



Variations in GCSE performance 2008/09

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This note looks at variations in pupil attainment and progress at GCSE and equivalent examinations in England in 2008/09. It includes variations in attainment by gender, school type, Local Education Authority (LEA), pupil characteristics and the distribution of results by schools. The corresponding notes from [2006/07](#) and [2007/08](#) contain the earlier data.

The introduction of the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census in England in 2002 meant that data on pupil characteristics could be matched to attainment data in the National Pupil Database (NPD) and thus comparisons could be made between groups of pupils. Prior to 2002 survey data had to be used which limited the number of characteristics that could be compared and the robustness of any findings.

All the data in this note are for England only. Attainment in 2008/09 is the latest data and variations are given for this year only. Readers should contact the author for earlier figures. The relatively recent publication of detailed data by pupil characteristics means that earlier information is limited. In addition a new measure of progress -Contextualised Value Added (CVA)- was introduced in 2005/06. This aimed to provide school progress scores, and hence measure school effectiveness, on a more comparable basis.

This note looks at variations in attainment/progress one indicator at a time. At present data from 2005/06 to 2007/08 can be cross-tabulated (for instance results by free school meal status for different ethnic groups) from the NPD and there are a limited number of cross tabulations, mainly by gender, ethnic group or LEA and one other indicator, on the [DCSF statistics website](#). The statistics section has access to the GCSE results from the NPD and, given sufficient time, can produce a limited amount of bespoke work from these results.

Most of the figures presented here for GCSE and equivalents are available on the [DCSF statistics website](#) for Key Stage 1 teacher assessments, Key Stage 2 tests and A/AS-level results and equivalents. National trends in GCSE results are given in the following notes:

[Examination results: Social Indicators page](#)
[Education: Historical statistics](#)

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1 National Results

Some 2007/08 GCSE results were delayed this year due to quality assurance 'issues' which have now been resolved. A new basis for the calculation of the number of eligible pupils at End Key Stage 4 has been used in 2007/08 to better account for pupils in pupil referral units and hospital schools. This increases the number of pupils used to calculate the percentage attainment figures and is thought to reduce the percentage reported at achieving each level by around 0.5 percentage points nationally.

1.1 Attainment

Summary national results broken down by gender are given in the following table. Girls outperform boys on each measure and have done so for many years.

GCSE and equivalent achievements for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4^(a)

	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of pupils	324,883	309,624	634,507
Percentage who achieved at GCSE or equivalent:			
5+A*-C grades	65.8	74.4	70.0
- Including English and Mathematics GCSE	45.7	54.1	49.8
- Including Level 2 functional English and Mathematics ^(b)	48.9	56.6	52.7
5+A*-G grades	90.4	94.4	92.3
- Including English and Mathematics GCSE	85.8	90.8	88.3
- Including Level 1 functional English and Mathematics ^(c)	86.1	91.0	88.5
2+ A*-C grades in Science subjects	51.8	55.8	53.7
Any qualification ^(d)	98.3	99.5	98.9

(a) The calculation of the number of eligible pupils at End Key Stage 4 has been changed to better account for pupils in PRUs and hospital schools

(b) Includes pupils who achieved grades A*-C in English and Maths GCSEs or level 2 in Key Skills or Basic Skills in literacy and numeracy.

(c) Includes pupils who achieved grades A*-g in English and Maths GCSEs or level 1 in Key Skills or Basic Skills in literacy and numeracy.

(d) This includes attempts in entry level qualifications which do not contribute towards A*-C or A*-G thresholds.

Source: GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2008/09 (Revised), DCSF

The Government has a number of different targets for GCSE performance. These include all maintained schools achieving at least 30% on this measure by 2008, the 5+ A*-C measure including English and Maths measure should reach 53% nationally by 2011 and all maintained schools achieving at least 30% on the 5+ A*-C measure including English and Maths measure by 2011.

The main achievement 'date' is now the end of Key Stage 4 (year 11). The vast majority of pupils included were aged 15 at the start of the academic year, but a small number will be younger (promoted up a year or more) or older (held back a year or more). The results are based on attempts and achievement by these pupils in 2008/09 and earlier years. The denominator (total number of pupils shown in the first line of the table) includes pupils who were not entered for any GCSE/equivalent or entry level¹ examination. The coverage of the national figures is all maintained and independent schools, including special schools and Pupil Referral Units.

The main achievement levels are **level 2** (5+ grades A*-C or equivalent) and **level 1** (5+ grades A*-G or equivalent). Since 2005 the proportion of pupils reaching these levels and passing equivalent level English and Maths has also been reported. The 2 or more science GCSEs at A*-C was introduced last year as part of the national indicator set for local authorities. The final line of the table looks at the proportion of pupils who achieved any qualification approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority as appropriate for pre-16 pupils, including those below GCSE standard. Other attainment indicators and progress measures are also published nationally and down to school level.

The attainment measures this note concentrates on are the proportion of pupils who reach level 2 and level 2 including English and Maths (level 2 E&M). These are the indicators included in Government targets and as some others tend to be in the 90-100% range it can be difficult to accurately judge any real variations. Improvements in level 2 performance over the past few years have started to make it difficult to do so on certain indicators.

1.2 GCSE Equivalencies

GCSE results have included equivalent examinations for more than 10 years. To include other approved qualifications in GCSE equivalent terms they need to be judged on their level and length. This means they can be added to any GCSE results and the level that a pupil has reached can be assessed. The table below outlines the 'broad equivalencies' of the major non-GCSE qualifications.

