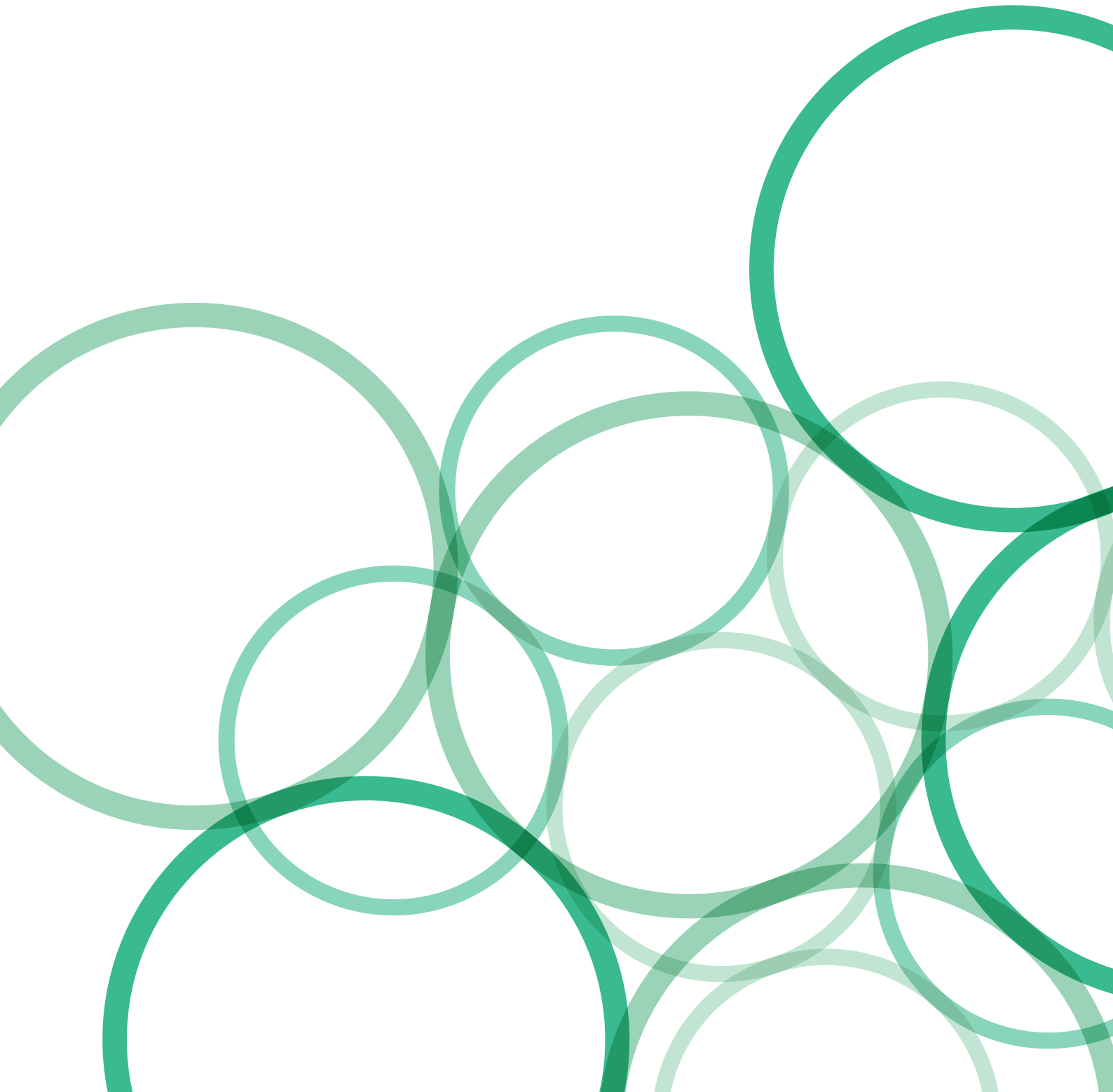


The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of
Education, Children's Services and Skills 2013/14

North West regional report





Summary

The quality of educational provision for too many children and young people in the North West remains a postcode lottery. Educational outcomes for children and learners are improving but there is considerable variation within the region and across the sectors. In particular, there are too many secondary schools that simply are not good enough. The impact on the poorest and most disadvantaged children is the biggest cause for concern. There are no local authorities that deliver entirely good or outstanding levels of provision across both the education and care sectors.

