



Annual Report 2012/13

East of England regional report



The East of England is one of the larger geographical regions and is home to a wide variety of industries, including cutting edge bio- and information technology companies. Research and development are large contributors to the region's economy, as are fishing and agriculture.¹ It has the second highest employment rate of any English region, behind only the South East, and the lowest proportion of jobless households. The annual gross disposable household income is also above the UK level.² However, there is a great deal of variation in this affluence, with Hertfordshire being in the top five areas of the country for disposable income and Luton being near the bottom.



¹ Regional profiles: economy – East of England, May 2012, ONS, published 30 May 2012.

² Regional Gross Disposable Household Income [GDHI] 2011, ONS, published 24 April 2013.

Director's summary



Sean Harford,
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Despite the relative affluence of the region, primary school pupils in the East of England have one of the lowest chances in the country of attending a good or outstanding school. Just under a quarter of a million children attend a school that is less than good. Overall, a lower proportion of primary schools are good or outstanding than in every other region and the gap is widening, as the rate of improvement is substantially slower than across the rest of the country. A lower proportion of secondary schools in the region are good or outstanding than in England overall, although there are signs of improvement in the last year. A similar picture is seen in the quality of further education (FE), which has shown an increase in the proportion of learners attending good or outstanding colleges.

Performance of primary schools is among the worst in the country in over half the local authorities in the East of England. Six of the 11 local authorities – Thurrock, Southend-on-Sea, Peterborough, Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire – are within the bottom 10% of all local authorities in England for the proportion of children attending primary schools that are good or outstanding. Only Bedford and Central Bedfordshire are in the top half when measured in this way. Overall, the

gap between the proportion of pupils attending good and outstanding primary schools regionally and nationally is growing.

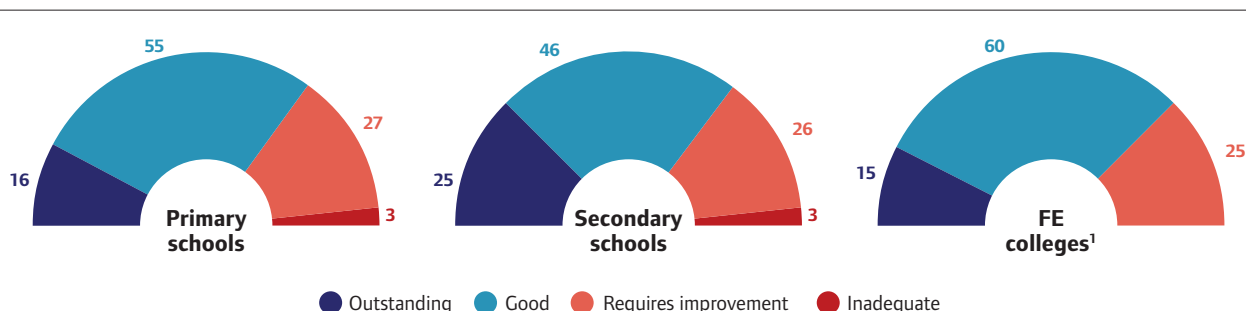
The region's secondary schools continue to lag behind England as a whole, but they have gained some ground by improving faster than has been seen nationally. They are now beginning to close the gap. Less positively, five of the region's local authorities rank in the bottom 40% for the quality of secondary school provision. In the majority of these areas, pupils have at least a one in three chance of attending a school that is less than good.

Leadership and management of schools are weaker in the East of England than in any other region of the country. While 76% of schools in the region are led well, this compares poorly with the national level of 82% and the strongest region, London, where 87% of schools have good or outstanding leadership. This is a key barrier to school improvement in the region and one that must be tackled rigorously.

The performance of colleges in the East of England has improved overall this year. General further education (GFE) colleges improved at a faster rate than was seen nationally but the overall quality is still a little below that for England as a whole. Sixth form colleges in the region remain comparatively strong.

