their children and their school to achieve. Despite improving since last year, the region still has the lowest proportion of schools with good or outstanding leadership and management (81%). Schools in the East of England have to focus relentlessly on improving this, particularly in secondary schools where, in line with the national picture, leadership is weaker than in primary schools. There is some cause for optimism: of the schools previously judged inadequate for overall effectiveness, 64% now have good or better leadership. It is this quality of leadership that is crucial to the continuing improvement needed in such schools.

6. Hertfordshire (-0.5%), Thurrock (-10%), Norfolk (-5.8%), Central Bedfordshire (-1.3%).

7. *Local authority interactive tool*, Department for Education; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait). Data on the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 relate to 2012/13 unless otherwise stated.

34. Governors must also be diligent in discharging their duties effectively and challenging their schools to improve. Inspection reports of schools judged as requires improvement frequently cite the need for governors to have a secure understanding of the progress of different groups and to check the impact of their improvement strategies.
35. Her Majesty's Inspectors will maintain a focus on the crucial area of leadership and management and work with schools to help improve leadership across the region. There is good evidence that determined leadership, held to account by rigorous inspection, raises the standard of education in schools where improvement has previously proved difficult.

#### **The impact of leadership – Cherry Tree Primary School, Basildon, Essex**

In March 2012, Cherry Tree, a larger than average primary school with an above-average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, was put in special measures. By October 2013, it was judged to be good in all aspects.

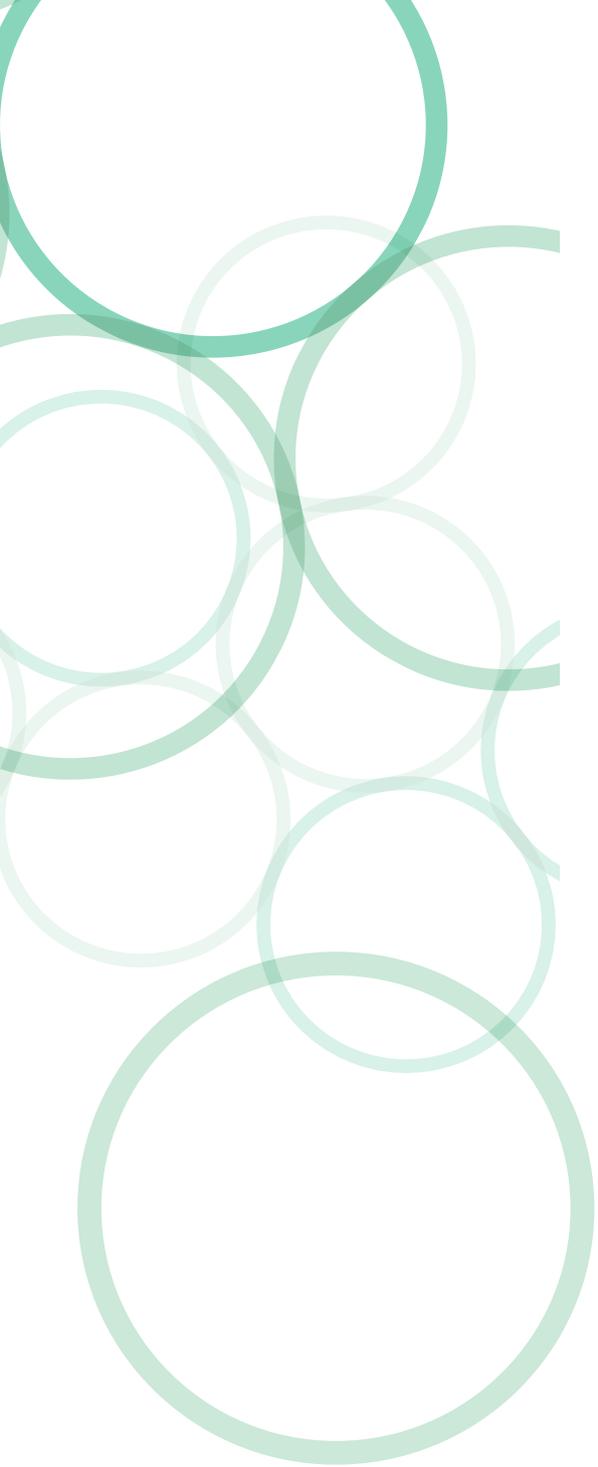
The work of the executive headteacher and the new substantive headteacher in driving forward improvement, especially in the quality of teaching, has resulted in substantially improved standards, behaviour and attendance.