White British young people from poor families get a particularly raw deal. Children who are in the care system tend to get the worst deal of all. These children achieve poor outcomes from the start of their educational journey, and the gap between them and other children widens as they progress through the system. As a result, many poor families and disadvantaged children fall into a cycle of inter-generational educational failure.

Effective system leadership across all sectors is needed to break this cycle of educational failure; however, too often this is absent or uncoordinated. System leaders are drawn from many disparate groups including local authorities, academy trusts, the National College for Teaching and Leadership, teaching schools, colleges and national/local leaders of education (NLEs/LLEs). Some system leaders in the region are making an outstanding contribution to school improvement in the most disadvantaged areas. These leaders are working hard to extend the efficacy of school-to-school support more broadly. However, there are too few outstanding leaders and teachers in the areas where they are most needed. It is rare to find system leaders working together effectively in the areas of significant challenge. There is little evidence that they are making a tangible difference to date. However, signs of improvement are beginning to show in some areas, for example in parts of Knowsley and Halton.

State of the region

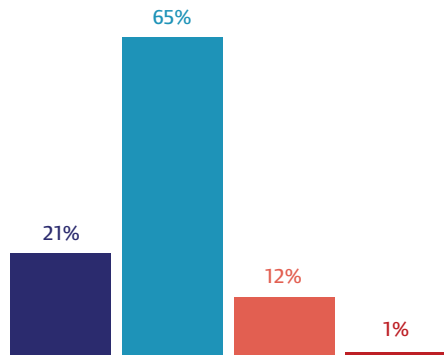
1. Although strong leadership is not found consistently across the region, there are instances of good practice. For example, children have a greater chance of attending a good or outstanding primary school than their peers nationally because of good leadership. However, this is not the case when we look at secondary schools. Leadership in colleges has improved and a high proportion of them provide a good or outstanding level of education.
2. There remains too much variation in the quality of leadership in schools across the North West. Stockport has the highest percentage of leadership and management judged as good or outstanding, at 92%, followed closely by Trafford (91%) and Cheshire East (90%). These contrast with Blackburn with Darwen (80%) and Oldham (79%), where leadership is judged weakest.
3. Not all system leaders are working well enough to support regional improvement because several schools and local authorities remain beset by underperformance. Communication and coordination of effort between the different organisations working to raise standards in schools require improvement. The region has a number of teaching schools and NLEs/ LLEs but these are simply too few in the areas where they are most needed, such as rural and coastal towns. Not all designated system leaders respond to the needs of the most challenged. Those that do are beginning to have an impact; this needs to extend to other high-profile leaders.
4. There is a risk of unchecked expansion of multi-academy trusts. Some have taken on a number of failing schools but, as yet, are unable to evidence that they are bringing about sustained improvement.

Early years

5. Children are not supported well enough in their early years, particularly those who live in poverty and areas of deprivation. Less than half the children in Halton and Blackburn with Darwen reach a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Lancashire, Wirral, St Helens and Stockport are among seven local authorities that provide better opportunities for their youngest children, with more than 60% reaching this standard. This level of achievement, however, is still not good enough for our children. Boys do less well than girls in many areas. For example, in Blackpool, Knowsley, Salford, Sefton and Tameside, girls outperform boys by approximately 20 percentage points.
6. Across local authorities, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged children living in poverty and their peers is significant. In some areas, for example Manchester and Blackburn with Darwen, the gap is small (eight percentage points). However, this is due to low levels of achievement for all children. Some local authorities present high levels of achievement for non-disadvantaged children and so the gaps in performance are significant. In Trafford, for example, there is a 25 percentage point gap and in Lancashire it is 23 percentage points.