GNVQ Full	Number of GCSEs	Grades
Intermediate	4	A*-C
Foundation	4	D-G
GNVQ Language Unit		
Intermediate	½	A
Foundation	½	D
GCSE (Short Course)	½	Same grade
CSE in Vocational Subject	2	Same grade

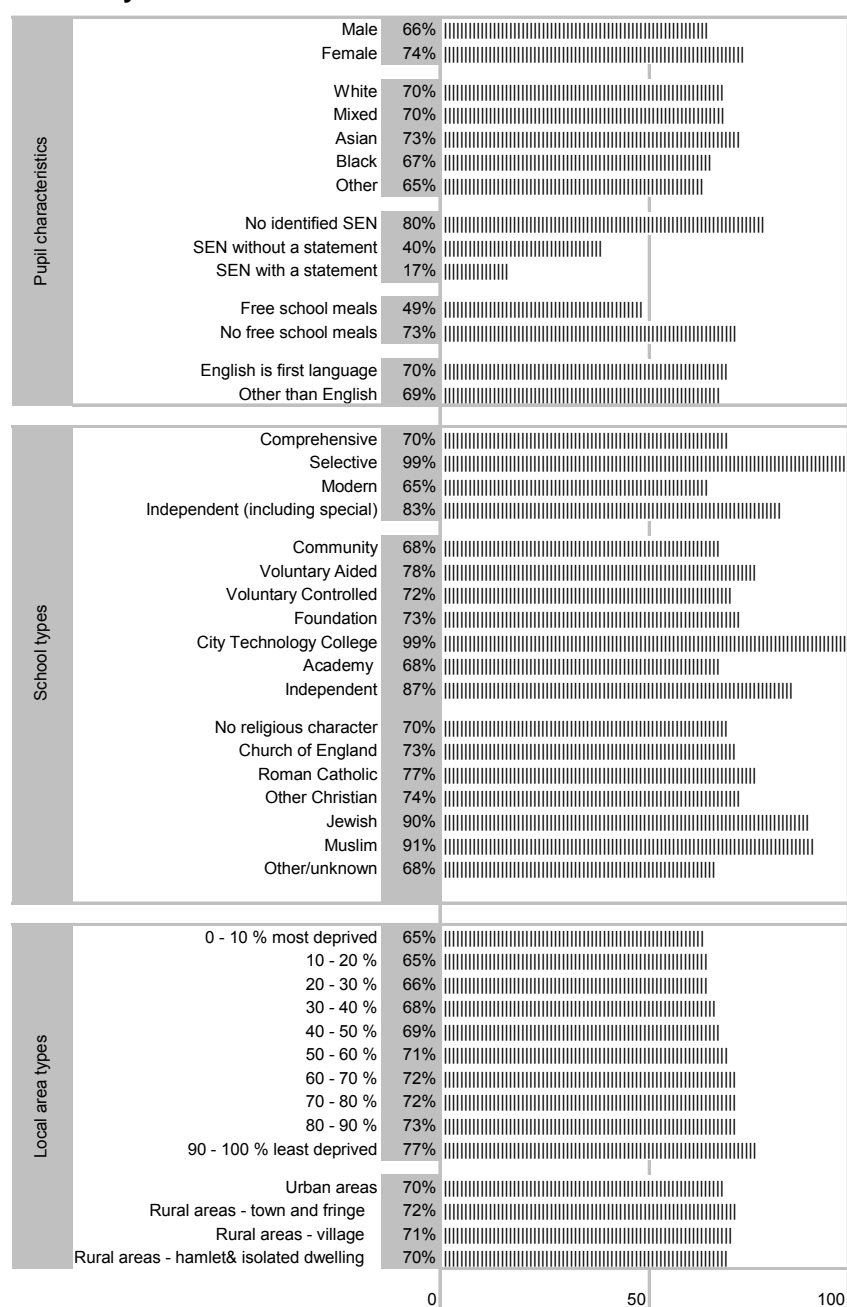
¹ Qualifications below a grade G at GCSE

1.3 School performance table results

The data in the sections on the distribution of results and religious character are taken from the secondary school performance tables as first published in mid-January 2010. This source excludes results from schools where fewer than 10 pupils were at the end of Key Stage 4 (year 11) in 2008/09. It excludes CVA results at schools where less than 50% of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are included. Headline GCSE attainment in these tables is rounded to the nearest percentage point (zero decimal places). Aggregating results up from such data – as the religious character section does- may lead to very small differences from results based on more precise data. The 2007/08 performance tables were the first to include schools that had closed since the January Census data. 101 schools included in the tables have subsequently closed; the vast majority of them at the end of academic year 2008/09.

2 Summary of attainment results

Summary of level 2 attainment variations 2008/09



3 Variations by type of school

School Type -attainment results

- 99% of pupils in selective schools and 83% of pupils in independent (including non-maintained special schools) reached level 2.
- The proportion of pupils reaching level 2 in comprehensives was 29 percentage points below that in selective schools.
- The results for maintained selective schools was little changed when the level 2 measure includes English and Maths.
- Including English and maths reduces the independent school figure by almost 40 percentage points, the comprehensive school rate by 17 points and the secondary modern level by 19 points.
- The large difference in the two measures for independent schools is affected by their choice to offer International GCSEs (IGCSEs). Passes in these exams in English and maths do not count towards that part of the Level 2 (E&M) threshold, although they are included in equivalent qualifications.
- 7.6% of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 were in selective or modern schools and 7.4% were in independent schools.

Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement by School Type

	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving			% entered for GCSEs or equivalent
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes	
Comprehensive	519,133	70.1	50.1	100.0	100.0
Selective	22,389	99.2	98.2	100.0	100.0
Modern	25,916	65.3	41.2	100.0	100.0
All Maintained	578,846	69.8	50.7	99.5	99.6
Independent	48,435	83.0	46.3	96.9	96.4
All Schools	634,507	70.0	49.8	98.9	98.8

Notes:

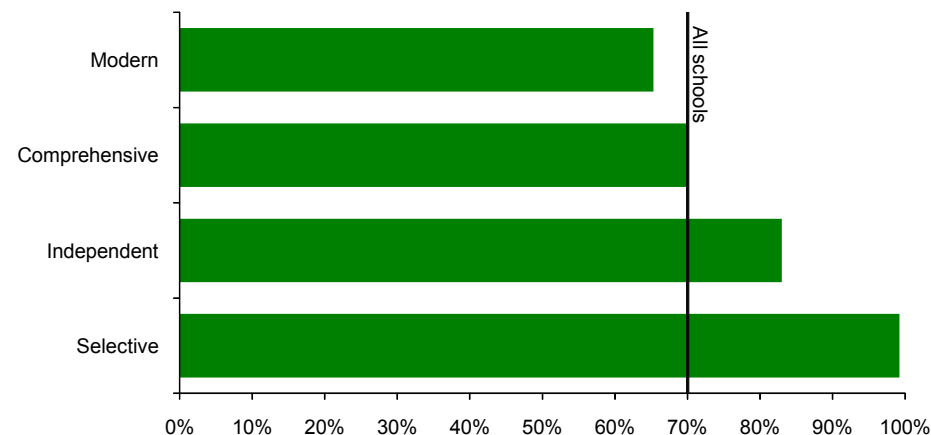
Comprehensive schools include Academies and City Technology Colleges

