

# **A Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy**

**An independent review by Sir Nick  
Weller**

**November 2016**

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## Foreword



In March 2016, the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Education asked me to undertake an independent review of northern education and produce a report to inform the delivery of a Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy.

I was asked to explore why there is a particular concentration of underperformance in the North and to make recommendations to raise educational attainment.

This important review has been undertaken over a relatively short period of time. I have aimed to gather as much evidence and insight as possible from a range of sources and this has only been possible with the help of those system and educational leaders working across the sector who have been generous with their time and with their expertise.

I want to thank all of those involved in this review, from those educational leaders who have engaged with me across the country, to the Department of Education (DfE) officials that have provided my secretariat support. I am indebted to the Institute of Public Policy Research's (IPPR) Report, *Northern Schools: Putting Education at the Heart of the Northern Powerhouse*<sup>1</sup>, which underscored the relatively poor performance of disadvantaged children in the North. Ofsted's *Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014/15*<sup>2</sup>, which highlighted the poorer performance of secondary schools in the North and Midlands than in the South, has also been a key source.

In the process of this review, I have been impressed with the commitment of my colleagues in the region to raising education standards for northern children and indeed, there are some great examples of excellent schools across the North. However, many schools in the North are still failing to provide northern children with the standard of education needed for them to thrive.

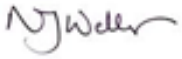
I also continue to be impressed with schools in London that are bucking the national trend in closing the disadvantage gap and raising standards. Some argue that the success of London is primarily due to its demography, funding, political will and a stable education system. But more than that, London Challenge galvanised a collective moral imperative: a willingness to take on fresh ideas to create a momentum to improve standards and to provide a strong challenge to poor performance.

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<sup>1</sup> Clifton J, Round A and Raikes L. (May 2016) [Northern Schools: Putting Education at the Heart of the Northern Powerhouse](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ofsted. (Dec 2015) [The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014/15](#)

My report focuses on what we can do in the North to make teacher recruitment easier, develop greater leadership capacity, and close the very wide gap in the achievement of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children. Above all, as school leaders in the North, we need to do a better job of learning from and replicating success stories locally as well as from elsewhere in the country.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N Weller", enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Sir Nick Weller

## Executive summary

1. The Northern Powerhouse initiative is designed to help rebalance the economy and establish the North as a centre of growth in the UK. For the purpose of this report, the 'North' covers the North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humber regions.
2. A dynamic regional economy depends on an excellent education system. Currently, the standard of secondary schooling in the North of England fails to match this ambition. Secondary schools in the North are consistently outperformed by their counterparts in the South of England. The number of secondary schools judged to be good or outstanding in the South and East is 81%, compared with only 70% in the North<sup>3</sup>.
3. The outcomes for children from disadvantaged<sup>4</sup> backgrounds are also significant. DfE 2014-15 data shows that only 34% of disadvantaged students attending northern schools achieved 5+ A\*-C GCSEs, including English and mathematics, compared to a national disadvantaged average of 37% and 48% in London<sup>5</sup>.
4. This underperformance has implications for the life chances of young people, including further study and careers.
5. This report identifies a number of factors which may contribute to better performance, including closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged students, attracting and retaining high-quality teachers and leaders, developing and growing effective Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), and focusing on an academic curriculum and high-status qualifications.

## Findings and recommendations

### Building teaching and leadership capacity

6. Teacher effectiveness is the most important determinant of pupil outcomes<sup>6</sup>. Raising educational standards in the North requires us to attract, train and retain high-quality teachers and leaders in the region so that every child is taught by an effective teacher. In my view, the most important step we can take to address educational

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<sup>3</sup> Ofsted. (June 2016) [Maintained schools and academies inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2016](#) - Main text - Page 7

<sup>4</sup> Pupils are defined as disadvantaged if they are known to have been eligible for free school meals in the past six years (from year 6 to year 11), if they are recorded as having been looked after for at least one day or if they are recorded as having been adopted from care. (Department for Education. (Jan 2016) [Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2014 to 2015](#) Main text: SFR 01/2016)

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education. (Jan 2016) [Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2014 to 2015](#) - LA Tables – Table LA9

<sup>6</sup> Burgess S. (2016) [Human Capital and Education: The State of the Art in the Economics of Education. IZA Discussion Paper No. 9885](#) - Page 69-70

underperformance in the North, particularly for schools in areas of deprivation, is to meet the challenge of teacher supply.