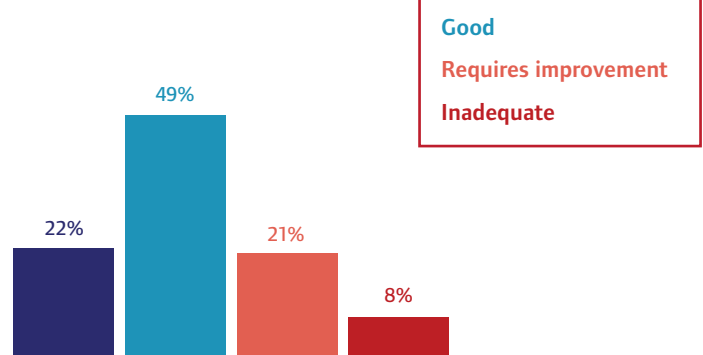
Figure 1: Inspection outcomes by proportion of pupils, children or learners at 31 August 2014

Primary schools



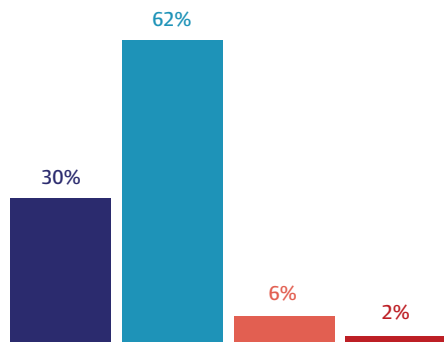
Overall effectiveness of primary schools in the North West, latest inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (% of pupils).

Secondary schools



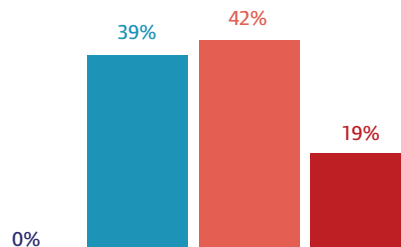
Overall effectiveness of secondary schools in the North West, latest inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (% of pupils).

Colleges



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

Safeguarding



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



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7. The proportion of good or outstanding early years providers in the North West is lower than that seen nationally. Many local authorities have put children's centres at the heart of their early help agenda and have successfully integrated aspects of early childhood services. However, the impact of this varies widely across the region and too many children and their families are not being supported to ensure that they are ready to start school. Most local authorities have recognised the importance of providing two-year-olds from the most disadvantaged families with a good early start, with many parents taking advantage of this offer. The North West has 71 maintained nursery schools attended by over 6,000 children; the vast majority have been judged good or outstanding.

Schools

8. Generally, the quality of primary education in the region is strong: 86% of pupils attend a school that is good or outstanding. Where primary schools have been judged to require improvement they have worked closely with Her Majesty's Inspectors during on-site visits and in seminars and workshops. We have seen an increased proportion of good and outstanding primary schools and a steady rise in standards. However, as is the case in other phases of education, in too many primary schools the gap in attainment between those children eligible for free school meals and their peers remains too large. This means they fall further behind and are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Outcomes remain weaker in the secondary sector.

Table 1: Percentage of primary and secondary pupils attending good or outstanding schools by local authority in the North West

Primary schools				Secondary schools			
Rank*	Local authority (education)	2014 %	Change from 2013 (% points)	Rank*	Local authority (education)	2014 %	Change from 2013 (% points)
3=	Trafford	96	▲ 3	20=	Bury	91	▼ -3
9=	Stockport	93	▲ 6	20=	Trafford	91	▲ 1
12=	Cheshire East	92	▲ 2	37=	Rochdale	85	▲ 12
24=	St. Helens	89	▬ 0	52=	Stockport	82	▲ 10
30=	Wigan	88	▲ 5	55=	Lancashire	81	▲ 4
30=	Sefton	88	▼ -6	65=	Cheshire West and Chester	78	▼ -4
30=	Wirral	88	▲ 3	65=	Cheshire East	78	▲ 1
30=	Manchester	88	▲ 7	67=	Wigan	77	▼ -3
35=	Cumbria	87	▲ 4	67=	Liverpool	77	▼ -4
35=	Lancashire	87	▲ 6	67=	Halton	77	▲ 20
35=	Bolton	87	▲ 1	67=	Knowsley	77	▲ 26
45=	Cheshire West and Chester	86	▲ 5	102=	Wirral	69	▼ -2
45=	Halton	86	▲ 6	105=	Cumbria	68	▲ 5
45=	Liverpool	86	▲ 1	105=	Blackburn with Darwen	68	▬ 0
56=	Knowsley	85	▼ -3	105=	Warrington	68	▼ -8
60=	Bury	84	▲ 4	116=	Manchester	64	▲ 2
60=	Salford	84	▲ 9	116=	Bolton	64	▼ -5
60=	Warrington	84	▲ 5	121=	Salford	59	▲ 12
68=	Rochdale	83	▬ 0	127=	Sefton	55	▼ -1
68=	Blackburn with Darwen	83	▲ 1	138	Tameside	49	▲ 3
79=	Blackpool	81	▲ 5	145	Blackpool	38	▼ -8
91=	Oldham	80	▲ 3	147	Oldham	36	▼ -21
91=	Tameside	80	▲ 8	148=	St. Helens	35	▼ -12