Support provided for governors by both Essex and a national leader of governance means Cherry Tree's governors are much better informed, with first-hand knowledge of the school.

36. System leaders such as national and local leaders of education are important drivers of improvement. Unfortunately, they are few and far between in the East of England, where there is a higher number of schools per leader than in any other region. Combined with geographical spread, this means many schools may not be able to access the challenge and support they need from the best practitioners in an increasingly school-led improvement system. In addition, there is considerable variability across the region. Bedford, Thurrock and Luton have around five schools per system leader while some of the local authorities that need the most support have considerably more: Cambridgeshire and Central Bedfordshire have 13 and Norfolk and Suffolk have 12 schools per system leader. There are hardly any system leaders in some parts of Norfolk and very few in the north of Cambridgeshire. The coastal and mid-region of Suffolk are also poorly served. As recommended in the *Access and achievement* report in June 2013, more needs to be done to ensure that system leaders are deployed in areas of most need.<sup>8</sup> Despite there being too few system leaders currently, there are some good examples of success, as shown in the following case study.



8. *Access and achievement: recommendations*, Ofsted, June 2013; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/surveys/access-and-achievement-recommendations/access-and-achievement-recommendations](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/surveys/access-and-achievement-recommendations/access-and-achievement-recommendations).



### The impact of system leadership – North Denes Junior School, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk

In January 2013 North Denes Junior School, an average-sized primary school with an above-average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, was judged to require improvement. In March 2014 it was judged to be good in all aspects – the first time in the school's history.

The headteacher, appointed shortly before the 2013 inspection, is also the headteacher of the local Ormsey Village Junior School. In partnership with the governors, she drove improvements in teaching with commitment and rigour, despite staffing turbulence. Senior leaders turned the school around, halting the decline in standards. Successful schools focus on a broad and balanced curriculum and in North Denes, led by the deputy headteacher, there is a strong emphasis on music, creative arts and cultural development.

An active chair of the governing body organised wide-ranging training for all governors, empowering them to challenge school leaders. They ensured that performance management of staff was linked to the progress pupils make.

37. Teaching schools are another important plank in the school-led system. At 37, the number of maintained schools per teaching school is average overall, but this masks substantial variation across the region.<sup>9</sup> The number of maintained schools per teaching school in Norfolk, Peterborough, Central Bedfordshire and Suffolk is twice the national average, while Thurrock and Cambridgeshire have nearly half the number of maintained schools per teaching school found nationally. Given that part of a teaching school's role is to provide new, well-trained teachers for the profession, the low density of teaching schools in some of the poorest performing areas of the East of England is a cause for concern.
38. Although the DfE's 2013 data suggest the East of England does not have a worse teacher shortage than other regions, this is an issue that headteachers and local authorities are concerned about.<sup>10</sup> DfE data indicates there are two areas with higher vacancy rates: around north Hertfordshire and north Bedfordshire; and around south-east Cambridgeshire and west Suffolk. Clacton is the only coastal area that has a higher rate of vacancies than the national rate, according to the DfE data. This is likely to be contributing to its very high proportion of schools that are less than good. Norfolk local authority reports a higher rate of vacancies than the DfE data suggests, with particular concerns in Breckland and in the west of the authority.

9. List published by National College for Teaching and Leadership; [http://apps.nationalcollege.org.uk/s2ssd\\_new](http://apps.nationalcollege.org.uk/s2ssd_new).

10. *School workforce in England: November 2013*, Department for Education, April 2014, updated August 2014; [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2013](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2013).