All maintained includes hospital schools and PRUs

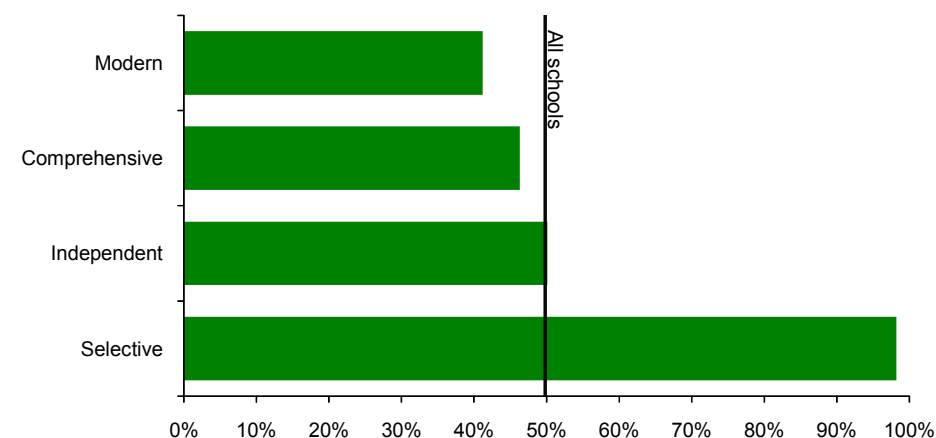
Independent schools included non-maintained special schools

Source: GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2008/09 (Revised), DCSF

Level 2 achievement by school type



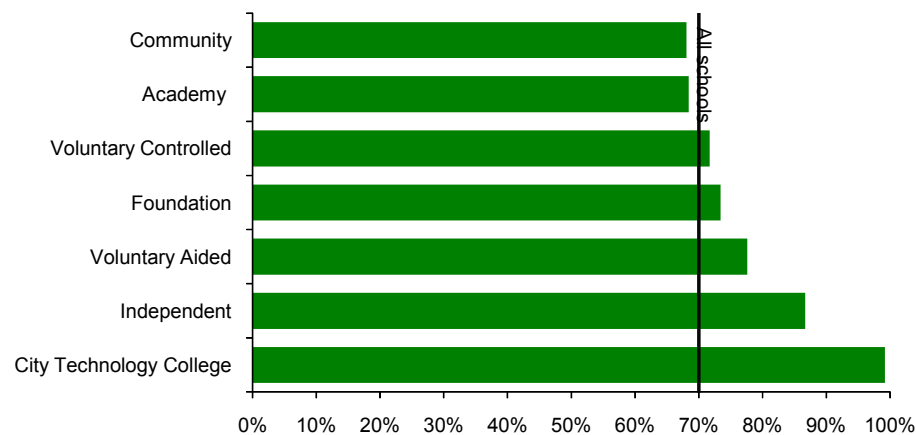
Level 2 (E&M) achievement by school type



Mainstream Schools by Status -attainment results

- 99% of pupils in City Technology Colleges and almost 87% in mainstream independent schools reached level 2.
- Voluntary Aided, Foundation and Voluntary Controlled schools all had an average of over 70% of pupils who achieved level 2.
- Academies and community schools had slightly less than 70% of pupils reaching level 2
- Again by opting for IGCSEs overall independent school performance was most reduced by introducing English and Maths in level 2. The small number of City Technology Colleges performed best on this measure.
- 15.9 % of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 were in Voluntary Aided or Voluntary Controlled (mainly faith) schools, 7.3% were in mainstream independent schools and 3.1% were in Academies.

Level 2 achievement by school status

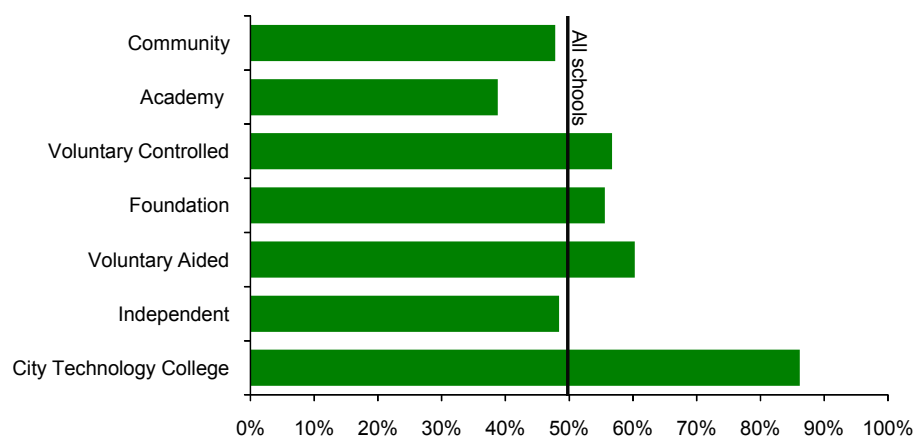


Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement in Mainstream Schools by Status

	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving			% entered for GCSEs or equivalent
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes	
Community	305,341	68.1	47.8	99.9	100.0
Voluntary Aided	83,056	77.6	60.3	100.0	100.0
Voluntary Controlled	17,773	71.7	56.7	100.0	100.0
Foundation	142,566	73.4	55.6	100.0	100.0
City Technology College	500	99.2	86.2	100.0	100.0
Academy	19,885	68.4	38.8	99.9	100.0
Independent	46,159	86.7	48.4	98.4	97.8
All Schools	634,507	70.0	49.8	98.9	98.8

Source: GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2008/09 (Revised), DCSF

Level 2 (E&M) achievement by school status



Religious Character -attainment results

- Attainment was higher in faith schools than in those with no religious character.
- Pupils at Jewish and Muslim schools performed the best at Level 2. Fewer than 0.3% of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 attended such schools.
- Variations were much smaller among the other types of faith schools, although attainment at all types was above average.
- The results of pupils at Jewish schools were least affected by the inclusion of English and Maths in the Level 2 measure. Their results were clearly the highest on this measure.
- Achievement of pupils at most other types of faith and non faith schools fell by 16-20 percentage points after the inclusion of English and Maths.

Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement in Religious Character

	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving		
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes
No religious character	474,923	70.2	50.7	99.2
Church of England	28,306	72.7	56.3	99.4
Roman Catholic	53,202	77.3	57.7	99.4
Other Christian	7,910	74.0	55.4	98.8
Jewish	896	90.2	83.3	99.6
Muslim	386	91.2	70.4	100.0
Other/unknown	1,371	67.5	42.8	98.4
All schools	566,994	71.1	51.7	99.2
<i>All faith schools</i>	<i>90,819</i>	<i>75.8</i>	<i>57.3</i>	<i>99.4</i>

Notes:

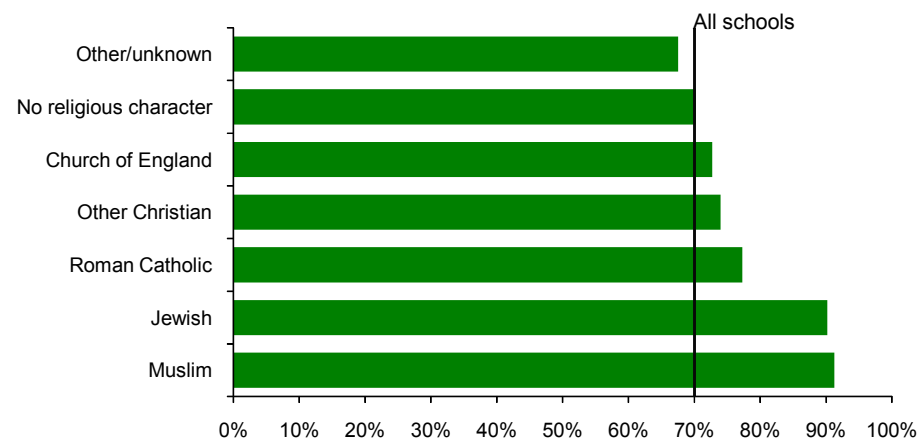
Includes maintained mainstream schools only

Figures are based on unrounded data weighted by the number of pupils in Key Stage 4 at the start of the year. The averages are therefore approximate. Results are excluded for schools that with less than 10 pupils for either the GCSE attainment and those not included in the CVA results.

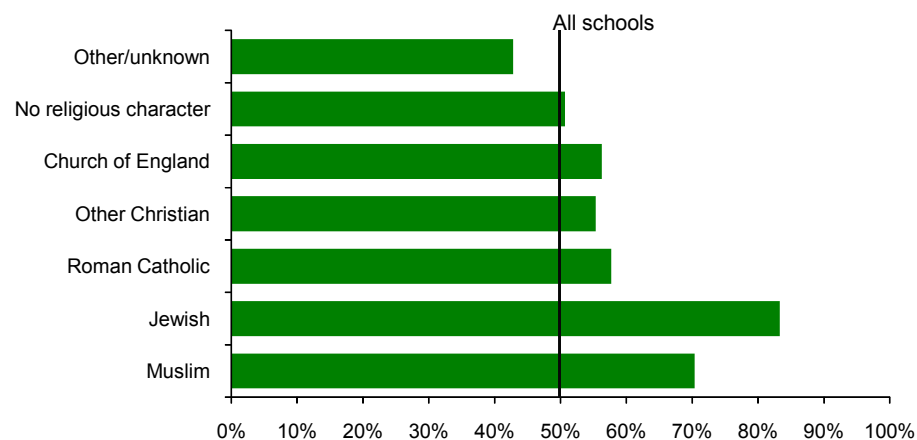
'Other Christian' includes Church of England/other Christian or just 'Christian'

Sources: EduBase, Database of educational establishments, downloaded May 2010; DCSF performance data

Level 2 achievement by Religious Character



Level 2 (E&M) achievement by Religious Character



4 Distribution of results at a school level

School level distribution -attainment results

- In 2008/09 there were 50 schools where less than 30% of pupils reached level 2; 36 of these were public sector. The DCSF had a target that all maintained mainstream schools should reach at least 30% by 2008.
- The Government also has a target that in all such schools at least 30% will reach level 2 including English and Maths by 2011. In 2008/09 301 state funded mainstream schools did not reach this level or 247 if we exclude those that have subsequently closed.
- In just under one in ten schools (with results in the performance tables) less than half the pupils reached level 2. The median value of 73% means that half of schools did better than this and half did worse.
- In 267 schools, all pupils reached level 2, in 117 all pupils reached level 2 including English and Maths.

Number of mainstream schools in each performance band

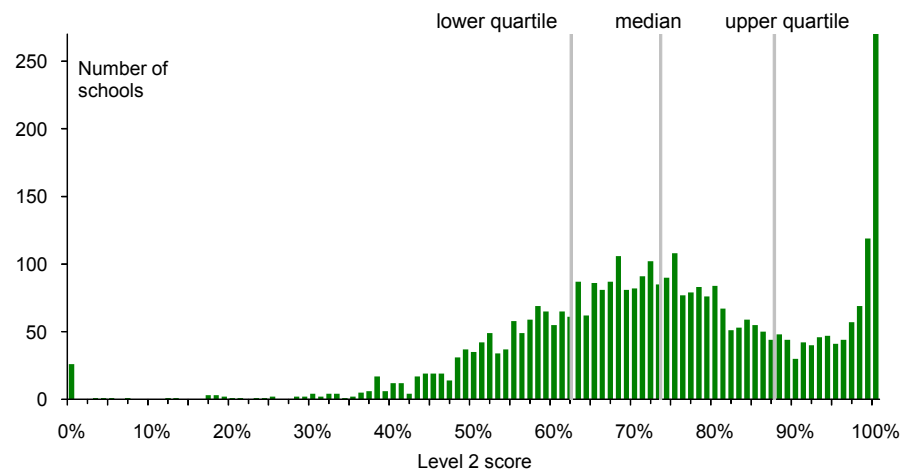
	Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)
<10%	30	198
10-19%	10	62
20-29%	10	260
30-39%	51	609
40-49%	184	697
50-59%	497	646
60-69%	771	501
70-79%	873	282
80-89%	555	158
90-100%	826	394

Notes:

Includes independent mainstream schools. Excludes schools with no published results in the 2009 performance tables.

Source: DCSF performance data

Distribution of level 2 achievement in mainstream schools



Percentile distribution of mainstream schools

	Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)
1st bottom 1%	19%	0%
5th bottom 5%	46%	2%
10th bottom 10%	52%	25%
25th lower quartile	62%	37%
50th median	73%	51%
75th upper quartile	87%	67%
90th top 10%	99%	90%
95th top 5%	100%	98%
99th top 1%	100%	100%

Notes:

Includes independent mainstream schools. Excludes schools with no published results in the 2009 performance tables.