7. Firstly, we need to understand teacher supply issues better, including at a local level. I recommend that:

- **DfE should find additional sources to capture fluctuations in vacancy rates across the school year and to measure the degree of churn schools are experiencing after the termly resignation deadline in May each year; and**
- **DfE should improve its teacher supply model to take better account of local need, including by subject.**

8. Secondly, DfE should support schools with the biggest challenge in attracting and retaining teachers and build evidence of what works. I recommend that:

- **DfE should pilot a new ‘Teach North’ scheme to attract and retain talented newly-qualified teachers in disadvantaged schools in the North; and**
- **Northern Powerhouse cities should take the lead on regional marketing initiatives to attract teachers to live and work in the North and I propose that funding should be allocated to support these initiatives.**

9. Research tells us that school leadership is second only to teaching in improving pupil performance<sup>7</sup>. Having an effective pipeline of talented and skilled school leaders has become increasingly important as we move towards a school-led system. I recommend that:

- **DfE should consider how it can enhance existing and new leadership initiatives and programmes in the North, which will encourage more participants to take up the challenge of closing the disadvantage gap where it is greatest and raise the status of a career in northern ‘cold spots’<sup>8</sup>.**

### **School improvement capacity**

10. Academy sponsorship is an important school improvement mechanism, which in my experience, enables outstanding head teachers to make a difference in more than

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<sup>7</sup> Leithwood K, Day C, Sammons P, Harris A, and Hopkins D. (2006) [Seven strong claims about successful school leadership](#) (Page 3), DfES London and NCSL, Nottingham

<sup>8</sup> Cold spots for the purpose of this report are considered as areas of chronic and persistent underperformance, where not enough children have access to a high-quality school place, and there is insufficient capacity to drive improvement.

one school. MATs can also support better recruitment and retention of teachers and help share effective practice across schools.

11. The academies movement has progressed more slowly in the North and I believe accelerating growth of MATs is key to driving up standards. To go further faster, I believe we need to be more challenging to successful schools in the North, who should feel a moral imperative to support struggling schools through sponsorship arrangements. There should also be greater challenge to schools requesting to convert to academies.

12. Sustainability is key to success. Schools that convert to academy status must have strong performance to ensure successful transition. I recommend that:

- **In addition to an outstanding or good judgement, standalone conversion to academy status should be restricted to schools with strong evidence of progress over three years; and**
- **The governing boards of standalone academy trusts (SATs) and small MATs of 1–3 academies should consider amalgamating with others to build a more sustainable MAT. The retirement or departure of the head teacher or executive head teacher might be a particularly appropriate time to do this.**

13. Northern local authorities must also do more to support academy programmes. Northern Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) and their offices are key to facilitating this. I recommend that:

- **National consideration should be given to RSC resourcing in areas where there are endemic issues, including issues with previous decision-making; and**
- **It is important that all northern local authorities accept that every Government for almost two decades has had an academy policy. They should encourage and facilitate the growth of strong and effective Multi Academy Trusts in their area because it is in the interests of local children and young people to do so.**

14. I believe that strong MATs require strong leaders and we need to develop ways of spreading the influence of strong MATs in the North and the rest of the country. I recommend that:

- **DfE should assign funding to MAT CEOs from northern ‘cold spot’ areas to attend MAT CEO training; and**
- **DfE should assign funding to a mentoring scheme whereby successful MAT CEOs from across the country mentor CEOs of new or expanding MATs in the North, offering support on effective school improvement models, data analysis, financial management and growth planning.**

15. Effective governance is also crucial to MAT success. Ofsted report that the “best governing bodies are increasingly professional, with members who have the knowledge and background to effectively challenge senior leaders”<sup>9</sup>. However, the evidence tells us that recruiting skilled governors is more difficult in rural, urban or deprived areas and in those schools that ‘require improvement’ or have lower than average pupil attainment. Further work is required to encourage trusts to build board capability. I recommend that:

- **New academy trusts should review their governance arrangements and in many cases must recruit governors with additional skills if governing bodies are to successfully transition into their new role as a board of trustees;**
- **DfE should use their review of governance training activity to assess the specific development needs of MAT boards and MAT board chairs, and should fund training and development activity to meet these; and**
- **DfE should ensure that funded programmes to recruit people to governance roles (Academy Ambassadors and Inspiring Governance), address the particular issues faced by northern schools and MATs when planning campaigns to recruit new volunteers to governing boards.**

16. Finally, system leaders, with experience of achieving high standards and turning schools around in challenging circumstances, are important to supporting school improvement. The *Educational Excellence Everywhere* White Paper identified a shortage of both National Leaders of Education (NLEs) and of Teaching School Alliances as a feature of ‘cold spots’, many of which are in the North<sup>10</sup>. We need a more sophisticated mechanism to identify those schools and leaders who can best contribute to building educational capacity in our hardest to reach communities. I recommend that:

- **National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) should press ahead with plans to enable the best schools with good Ofsted judgements to apply to become Teaching Schools and NLEs as soon as possible. The revised designation approach should also take greater account of those heads that have a track record of transforming the schools they lead and support, and consistently achieve high levels of progress for pupils with low prior attainment.**

### **Raising standards by closing the disadvantage gap**

17. Large pockets of deprivation are a feature of the North, whether they are in former mining towns, coastal towns or rural areas. We need to understand why there is a large

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<sup>9</sup> Ofsted. (Dec 2015) [Sir Michael Wilshaw's speech to launch Ofsted's 2014/15 annual report for education and skills.](#)

<sup>10</sup> Department for Education. (March 2016) [Educational Excellence Everywhere White Paper](#)



gap between children in the North and better performing areas such as London, including at the end of reception. Although this report does not attempt to cover early years education prior to Reception, I recommend that:

- **DfE should commission research into the early years gap in the North as well as effective practice for closing it; and**
- **DfE should identify the schools that are most effective at closing the gap in Reception classes and support them to disseminate best practice to schools in the North.**

18. We also need to bring together best practice from schools in closing the disadvantage gap and identify the most effective approaches for teaching, managing behaviour, and creating a whole school culture and ethos that supports high standards and raises aspirations for all pupils. I recommend that:

- **DfE should bring together schools who have a track record in closing the disadvantage gap and raising attainment of the most disadvantaged pupils to report on what works effectively for different schools and circumstances.**

## **Curriculum**

19. London's success in recent years is at least in part attributable to very strong performance at primary. Northern primary schools could go even further in preparing students for success at secondary schools through outstanding evidence-based teaching of literacy and numeracy. I recommend that:

- **DfE should work with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to scale up the North East Literacy Campaign to other priority areas in the North; and**
- **DfE should work with the EEF Research Schools to further develop EEF's focus within northern schools, to identify and evaluate effective programmes and practice with children who do not meet age-related expectation or who are not secondary-ready.**

20. A sound academic education to age 16 helps open doors and enables pupils to make genuine choices about post-16 pathways, whether academic or high-quality technical education. Many schools in the North have tended to offer a less academic curriculum and have been slower to change. Some northern schools need to be more responsive to curriculum change and offer a high-quality academic curriculum, in line with many schools serving disadvantaged communities in London. I recommend that:

- **Northern schools, which have not already done so, should revise their curriculum offer. We should all ensure that the curriculum and**

**qualifications we offer are of sufficiently high status to open up opportunities for our students, rather than so low in status as to close them down.**

## **System conditions**

21. A feature of the North is the large number of ‘cold spots’, which tend to have high levels of deprivation, low levels of attainment and few good or outstanding schools. We need to make sure that conditions in the system in which schools operate enable schools to build the capacity and capability to improve.