Despite some improvement as weaker providers have ceased to trade this year, the proportion of good or outstanding independent learning providers is lower in the East of England than in any other region. This is a real concern for high quality apprenticeship provision and a threat to the economic growth strategy for the region.

Figure 1: Overall inspection judgements by proportion of pupils for the East of England, as at 31 August 2013



¹ FE colleges includes general further education/tertiary colleges, higher education institutions, independent specialist colleges, sixth form colleges and specialist FE colleges.

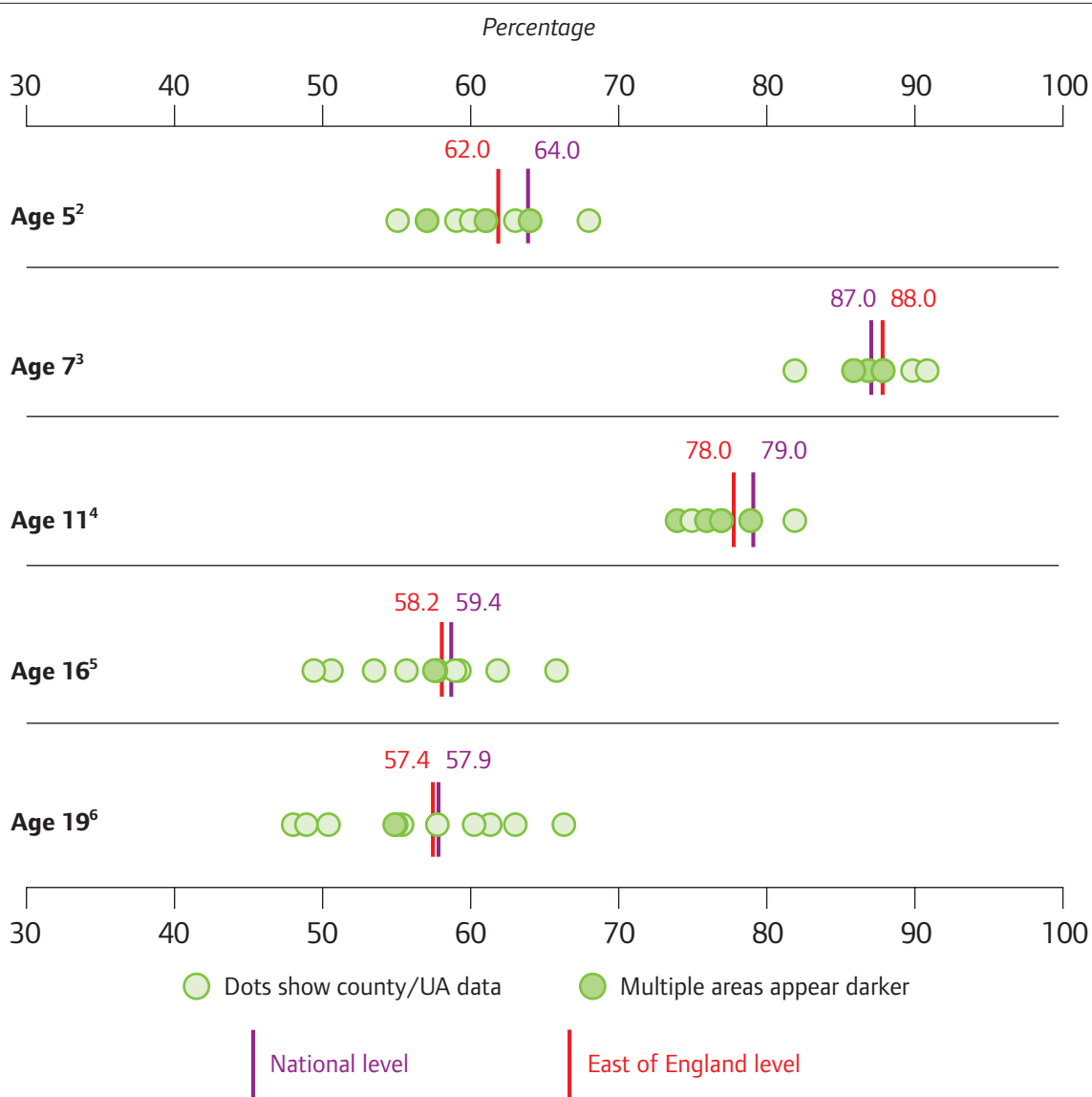


Pupil attainment in the East of England

Outcomes for children and young people across the region are below the national level at the ages of five, 11 and 16.³ At the age of seven, when attainment is gauged solely through teacher assessment, outcomes are better than the national level. This suggests either that