Source: DCSF performance data

5 Variations by local area characteristics (state funded schools only)

English regions and LEAs -attainment results

Top 10 performing LEAs

<u>Level 2</u>		<u>Level 2 (E&M)</u>	
Kensington and Chelsea	84.9%	Isles of Scilly	80.0%
Sutton	84.8%	Kingston upon Thames	68.2%
Hammersmith and Fulham	82.2%	Sutton	67.9%
Gateshead	81.2%	Kensington and Chelsea	66.1%
Trafford	80.3%	Buckinghamshire	65.4%
Isles of Scilly	80.0%	Redbridge	64.5%
Thurrock	78.6%	Hammersmith and Fulham	64.1%
Westminster	78.5%	Trafford	63.3%
Kingston upon Thames	78.4%	Wokingham	63.2%
Bromley	78.3%	Bromley	62.6%

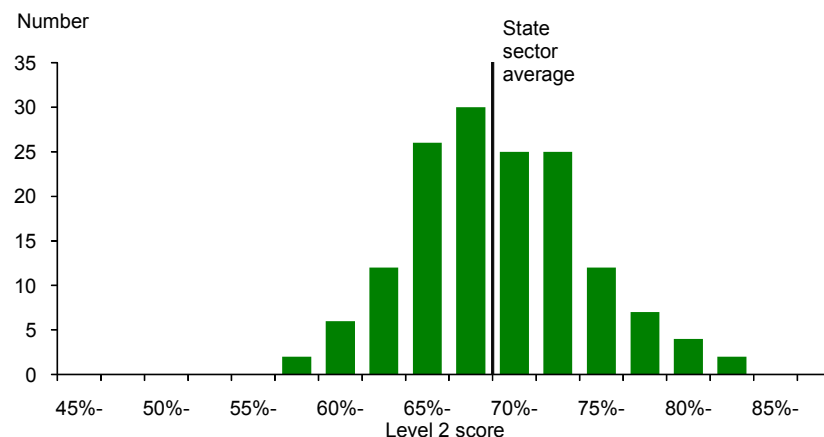
Bottom 10 performing LEAs

<u>Level 2</u>		<u>Level 2 (E&M)</u>	
Manchester	62.6%	Bristol, City of	40.2%
Waltham Forest	62.6%	Portsmouth	39.5%
Swindon	62.4%	Stoke-on-Trent	39.4%
Lewisham	62.0%	Barnsley	39.3%
Brighton and Hove	61.8%	Blackpool	38.7%
Bristol, City of	61.7%	Manchester	38.6%
Barnsley	60.6%	Sandwell	37.5%
Southampton	60.5%	Kingston upon Hull, City of	36.9%
Portsmouth	58.4%	Middlesbrough	36.9%
Isle of Wight	57.8%	Knowsley	33.5%

Note: These data cover maintained schools only and exclude pupils recently arrived from overseas

Source: GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2008/09 (Revised), DCSF

Distiribution of level 2 achievement by LEA



Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement by Region

	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving		
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes
North East	30,671	72.8	48.1	98.5
North West	83,355	70.9	49.9	98.5
Yorkshire & Humber	60,857	69.2	47.3	98.4
East Midlands	51,663	68.9	49.9	98.7
West Midlands	64,884	70.1	48.5	98.8
East Of England	65,171	69.0	51.9	98.7
London	73,724	71.2	54.0	98.8
<i>Outer London</i>	50,761	72.6	56.0	98.9
<i>Inner London</i>	22,963	68.3	49.6	98.6
South East	89,498	70.1	53.7	98.9
South West	56,607	67.9	51.8	98.9
TOTAL (state funded)	576,430	70.0	50.9	98.7

Source: GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2008/09 (Revised), DCSF

IDACI decile -attainment results

- The IDACI is the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index. It measures the proportion of children in an area living in low income households.
- Each of 32,500 Super Output Areas are ranked on their IDACI score. The results here are based on the decile band of the area that pupils live in.
- The pattern of results by ICADI decile are very clear with better results seen with each and every reduction in deprivation.
- The achievement gap for level 2 between pupils in the most and least deprived areas of the country was 12 percentage points, down by 33 points in 2007/08.
- This achievement gap was even larger for level 2 including English and Maths at 25 percentage points, down from 41 points in 2007/08.

Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement by IDACI decile

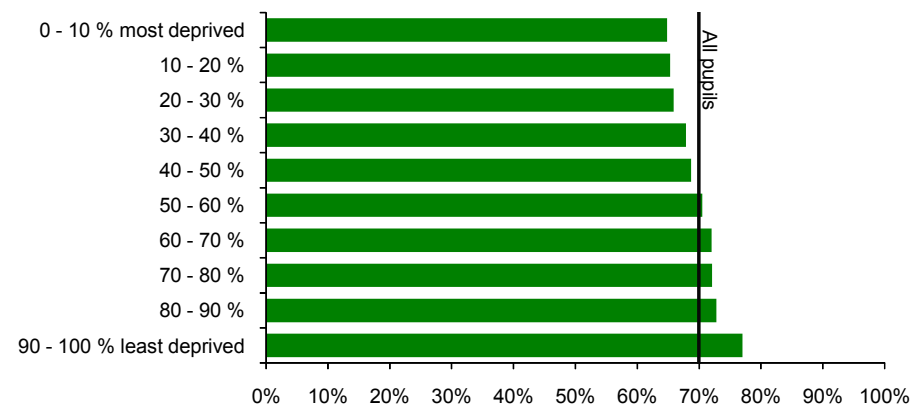
	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving		
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes
0 - 10 % most deprived	42,535	64.8	38.2	97.6
10 - 20 %	52,357	65.3	42.1	98.1
20 - 30 %	54,959	65.9	44.8	98.3
30 - 40 %	63,396	67.9	47.9	98.8
40 - 50 %	60,539	68.7	49.0	98.7
50 - 60 %	56,174	70.5	51.8	98.7
60 - 70 %	57,754	72.0	53.8	98.9
70 - 80 %	66,916	72.1	55.2	99.1
80 - 90 %	61,526	72.8	57.4	99.0
90 - 100 % least deprived	60,274	77.0	63.1	99.2
All areas	576,430	70.0	50.9	98.7