22. Firstly, we need to make sure that there is adequate funding for high-need pupils and sufficient special school provision in ‘cold spot’ areas. I recommend that:

- **DfE should reform funding to ensure schools with high concentrations of students with special educational needs are fairly funded; and**
- **DfE should provide local authorities with additional support and funding (including capital) so they can ensure Special School provision is sufficient to meet demand, particularly in ‘cold spot’ areas.**

23. Secondly, we need to tackle mono-cultural disadvantage which I believe is a particular problem in the North. I recommend that:

- **DfE should review the Admissions Code to ensure clarity for both schools and adjudicators on how nodal points and catchments can be used to encourage greater diversity; and**
- **Schools with high concentrations of mono-cultural disadvantage should consider how changing their admissions policy might encourage a more diverse mix of students, for example randomised selection from a city-wide or whole-town catchment.**

24. Finally, we need a stable system in which head teachers can have confidence. Curriculum and exam changes in recent years have made it more difficult for head teachers to directly compare their schools results year on year. I recommend that:

- **DfE and Ofqual should address schools’ concerns about the examination system; and**
- **DfE and Ofqual should monitor the impact of recent changes to the examination system on disadvantaged students, and take this into account when making future refinements to the examination system.**

## Methodology

25. Although this review was not intended to be a research project, we have gathered a range of evidence, data and views through the following activities:

- a. Analysis of data to understand the distinctive features of education in the North and identify focus areas;
- b. Consulting people with an interest in education in the North, including:
  - Northern MPs, at an event held in the Palace of Westminster.
  - Think tanks, education charities and academics, including IPPR North, Teach First, Education Data Lab, Impetus PEF, Manchester University, Right to Succeed and the Education Endowment Foundation.
  - 300 system leaders across the North of England at various events.
  - 130 academy leaders or schools interested in becoming academies at the NSC Roadshow in Leeds.
- c. Testing proposals with DfE policy leads and ministers and externally with educationalists across the region; and
- d. Commissioning a literature review of evidence relating to education in the North, which has been published today alongside this report<sup>11</sup>.

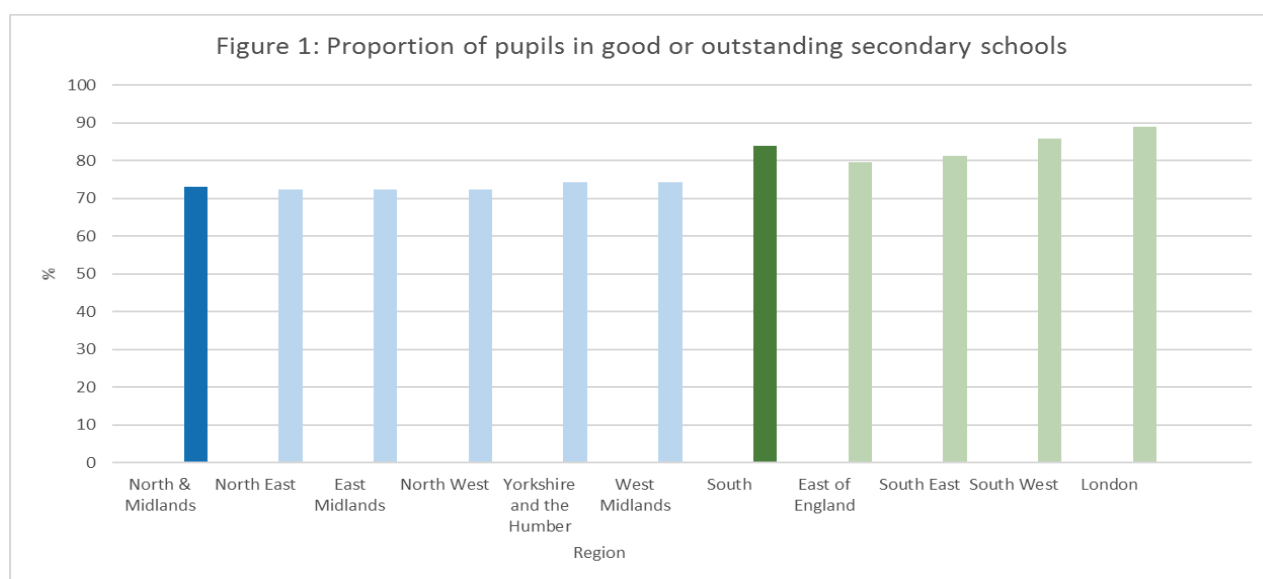
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<sup>11</sup> Tate S, Greatbatch, Prof David. (2016) Review of evidence on education in the north of England