39. Around 4,000 students have been placed in initial teacher education (ITE) provision in the East of England region for 2014/15. This suggests there will be fewer students awarded qualified teacher status in 2015 than in 2012. As pupil numbers grow, combined with teacher shortages reported by local authorities, this is a cause for concern.
40. The quality of ITE provision in the East of England is similar to the quality seen nationally. At 31 August 2014, of the 27 ITE provisions in the region, 25 were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection. Both the primary and secondary ITE provision of Anglia Ruskin University were judged as requires improvement this year.

### Local authorities' role in challenging schools

41. Despite increasing autonomy for schools, local authorities still have a role to play to ensure a good quality of education for children in their areas. Following concerns about the achievement of students in Norfolk, Ofsted inspected its arrangements for school improvement in June 2013 and found them ineffective. At its subsequent re-inspection in June 2014 Norfolk was judged to be effective. In September 2013, Ofsted carried out focused inspections of schools in Suffolk that raised concerns about the high proportion of schools that were less than good. In January 2014, Ofsted judged Suffolk's school improvement function to be ineffective. Suffolk will be re-inspected in 2015.
42. Inspectors also undertook focused inspections in Thurrock following concerns about the low proportion of good or outstanding schools. They found that the support provided by the local authority was improving, but headteachers felt they needed a more proactive school improvement function and a systematic and purposeful approach to developing school-to-school support.
43. There are, however, some good examples of local authorities in the East of England working well with all the schools in their area to improve provision and maintain high standards, for example in Hertfordshire, as shown in the following case study.

## School improvement in Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire stands out in the region as performing substantially above regional and national levels on a wide range of indicators.

In September 2013, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) set up Herts for Learning (HfL), an independent school improvement company with 20% of shares owned by HCC and 80% by 510 of the 526 Hertfordshire schools.

HfL has established a rigorous monitoring routine. Informed by two reviews per academic year and a termly desktop monitoring exercise, all schools, including academies, are rated on a four-point scale. Early years providers are monitored in a similar way. There is also a new 'early alert' system that draws information from different services to give a profile of a school. This ensures that issues such as pupil mobility, staff turnover, governor vacancies and financial matters are seen as part of a bigger picture of the school. Depending on the needs of the school, HfL develops bespoke support packages. These vary from a two-day package for all maintained schools to an extensive support programme.

The local authority believes in setting a strategic direction for its schools and although it welcomes the autonomy of schools it does not hesitate to challenge them where needed. Informed by a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of its schools, Hertfordshire makes effective use of its powers, issuing warning notices as required or working with the DfE in the case of academies.

The percentage of good and outstanding schools in the county has risen from 77% in August 2013 to 83% in August 2014. Attainment for children and young people in Hertfordshire is in the top quartile nationally at most key stages and continues

to improve in relation to the national figures.

The challenge remains to close the gap in outcomes between those who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not. In 2013/14, Hertfordshire approached this aspect through the 'Closing gaps' research project within its Exchanging Excellence programme. This focused on: exploring perceptions of the barriers schools face in closing the gap; identifying good practice in the use of the pupil premium grant; and making recommendations on the basis of this research.<sup>11</sup>

Hertfordshire has also focused its attention on localities such as Stevenage, where the percentage of good and outstanding schools has improved from 56% in August 2013 to 73% in August 2014.

The virtual school in Hertfordshire has developed a range of strategies to improve educational outcomes for its looked after children – a key priority for the county. The educational progress of every looked after child is reviewed on a termly basis. This informs pupil progress meetings held between the lead HfL adviser to the virtual school and each virtual school education adviser. This information is used to support and challenge schools and inform interventions. These include masterclasses in both English and mathematics, with follow-up tuition by HfL advisers, and focused guidance and support for young people and individual schools. The virtual school has established focus groups with key stakeholders, including designated teachers, carers and social workers. They have co-produced a range of information handbooks to support the educational achievement of all looked after children in Hertfordshire.<sup>12</sup>

11. Further information can be found at: [www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/content/exchanging-excellence](http://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/content/exchanging-excellence).

12. The handbooks for the current academic year were launched during the autumn term and will be placed on Hertfordshire County Council's web page; [www.thegrid.org.uk/virtualschool](http://www.thegrid.org.uk/virtualschool).