Notes:

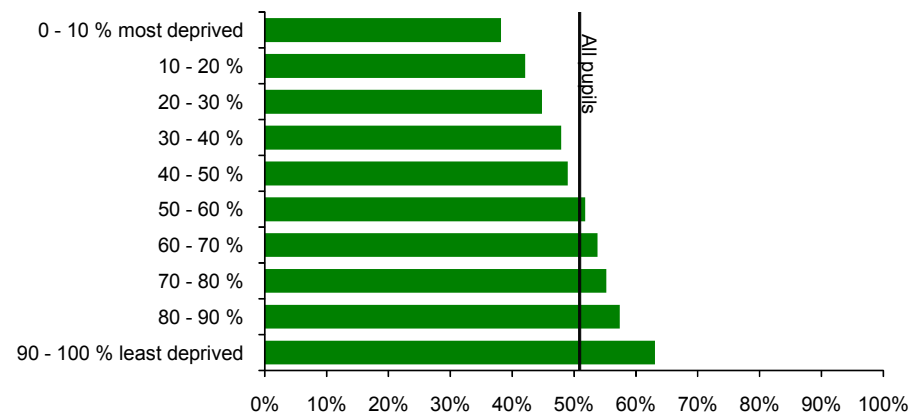
Category data based on where the pupil lives and includes pupils with valid postcodes only. Excludes pupils recently arrived from overseas

Source: *Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2008/09, DCSF. Key stage 4 tables*

Level 2 achievement by IDACI decile



Level 2 (E&M) achievement by IDACI decile



Rurality -attainment results

- Results are based on the official classification of urban and rural levels. As with other local area classifications it uses the postcodes of pupils, not schools, to analyse results.
- The variation in attainment by rurality is much smaller than that seen for other area types.
- As more than 80% of the pupils were from urban areas their results are very close to average.
- There is a general pattern of higher attainment with a greater degree of rurality. This was stronger for the level 2 measure including English and Maths.
- 2.1% of pupils included in this analysis were from areas classed as rural villages and 1.7% were from rural hamlets and isolated dwellings.

Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement by Rurality

	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving		
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes
Urban areas	498,353	69.7	50.3	98.6
Rural areas - town and fringe	55,551	72.0	55.2	99.2
Rural areas - village	12,308	71.4	55.3	99.0
Rural areas - hamlet & isolated dwelling	10,218	70.1	53.5	98.9
All areas	576,430	70.0	50.9	98.7

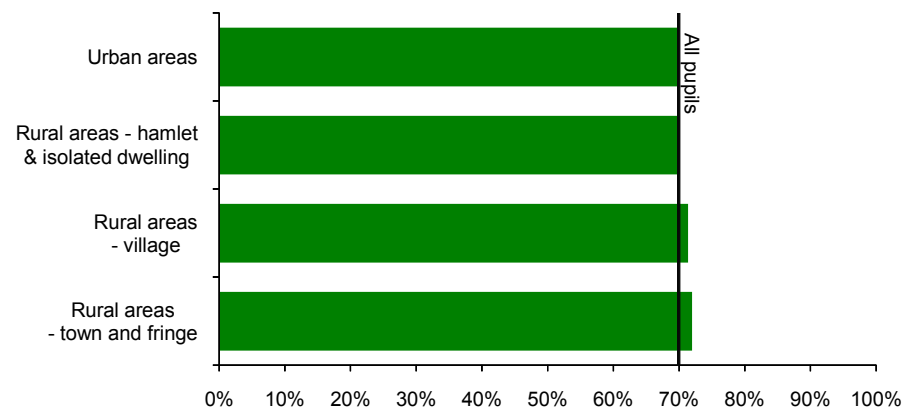
Notes:

Category data based on where the pupil lives and includes pupils with valid postcodes only.

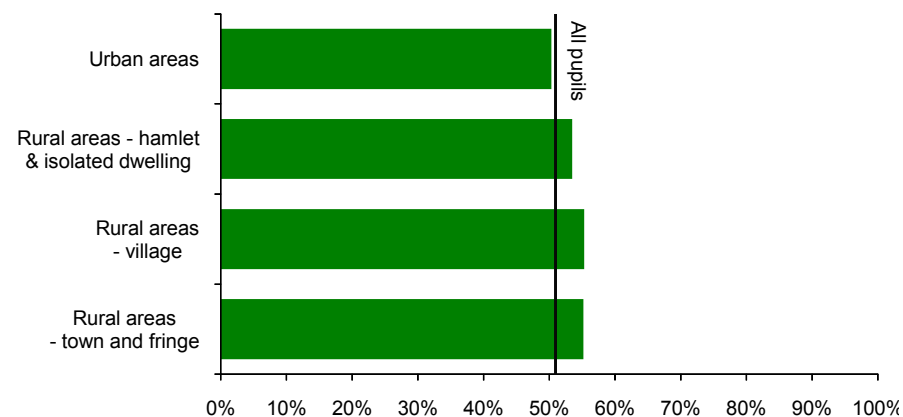
Degree of rurality based on the 2004 Rural and Urban classification at Census Output Area level

Source: *Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2008/09, DCSF. Key stage 4 tables*

Level 2 achievement by Rurality



Level 2 (E&M) achievement by Rurality



6 Variations by pupil characteristics (State funded schools only)

Free School Meals status -attainment results

- The gap between pupils eligible and not eligible for free school meals stood at 24 percentage points for level 2 and 27 percentage points for level 2 including English and Maths.
- Achievement rates of Level 2 including English and Maths were more than double for pupils not eligible for free school meals.
- The proportionate gap was even greater for boys. 24% of boys eligible for free school meals met the level 2 standard including English and Maths compared to 51% of boys and 58% of girls who were not eligible.

Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement by Free School Meals status

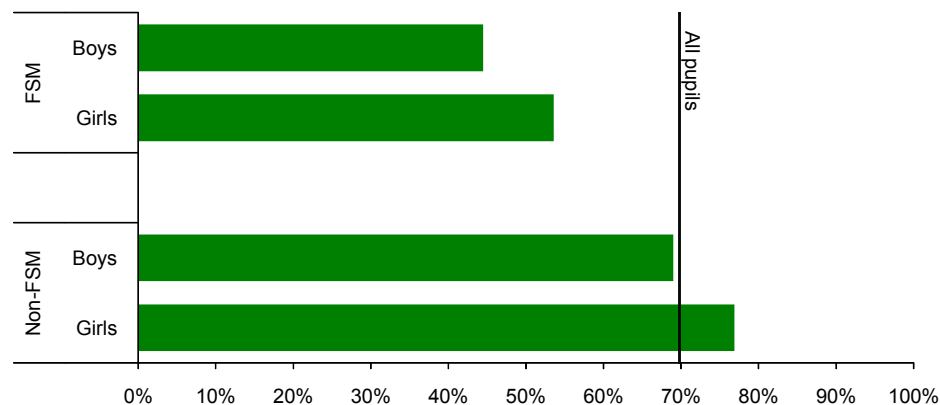
	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving		
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes
FSM	72,869	49.0	26.9	98.9
Boys	36,701	44.5	23.8	99.0
Girls	36,168	53.6	30.0	99.4
Non-FSM	500,556	72.9	54.4	99.7
Boys	254,643	69.0	50.7	99.7
Girls	245,913	76.9	58.1	99.8
All Pupils	573,654	69.8	50.9	99.6

Notes:

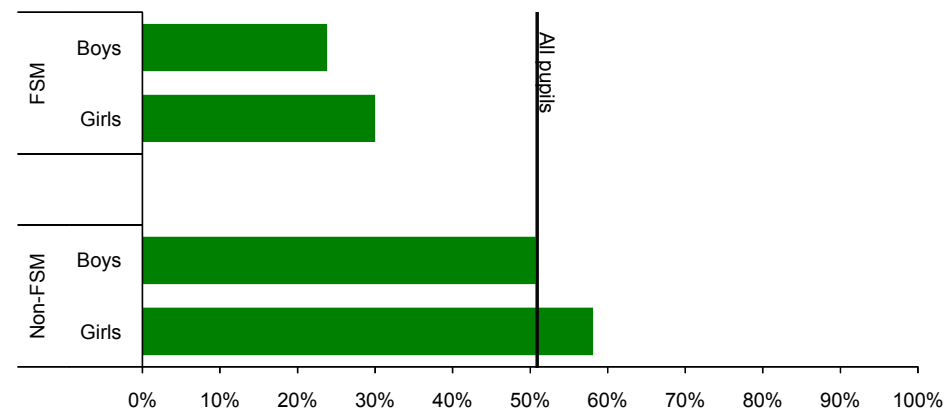
All pupils includes 'unclassified' -where information was refused or not obtained

Source: Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2008/09, DCSF. Key stage 4 tables

Level 2 achievement by Free School Meals status



Level 2 (E&M) achievement by Free School Meals status



Ethnicity -attainment results

- Pupils from Indian ethnic backgrounds performed better than any other ethnic group; over 80% reached level 2 and two thirds achieved level 2 including English and Maths.
- White British pupils performed at or just above average on both measures.
- performed above average by around four percentage points on both measures.
- Pupils from Black Caribbean and Pakistani ethnic backgrounds had the lowest level 2 achievement rates (with or without English and Maths).
- Including English and Maths in the level 2 measure reduced the rates for pupils with an Indian background by the smallest amount and had the greatest impact on the Pakistani and Black Caribbean groups.

Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement by Ethnicity

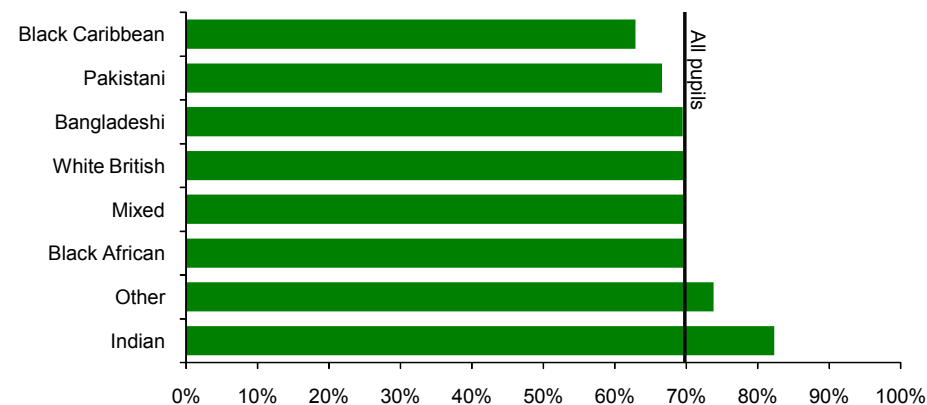
	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving		
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes
White	476,372	69.7	50.9	99.5
<i>White British</i>	457,346	69.8	51.0	99.5
Mixed	16,725	69.8	51.5	99.6
Asian	41,173	73.0	53.4	99.8
<i>Indian</i>	13,291	82.3	67.2	99.9
<i>Pakistani</i>	15,892	66.6	43.1	99.8
<i>Bangladeshi</i>	5,944	69.5	48.4	99.7
Black	23,413	66.8	44.6	99.7
<i>Black Caribbean</i>	7,944	62.9	39.4	99.5
<i>Black African</i>	12,833	69.8	48.4	99.8
Other	8,279	73.8	54.4	99.5
All Pupils	573,654	69.8	50.9	99.6

Notes:

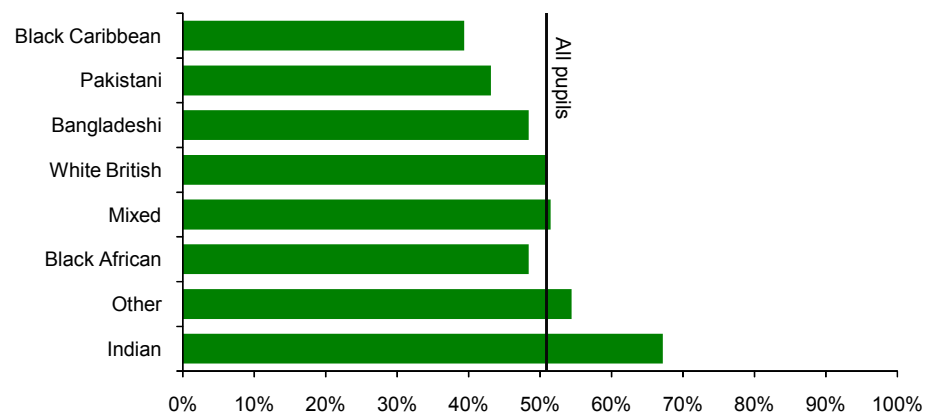
All pupils includes 'unclassified' -where information was refused or not obtained