# Introduction

## The case for intervention

26. Too often, schools in the North of England are failing to provide children with a standard of education which would allow them to reach their full potential. The Northern Powerhouse initiative is designed to rebalance the economy and establish the North as a centre of growth in the UK, but a dynamic regional economy depends on an excellent education system. Currently, the standard of secondary schooling in the North of England fails to match this ambition.



Source: Ofsted Official Statistics for school inspection data: March 2016<sup>12</sup>

27. **Secondary schools in the North are consistently outperformed by their counterparts in the South of England.** The number of secondary schools judged to be good or outstanding in the South and East is 81%, compared with only 70% in the North<sup>13</sup>. If schools in these regions were performing as well as those in the South, nearly 160,000 more children would attend good schools<sup>14</sup>. Poorly performing local authority areas are also concentrated in the North – seven out of the ten worst performing local authority areas for good or outstanding secondary schools are in the North<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Figure 1 source: Ofsted. (March 2016) [Maintained schools and academies inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2016 - schools inspection data as at 31 March 2016](#)

<sup>13</sup> Ofsted. (June 2016) [Maintained schools and academies inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2016 - Main text Page 7](#)

<sup>14</sup> Ofsted. (Dec 2015) [The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014/15 Page 25](#)

<sup>15</sup> Ofsted. (June 2016) [Maintained schools and academies inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2016](#)

28. The lower standard of secondary school education feeds through to lower attainment at KS4 and at A level. The three regions which make up the North – the North East, the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber – are below the national average in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A\*-C at GCSE including English and mathematics. This cannot be solely attributed to the North having high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage<sup>16</sup>. This gap is higher than one would expect to see, even when one accounts for background and family income. We must be open to new ideas and determined to change this if the North is to become a Powerhouse.

29. The outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly severe. DfE 2014-15 data shows that only 34% of disadvantaged students attending northern schools achieved 5+ A\*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics, compared to a national disadvantaged average of 37% and 48% in London. There is also a bigger difference in attainment between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils in the North of England; the gap is 30.9 percentage points in the North compared with 28.3 nationally and only 20.5 in London<sup>17</sup>. This attainment gap is wide in the North even in schools with low levels of disadvantage, all types of school in the North, no matter what their intake, need to address this issue. This threshold of attainment has a material effect on a child's life chances; research from the DfE suggests that it is worth approximately £100,000 over the lifetime of an individual<sup>18</sup>.

30. This underperformance has important implications for outcomes in work and education in later life. Pupils from the North are less likely to go on to study at top universities than children in the South, with a lower percentage attending high tariff institutions. Once they leave school, too many young people in the North end up not in education, employment or training (NEET). In 2015, this was as high as 5.7% in the North East and 4.8% in both the North West and Yorkshire and Humber<sup>19</sup>. Periods of youth unemployment are particularly damaging for long-term life chances, with several academic studies indicating that a significant period of unemployment has a 'scarring effect' on young people.

31. There are, however, examples of schools in the North where exceptional leadership and teaching are driving the kind of successful, new approaches which are much more typical of London. The Academy at Shotton Hall in Peterlee serves an area of

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<sup>16</sup> Ofsted. (Dec 2015) [The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014/15 – Page 10](#)

<sup>17</sup> Department for Education. (Jan 2016) [Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2014 to 2015 - LA Tables – Table LA9](#)

<sup>18</sup> Department for Education. (Dec 2014) [The economic value of key intermediate qualifications: estimating the returns and lifetime productivity gains to GCSEs, A levels and apprenticeships – Page 9](#)

<sup>19</sup> Department for Education. (Dec 2015) [Local Authority NEET figures 2015](#)

high deprivation. It focusses on high expectations for both students and staff. Senior and middle leaders have a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching and leadership, and increasing pupil aspirations. A particular focus on literacy and numeracy ensures that students are making excellent progress and can be successful across the curriculum.