## Further education and skills

44. In terms of the attainment of post-16 learners, the region continues to perform better than the national level, but variations within the region remain. Hertfordshire and Bedford are in the top quartile for the proportion of post-16 learners achieving a level 3 qualification.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, Peterborough, Norfolk, and Thurrock are in the bottom quartile. Learners from low-income backgrounds, however, do worse than the national level for similar learners. Central Bedfordshire and Norfolk are among the worst in the country for the proportion of students from low-income families achieving a level 3 qualification, while Luton is among the best.
45. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), at 5.1% in 2013, was the joint third lowest in the country and reduced from 2012.<sup>14</sup> Peterborough, at 6.7%, has the highest level of young people who are NEET in the region. Some of the region's local authorities are working well to understand the make-up of their NEET population in order to improve outcomes.

### Essex County Council data-sharing protocol

Essex County Council has established a data-sharing protocol with schools, colleges and other learning providers so that they have information on the cohort of potential learners, their levels of attainment and their aspirations. This is shared with providers, enabling them to respond to these learners' needs more effectively and further reduce the proportion of young people who are either NEET or unknown. With a better understanding of the NEET cohort, and the barriers young people face, funding for two new providers operating in areas of high deprivation has been made available.

46. Fifty-two per cent of young people in the region progress to higher education – below the national level of 54%.<sup>15</sup> Only Hertfordshire is in the top quartile for this measure, with Norfolk, Peterborough and Southend-on-Sea in the lowest quartile.
47. Only 22 of the 34 colleges in the region are judged good or outstanding; this is the lowest proportion nationally.<sup>16</sup> Of the 31 independent learning providers, 19 are good or outstanding. Although this is an improved picture compared with last year when only half the region's independent learning providers were judged good or outstanding, the region remains the lowest in the country for this benchmark. Apprenticeship success rates are the second lowest overall when compared with other regions for achievement within the agreed time.

13. *Local authority interactive tool*, Department for Education; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait).

14. *NEET data by local authority*, Department for Education, June 2013, updated May 2014; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training).

15. Destination entered in 2011/12 of pupils who completed a level 3 qualification in 2010/11. *Destinations of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 pupils: 2011 to 2012*, Department for Education; [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-key-stage-4-and-key-stage-5-pupils-2011-to-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-key-stage-4-and-key-stage-5-pupils-2011-to-2012).

16. This includes general and further education colleges, sixth form colleges and independent specialist colleges. It also includes Writtle College, which is a higher education institution but funded to provide further education provision.

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48. Due to declining performance, several colleges in the region were selected for inspection. Four of these were judged to require improvement whereas previously they had been good colleges. Their decline was mainly because of low or inconsistent success rates, teaching and learning that did not enable students to reach their potential and a lack of challenge, particularly for the most able.
  49. Her Majesty's Inspectors are working with providers judged to require improvement through monitoring visits and seminars. These focus particularly on teaching and learning in English and mathematics, assessment and implementing effective work-related learning. The best providers in the region are sharing their good practice by working with Her Majesty's Inspectors to support other providers.
  50. In 2013/14, Her Majesty's Inspectors worked closely with five colleges and two independent learning providers across the region. In these providers, overall effectiveness was good and outcomes for classroom-based courses were above national rates. However, apprenticeship success rates had declined to below the national rates. In most cases, the decline was because of learners not completing all component parts of their apprenticeship within the agreed time. As a result of Her Majesty's Inspectors' intervention, these providers have taken rapid steps to ensure a better quality experience for future apprentices.
  51. Eight out of 14 further education and skills providers (including one higher education institution offering further education provision) that previously required improvement were judged good in 2013/14. The following case study gives a flavour of some of the actions that helped achieve this.

#### Good practice in further education and skills providers

Apprentices at **West Anglia Training Association** gain the high levels of skills and knowledge required by employers which they apply well in the workplace, making a valuable contribution to the employers' businesses. A majority undertake higher-level study and progress to more responsible jobs.

Nearly three quarters of learners at **Develop**, starting with few or no qualifications and lacking in confidence, go on to further education courses at a higher level, or employment, after their programme.