* 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).

Data includes inspection outcomes for the predecessor schools for converter academies. Outcomes for sponsor-led academies are included once the school has been inspected as an academy.

9. The proportion of pupils attending a good or outstanding primary school is lowest in Tameside, Oldham and Blackpool. Blackpool and Oldham, along with St Helens, are also poor at secondary level. Trafford is one of the region's strongest performers in both phases (see Table 1). There are signs of improvement in primary schools but the picture in the secondary sector is more mixed.
10. Outcomes for the most disadvantaged children are too low at most key stages and this remains an important area for improvement. The gap in attainment between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers remains a major concern, with Stockport and Cheshire East showing the widest gap in achievement at Key Stage 4 (see Table 2). Educational achievement is left to chance for too many children. In areas like Blackpool, the cycle of deprivation and low aspiration continues to lead to low achievement at secondary level.

Table 2: FSM/non-FSM gap at Key Stage 4 (2012/13)

Local authority	Percentage of students achieving at least five GCSEs A* to C including English and mathematics		
	FSM students	Non-FSM students	FSM/Non-FSM 'gap'
Blackburn with Darwen	39.4	64.3	-24.9
Blackpool	25.8	51.8	-26.0
Bolton	39.9	65.4	-25.5
Bury	41.3	65.8	-24.5
Cheshire East	26.4	65.8	-39.4
Cheshire West and Chester	30.6	66.8	-36.2
Cumbria	25.9	60.0	-34.1
Halton	44.1	70.5	-26.4
Knowsley	26.0	52.3	-26.3
Lancashire	31.4	65.6	-34.2
Liverpool	34.7	64.8	-30.1
Manchester	40.4	59.7	-19.3
Oldham	39.8	61.8	-22.0
Rochdale	39.5	61.9	-22.4
Salford	35.7	60.3	-24.6
Sefton	36.8	65.2	-28.4
St. Helens	31.5	60.4	-28.9
Stockport	33.6	70.0	-36.4
Tameside	38.7	64.3	-25.6
Trafford	41.8	74.7	-32.9
Warrington	34.6	68.9	-34.3
Wigan	36.1	68.3	-32.2
Wirral	37.6	72.4	-34.8
North West	35.5	65.0	- 29.5
England	38.1	64.8	-26.7

Source: Local authority interactive tool, Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait. All attainment and progress data is provisional data for 2013/14 unless otherwise specified.

11. Too many of the more able students underperform at secondary school. Of the 23 local authorities in the North West, 13 are below the national level for the percentage of children achieving at least Level 5 at Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics. The proportion subsequently attaining A* or A at GCSE is very low in some areas, particularly Knowsley, Salford and Blackpool (see Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage of pupils achieving Level 5+ at Key Stage 2 who subsequently achieve A* or A at GCSE 2012/13

Local authority	%	
	Mathematics	English
Blackburn with Darwen	47%	41%
Blackpool	27%	28%
Bolton	43%	34%
Bury	44%	40%
Cheshire East	49%	45%
Cheshire West and Chester	52%	50%
Cumbria	47%	36%
Halton	40%	47%
Knowsley	28%	18%
Lancashire	51%	45%
Liverpool	42%	40%
Manchester	38%	42%
Oldham	41%	32%
Rochdale	46%	31%
Salford	33%	30%
Sefton	42%	42%
St. Helens	40%	38%
Stockport	48%	46%
Tameside	38%	38%
Trafford	62%	48%
Warrington	47%	52%
Wigan	47%	50%
Wirral	54%	51%
North West	46%	42%
England	50%	43%