teaching and learning are stronger across the region in Key Stage 1 than in the other age ranges, or that teacher assessment is inflating outcomes in some of these areas. The weak outcomes seen here for children and young people in the region reflect the consequences of continued poor performance by schools in some areas over time. In **Norfolk**, for example, where 37% of primary pupils and 38% of secondary pupils attend schools that are not yet good, the percentage of children who achieve the

Figure 2: Pupil attainment in the East of England at ages 5, 7, 11, 16 and 19 in 2012¹



¹ Visit the regional performance interactive tool on our website to explore these data further and to look at regional comparisons, at: www.ofsted.gov.uk/annualreport1213/regional-performance-2012

² % of children achieving a good Level of development at Early Years Foundation Stage

³ % of pupils attaining at least Level 2 in reading at Key Stage 1 assessments

⁴ % of pupils attaining at least Level 4 in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 assessments

⁵ % of pupils attaining at least five GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*–C, including English and mathematics

⁶ % of pupils attaining a level 3 qualification at age 19



expected level of attainment at the age of 11 was four percentage points below the national level and also four percentage points below by the age of 16. In **Suffolk** and **Peterborough**, the gap to the national level of achievement at Key Stage 2 widens still further by the end of Key Stage 4. Only in **Hertfordshire** are attainment levels maintained above the national level and indeed surpassed as children progress through each of the key stages. Similarly, **Luton** does well by its children and young people: the very large gap between the attainment of children in the town at the age of five and the national average is closed considerably by the time they are 16.

The region performs comparatively better for young people aged 19: the proportion of learners achieving level 3 qualifications was broadly in line with England as a whole.⁴ However, this stronger aggregate performance masks some important differences between individual authorities, with young people in **Hertfordshire** and **Bedford** achieving far stronger outcomes than those in **Thurrock** and **Peterborough**. At A level, intra-regional differences are even starker. For instance, young people in **Southend on Sea** are four times more likely to achieve three or more A grades at A level than their peers in **Thurrock** and three times more than those in **Luton**. A-level performance is also particularly strong in **Cambridgeshire**.

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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		
2013 – Rank	Local authority (education)	2013 – %	2013 – Rank	Local authority (education)	2013 – %
2=	Bedford	95	18	Thurrock	92
32=	Central Bedfordshire	85	44=	Luton	84
84=	Hertfordshire	78	60=	Bedford	79
121=	Luton	71	63=	Cambridgeshire	78
126=	Essex	70	77=	Hertfordshire	74
135=	Cambridgeshire	67	84=	Suffolk	73
139	Suffolk	66	91=	Essex	72
141=	Norfolk	63	105=	Southend-on-Sea	68
145=	Southend-on-Sea	60	116=	Norfolk	62
145=	Peterborough	60	127=	Central Bedfordshire	56
148=	Thurrock	59	133	Peterborough	54

⁴ Local Area Interactive Tool, Department for Education: www.education.gov.uk.

Schools have been too slow to improve or have started from a very low base, so continue to lag behind the rest of the country

It is alarming that only **Bedford** and **Central Bedfordshire** occupy places in the top half of local authorities for the quality of primary schools. More worrying still is the fact that eight of the East of England's local authorities are in the bottom 20%, and all but one of these – **Luton** – compare very poorly with similar councils across the country in the provision of primary education. However, **Thurrock** is heading in the right direction and, from a low base, has demonstrated well above average improvement with its primary schools in the year. The picture for the region at secondary level is more encouraging, with four local authorities making it into the top half of the country, although only one local authority, **Thurrock**, made it into the top 20%.