At **Writtle College**, learners develop excellent practical skills taught by highly specialist and enthusiastic tutors. Learners develop high standards of behaviour, teamwork, conduct and punctuality to enable them to develop a good work ethic.

In **Great Yarmouth College**, excellent leadership from the principal, supported by governors and senior managers, has brought about a very positive culture that focuses more effectively on the needs of students. A clear strategic direction has improved provision for students.

52. In May 2014, Ofsted conducted a review of education and training for the most vulnerable 16–19-year-olds in Peterborough to evaluate and report on how effective provision is for these learners. We reported on how well it meets local needs, raises achievement, increases participation and supports learners' progression to further learning and employment.

### The effectiveness of education and training for 16–19-year-olds in Peterborough

Vulnerable young people are well supported by the local authority. The number of young people who are NEET is reducing, with bold post-16 initiatives on the near horizon, each with the potential to broaden provision for young people. However, the city lacks a strategic approach to planning for all young people. Young people in schools are not always sufficiently well informed to enable them to access vocational programmes best suited to their needs. The local authority's approach to monitoring and supporting schools, colleges and other providers requires improvement to ensure that these partners meet their statutory responsibilities in providing well-informed and impartial careers information, advice and guidance.

## Social care

53. In line with legislation, all children's homes in the region were inspected twice in 2013/14: 68% were good or outstanding. While this was below the national rate of 72%, all services judged inadequate either improved or closed and half of those judged less than good had improved by their next inspection. Driving improvement in children's homes and other social care services for children is a key objective for the region. For example, our targeted work with providers has significantly reduced the number of children's homes without a Registered Manager in place within the timeframe allowed by regulations. We will continue to focus on this area.
54. In November 2013, we introduced a new framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers. Cambridgeshire (which was previously judged inadequate) and Essex are the two local authorities in the region to be inspected so far under this framework and both were judged to be good. These judgements confirm the steady and sustained improvement in the services children receive in both of these local authorities.
55. As a result of these improved inspection outcomes, the proportion of the region's children who live in an area with safeguarding services judged to be good at their last inspection has improved overall. However, no children are living in areas that have been judged outstanding. Further improvements are required, most notably in Norfolk, where both child protection and services for looked after children were judged to be inadequate at their last inspections.
56. We will be publishing our Social Care Annual Report in spring 2015. This will set out the challenges for the sector and the priorities for improvement. For this reason we have not attempted to address social care issues for the region in any detail in this report.

# Regional priorities

57. In order to speed up progress towards the East of England becoming a high-performing region that serves its children and young people well – particularly those from poorer backgrounds – we need to focus on helping pupils and older learners make significant and sustained progress throughout their education. The importance of ensuring higher quality teaching, driven by confident, competent leaders at all levels, cannot be overestimated. Therefore, the regional priorities in education and further education and skills are as follows:

- Embed a culture of high expectations and ambition driven by system leaders and governors. Providers must learn from the good practice in and outside the region and challenge the status quo. This is particularly necessary for raising the attainment of children in Key Stages 2 and 4 in Luton, Peterborough, Suffolk, Norfolk and Bedford.
- Improve teaching to increase the rate of progress children make from one key stage to another, aiming for improvement that is above expected rates. Of particular concern is attainment in primary and secondary schools in Peterborough, Bedford, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Luton.
- Improve outcomes for looked after children and close the gap in outcomes between pupils who are eligible for free school meals and their more affluent peers in all local authorities. At Key Stage 2, Central Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk have the lowest attainment in the region – and a wide gap – for pupils eligible for free school meals. At Key Stage 4, Central Bedfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Southend-on-Sea, Peterborough and Cambridgeshire all have low attainment and large gaps.
- Maintain a strong focus on improving leadership. This should be a top priority for all stakeholders, particularly in areas with a higher density of schools that are less than good. These are often areas with high deprivation. Local authorities should consider creative solutions to target areas with clusters of schools that are not good.
- Improve the quality of post-16 education and training provided by both general further education colleges and independent learning providers. Particularly focus on ensuring better quality apprenticeship provision by widening access and substantially improving completion and success rates.

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