Source: RAISEonline

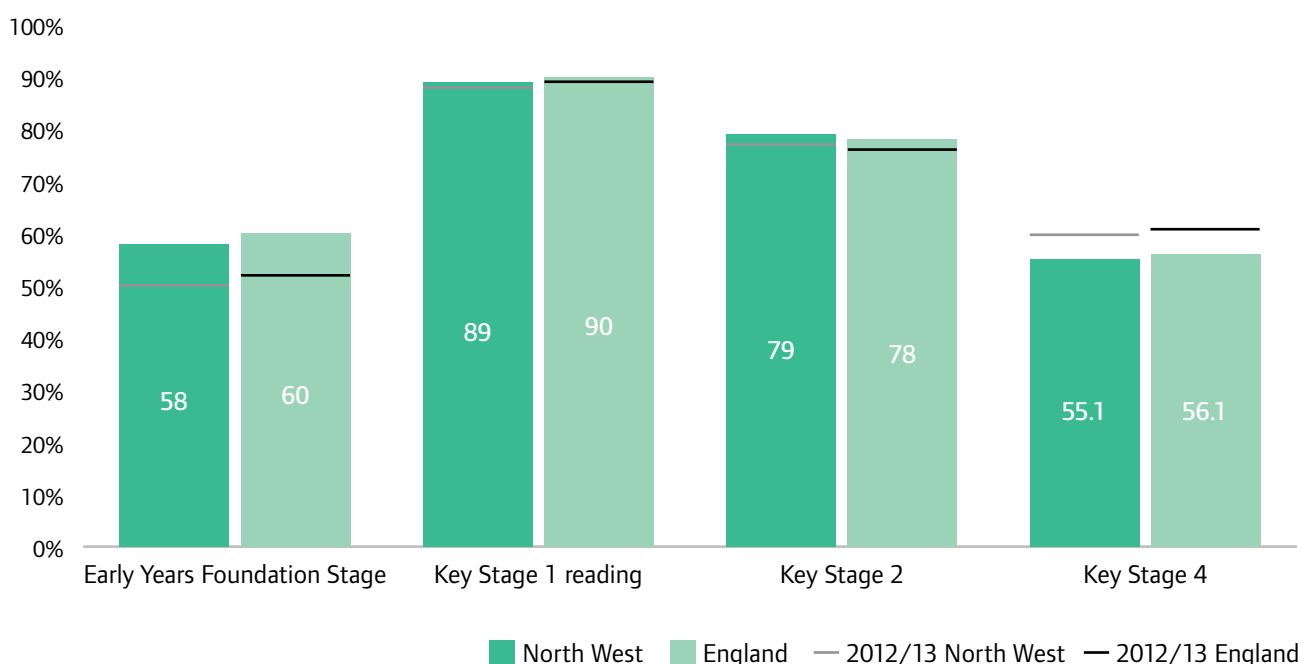
12. In too many schools, low-level disruption and misbehaviour has a detrimental effect on learning. We will continue to focus on this area. Blackpool (50%) and Oldham (42%) have a high percentage of secondary schools where behaviour has been judged as less than good when compared with the England level of 15%. Knowsley (13.9%) has just over twice the national level (6.8%) of secondary school fixed-term exclusions, closely followed by Tameside (11.8%) and Blackpool (11.5%).

13. Although the number of academies in the North West has grown in recent years (see Table 4), the region has the lowest proportion of academies nationally at just 11% compared with 20% for England as a whole. The rate of academisation varies between local authorities: while 46% of the 41 schools in Blackpool are academies, just 3% of the 70 schools in St Helens, 4% of the 90 schools in Rochdale and 4% of the 84 schools in Bury are academies.
14. The increase in the number of secondary academies has not yet made a significant enough difference to student performance across the region. For example, in Cumbria, the sponsored academies continue to underperform. Multi-academy trusts have not yet had enough impact in raising standards.
15. Too often, students leave secondary school having not made the progress of which they were capable. Key Stage 4 performance was particularly weak in Knowsley, Blackpool and Salford but stronger in Wirral, Cheshire East and Trafford. The attainment of disadvantaged students in secondary schools is particularly weak in Blackpool, Cumbria and Knowsley. It is strongest in Halton.