In response to the challenges presented in the region, and to seek to understand better why the East of England is underperforming in terms of educating its young people, Ofsted conducted focused inspections of schools in **Norfolk** and **Suffolk** in March and September 2013, respectively. Along with telephone surveys of good and outstanding schools not inspected at the time, the inspection outcomes were analysed to gain an understanding of how these local authorities were challenging and supporting the schools to improve. In the case of **Norfolk**, the focused inspections raised so much concern that Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) followed up by carrying out one of the first inspections in the country of the local authority's arrangements for school improvement in June. We found the local authority's actions over time to have been ineffective. For too many years, **Norfolk** schools have provided education that is simply not good enough. Test and examination results have been too low for too long. The local authority has been too slow to challenge weaker schools. As a result, the proportion of children attending good or outstanding schools is much lower than that seen nationally. There is a legacy of underachievement in many schools and, although rising gradually, attainment remains lower than regional and national levels.

Norfolk has seen some improvement over the last year. Its secondary schools have shown the strongest improvement in the region, albeit from a very low base. Clearly, some schools are responding to the tough new agenda and challenging themselves to do better. The local authority has developed a strategy that provides a clear

statement of intent to challenge and support schools to improve. It has begun to challenge more robustly schools that are underperforming by issuing warning notices. However, the improvements at primary level have been modest compared with the rest of the country and the gap has widened over the last four years. One hundred and twenty six primary schools educating over 20,000 children are not yet good enough. Worse still, 8% of secondary schools remain inadequate – twice the proportion of inadequate schools seen nationally. By the end of the year, over 6,000 pupils found themselves attending inadequate primary or secondary schools in the county. This gives us great cause for concern and, as a result, we are monitoring the local authority's progress and will make a return inspection by the end of July 2014 to check whether the children and young people of **Norfolk** are getting a better deal. We are working with the local authority, headteachers and Members of Parliament to help ensure that things improve rapidly – we are not walking away.

The focused inspections in **Suffolk** in September 2013 also gave us cause for concern. Too many of the schools inspected remained less than good and six declined into inadequacy. Additionally, only two improved to become good or better. These outcomes indicate that the slower than average improvement rate of both primary and secondary schools seen in 2012/13 continued. This points to the need for a concerted effort to improve education in the county for the more than 29,000 pupils who attend schools that are not yet good. To support improvement in the county, HMI have provided seminars for all its grade 3 schools, focused on key themes identified by inspections over the year.

The low levels of attainment at each key stage in **Peterborough** are reflected in the weak inspection outcomes. At 9%, the city has the highest proportion of inadequate primary schools in the East of England – three times the regional average and over four times the national – and over 6,000 pupils being educated in schools that are not good enough.

Leadership and management of schools in the East of England lag behind all other regions

As the Chief Inspector pointed out in his Annual Report 2011/12, 'It is leadership that drives improvement by creating the culture and ethos needed in order to push up standards.'⁵ Leadership and management are widely recognised as the biggest factors in driving school

improvement. Unfortunately, inspection evidence shows that school leadership in the East of England is the weakest of all the regions, varies hugely across the region and is particularly weak in the areas where it needs to be strong and effective, especially at the most senior level.

In 13 constituencies,⁶ most of which are relatively disadvantaged, less than two thirds of schools have strong enough leadership and management. Some of these areas have had longstanding issues with poorly performing schools, for example **North East Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Great Yarmouth and Clacton**. This needs to be put right, which is why HMI have focused our 'Getting to good' seminar programme largely on identifying, with schools judged as requires improvement, the key aspects of leadership and management, including strong governance, that need to be improved to overcome the challenges we are faced with in the region's schools.

Our inspection evidence shows that there is huge variation in the effectiveness of leadership in schools within similar areas and circumstances. Some schools have shown that, through strong leadership, radical and sustained improvement can be made.