Source: *Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2008/09, DCSF. Key stage 4 tables*

Level 2 achievement by Ethnicity



Level 2 (E&M) achievement by Ethnicity



Special Educational Needs -attainment results

- There was a very clear pattern of attainment by Special Educational Needs (SEN) status.
- Almost 80% of pupils without any identified SEN reached level 2 and 61% achieved this standard including English and Maths.
- Almost 40% of pupils with SEN but without a statement reached level 2 and fewer than one in five met this standard with English and Maths included.
- There was also a clear pattern within the unstatemented group between with higher attainment among the less severe 'School Action' group
- There was also a clear pattern within the unstatemented group between with higher attainment among the less severe 'School Action' group
- Around one in six pupils with statements of SEN reached level 2 and fewer than one in 20 achieved this with English and Maths.
- There are very large differences in attainment among SEN pupils according to their different needs.

Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement by Special Educational Needs

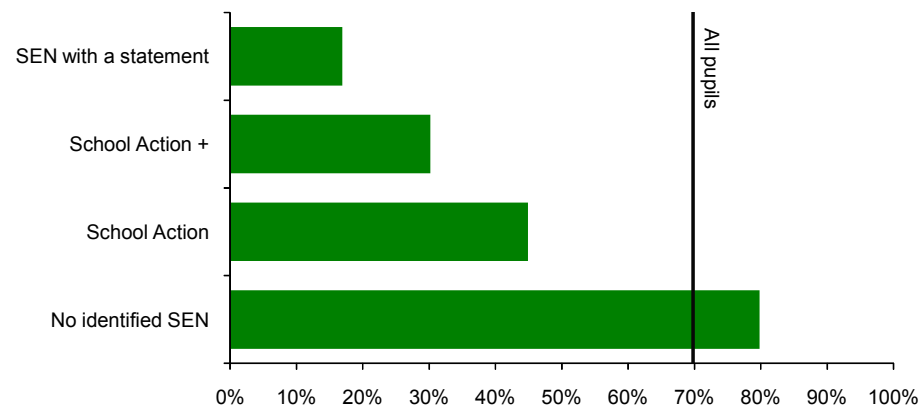
	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving		
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes
No identified SEN	440,556	79.8	61.1	99.8
SEN without a statement	113,557	39.9	18.5	98.7
<i>School Action</i>	75,527	44.9	21.1	99.3
<i>School Action +</i>	38,030	30.2	13.4	97.6
SEN with a statement	19,312	16.9	7.0	98.2
All Pupils	573,654	69.8	50.9	99.6

Notes:

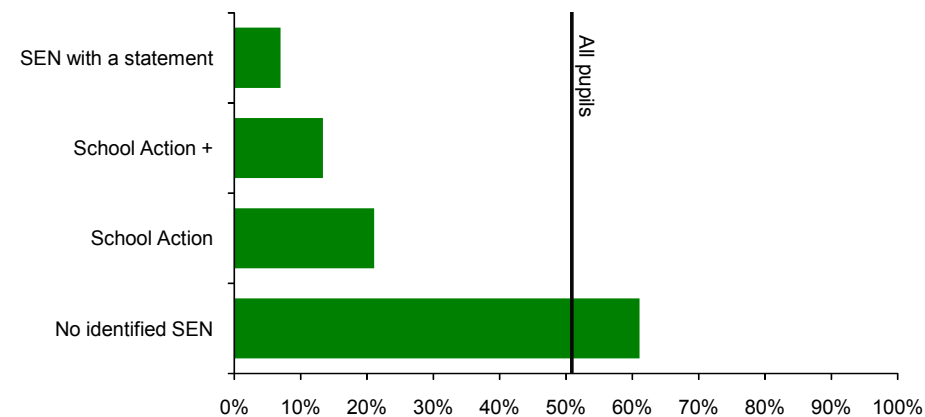
All pupils includes 'unclassified' -where information was refused or not obtained

Source: *Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2008/09, DCSF. Key stage 4 tables*

Level 2 achievement by Special Educational Needs



Level 2 (E&M) achievement by Special Educational Needs



First language -attainment results

- The gap between pupil attainment when analysis by first language is much smaller than those seen across other pupil characteristics.
- The gap was 1.2 percentage points for level 2 and somewhat larger (3.3 points) for level 2 including English and Maths.
- These gaps were greater among boys; 3.3 points for level 2 and 4.9 points for level 2 including English and Maths

Summary of GCSE/equivalent achievement by First language

	Number of pupils	Percentage achieving		
		Level 2	Level 2 (E&M)	Any passes
English	512,522	70.0	51.2	99.5
Other than English	59,331	68.8	47.9	99.6
All Pupils	573,654	69.8	50.9	99.6

Notes:

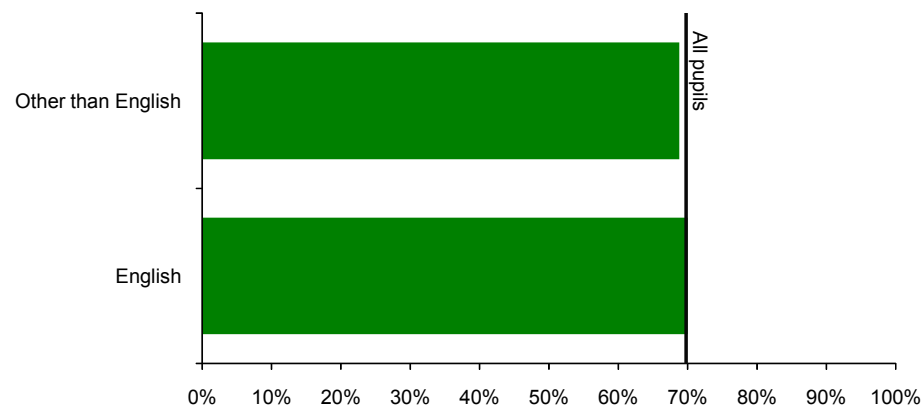
All pupils includes 'unclassified' -where information was refused or not obtained

English includes not known but believed to be English.

Other than English includes not known but believed to be other than English.

Source: *Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2008/09, DCSF. Key stage 4 tables*

Level 2 achievement by First language



Level 2 (E&M) achievement by First language