Table 4: Number of primary and secondary schools that are academies in the North West

Year	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Number of primary academies	0	11	44	91	138
Number of secondary academies	26	89	142	183	205

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 at least Level 2 in reading (%)

Key Stage 2 – achieving at least Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics (%)

Key Stage 4 – achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics (%)

All attainment and progress data is 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.

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>



Further education and skills

16. Further education and skills provision is strong in the North West. More than 330,000 learners attend colleges in the region. The region has over 200,000 learners in private training and community learning and skills providers. Ninety per cent of provision is judged to be good or outstanding, which is significantly higher than the England level of 81%. The North West has seen a deterioration in the overall effectiveness of one large general further education college from outstanding to inadequate. The weakest colleges and training providers are concentrated around Greater Merseyside.
17. Despite improvements in the quality of teaching, concerns remain about the quality of the curriculum on offer. For example, too few learners by the age of 19 achieve a level 2 qualification in English and mathematics (65%). This figure varies considerably across local authorities: in Blackpool and Manchester it is 53% and 55%, respectively, whereas in Trafford it is 77%.
18. The underachievement of disadvantaged groups and those from deprived backgrounds is of concern. Less than half (40%) of the region's learners who were previously eligible for free school meals achieved level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics by age 19.
19. In the 2012/13, North West regional report, we identified that apprenticeship success rates in several North West providers were poor and targeted them for improvement. There have been some advances, including an increase in the proportion of students achieving their apprenticeship in 15 of the 19 targeted providers. However, the rate of improvement is inconsistent and must be addressed urgently.

Social care

20. No local authorities in the North West have been judged as outstanding for either child protection, or the services they provide for children in their care (see Figure 1). Of the five local authorities inspected under the new single inspection framework, completed by 31 August 2014, Bolton, Blackpool and Liverpool require improvement. Knowsley and Manchester have been judged inadequate. Of the 18 local authorities that were last inspected under the safeguarding and looked after children or child protection framework, eight were judged to be good, seven were judged to be adequate, and three were judged to be inadequate – Cheshire East, Cumbria and Rochdale.
21. Of the 459 children's homes inspected during 2013/14, 354 were good or outstanding, nine were inadequate and 96 were judged as requires improvement (previously described as adequate).
22. Ofsted will be publishing its 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 addressed the social care issues for the region in any detail in this report.

Regional priorities

23. As a result of the failure of many providers to address the educational underachievement of the most disadvantaged in society, particularly in the secondary phase, we have implemented a targeted programme to support improvement. Most local authorities recognise the value of this programme and have engaged with us in the improvement agenda. For example, Wigan, Cumbria, Salford, Stockport and Cheshire East have all worked extensively in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectors over the last 12 months. A comprehensive cross-remit programme began in the region with the advent of 'Getting to good' and 'Through the lens' seminars. Focused inspections of Cumbria, Salford and Tameside directed attention to the areas where improvements are most needed.
24. We will continue to carry out unannounced inspections, particularly in schools where there are concerns about: pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; curriculum; and behaviour.
25. There has been an increase in the proportion of children and young people in good primary schools and colleges. Progress in secondary schools and early childhood providers has been slower in the region. We will continue to hold providers firmly to account for improving outcomes and focus on the areas of greatest concern.
26. If we are to see major change in the region, then the academisation of schools and the establishment of multi-academy trusts need to have a greater impact on improving the prospects for all children, especially the most disadvantaged. The impact of local authority support in secondary schools must improve and demonstrate more rapid progress.
27. The strong system leaders and teaching schools in the region, and the National College for Teaching and Leadership, need to develop effective strategies to maximise their impact on the most vulnerable schools and local authorities. This work must be rigorously quality assured to ensure value for money and impact on outcomes for young people. All designated system leaders must rise to the challenge of improving schools in the most difficult circumstances.
28. Ofsted will make it a priority to continue to work with providers, through inspection, to improve the quality of care so that children who are looked after by the local authority are able to live in good children's homes and succeed at school.

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