Three schools bucking the trend through excellent leadership

Less than four years after its predecessor school was in special measures, **Ormiston Victory Academy** in Norfolk has transformed provision and outcomes for students in its local community. The Principal is an outstanding leader with a deep understanding of schools and the systems needed to lead and manage them. She has won the hearts and minds of students and staff alike, inspiring them to aim high. She has built an exceptionally capable team of senior leaders, who constantly strive for improvement. The academy has demonstrated that high aspiration can achieve remarkable results when exceptional leadership sets the highest expectations of its students and staff. The academy was judged outstanding in all areas at its first inspection in May 2013.

St Martin at Shouldham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

near King's Lynn was judged outstanding in March 2013. The school's pursuit of excellence in all its activities is demonstrated by an uncompromising drive to improve and maintain the highest levels of academic progress. This is apparent at all levels of leadership and management. Leaders focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning. They provide focused professional development for all staff, monitoring lessons regularly. Support is particularly good for those that are newly qualified and at an early stage in their careers. In the past, decisive action has been taken when members of staff have been unable to respond to support given. This clear-sighted approach underpins robust performance management that encourages, challenges and supports teachers' improvement.

The headteacher of **Burnt Mill Academy** in Essex provides exceptionally strong and effective leadership, which is driving the significant improvements seen in the academy. She has introduced rigorous systems for improving teaching and this is successful in promoting students' excellent progress. She has also taken decisive action to address any inadequate teaching in the academy. All staff are dedicated to its further improvement and continued success. The senior leadership team are active in ensuring that the systems to track students' progress are used quickly to spot all students who need extra help and making sure that appropriate intervention support is provided for them. The academy is using the pupil premium funding very effectively to provide extra help for designated pupils who are at risk of underachieving.

⁵ The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2011/12, p9 (HC 755), TSO: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/annualreport1112.

⁶ Clacton, North-West Norfolk, South-West Norfolk, Great Yarmouth, Stevenage, Colchester, Peterborough, North-East Cambridgeshire, Rochford and Southend East, South Basildon and East Thurrock, Waveney, Ipswich and Harlow.



The quality of independent learning providers in the region is low

Most authorities in the East of England cite that increasing the number of apprenticeships is a key target in their economic growth strategies. All these strategies identify the need to work with local training providers and colleges to help extend provision where needs are identified in order to meet the economic growth targets.

The most common sector identified for future growth in the region is within science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)-related areas, with a sharp focus on training for higher level skills to support the development of renewable energy technology.

Unfortunately, the quality of independent learning and employer providers in the region – the key suppliers of apprenticeship training – is very low. While they have made some improvement this year, with 64% of learners now at providers that are good or better, the gains are slower than have been made across England, so the East of England has fallen further behind.

To support and challenge the sector to improve, this year we have linked HMI with each provider that has been judged as requires improvement in the region. Through a rigorous analysis of needs based on the latest inspection report, HMI have worked with each provider to sharpen practice and focus on the things that really matter in moving provision on.

Some providers have shown real commitment to improvement and high quality apprenticeship training.

WS Training Ltd is an independent training provider based in Bury St Edmunds. It provides apprenticeship and workplace training for learners predominantly in the East of England. It worked hard on the weaknesses identified at its previous inspection in 2011 and was this year judged to be good. Leaders and managers demonstrate a strong personal commitment to raising standards through the identification and adoption of good training practice that benefits all learners. Senior managers provide a clear and well-communicated vision for improvement that contributes well to improving success rates and standards.

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CITB Construction Skills continued on its path of improvement to excellence this year: it is now rated outstanding. It is the largest provider of construction work-based learning in England. Its headquarters are in King's Lynn, but it operates from sites across the country and works with many FE colleges. It provides top quality teaching, assessment and support for learners that result in high and improving completion and success rates, especially for apprentices. It enables learners to make significant progress relative to their starting points and they gain excellent craft, personal, social and employability skills along the way.