[The Academy at Shotton Hall](#) in Peterlee serves an area of high deprivation, with over 40% of its pupils in receipt of pupil premium. In a coastal and rural area, with a predominantly white British intake, the Academy bucks the trend in terms of the performance of all pupils, as well as those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The academy focusses on the quality of teaching and learning, driving the highest standards in literacy and numeracy. Children entering the academy benefit from significant intervention programmes in numeracy and literacy, so that the building blocks for future success are established from the beginning of their time in the school.

The academy's culture is one of high expectations of staff and students in all aspects of their work. Securing high levels of attendance, positive relationships between staff and students, the academy's mantra is 'every child experiencing excellence every day'. To secure this, the professional development of all staff is a high priority and there is a relentless focus on the quality of children's experience in the classroom.

Shotton Hall also believes the freedoms it has as an academy, including the ability to be innovative within their curriculum and bring in subject experts to give children a wider range of high quality experiences, has also been a key factor in their success. As an outstanding school, Ofsted recognises the impact of this culture and approach in the academy's outcomes, recognising that expectations are high and teachers give all students the self-belief that they can succeed.

## Reasons for underperformance

32. There is evidence of geographical differences in educational attainment emerging before pupils start secondary school. The recent IPPR North paper by Clifton et al highlights the early years gap. The difference in educational development of children from poorer families and more affluent backgrounds by the time a child finishes reception, 'is almost twice as large in the North as it is in London'<sup>20</sup>.

33. The drivers of the development gap are complex and not fully understood at the regional level. The wider evidence indicates that factors such as a high-quality early

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<sup>20</sup>Clifton J, Round A and Raikes L. (May 2016) [Northern Schools: Putting Education at the Heart of the Northern Powerhouse](#) - Page 3

education, a high-quality home learning environment, maternal education, and other background factors play a key role. What is known is that the gap in the North widens during the primary phase and then again more sharply during secondary education.

34. **Schools in the North are struggling to recruit and retain the best teachers.**

The rising demand for teachers across the country has made it more difficult for schools in disadvantaged and deprived areas to recruit the best teachers. In these areas, Ofsted report that 77% of headteachers reported difficulties in recruiting the right staff as opposed to 50% in non-deprived areas<sup>21</sup>. Schools with a disadvantaged intake also face difficulties in retaining teachers. This is in the context of a challenging national picture for teacher recruitment and retention; teacher recruitment targets in some subjects have been missed for four consecutive years.

35. A key factor in determining the North's performance is the **shortage of high-quality senior leaders in disadvantaged areas**. Ofsted report that "of the 49 Secondary schools in the most disadvantaged areas that have inadequate leadership and management, 41 were in the North and the Midlands"<sup>22</sup>. It can be extremely challenging to persuade head teachers and senior leaders to relocate to isolated or economically deprived areas.

36. The reforms of the previous Government have allowed primary and secondary schools to apply to become an academy, independent of local authority control, and schools to form multi-academy trusts, which are governed through a single set of members and directors. I have seen first-hand the transformational impact that academy sponsorship can have on pupil outcomes in low-performing local authority schools. However, change has been slower in the North of England overall than elsewhere in the country. There is a need to support the **development of effective multi-academy trusts with genuine moral purpose in the North**.

37. There is also a need to explore how **school admissions arrangements** can exacerbate problems in areas where standards are low. How can schools work together locally to facilitate a mix of pupils from a range of different backgrounds? In so-called 'cold-spots', where there are not many good or outstanding schools locally, how can we adequately fund the high concentrations of students in too few schools who are looked after or who have special educational needs? The composition of a school's intake has a significant impact on the ability of a school to narrow the attainment gap.

38. Secondary schools in the North are failing large numbers of disadvantaged pupils. Although it is clear a large part of the gap between in educational performance emerges

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<sup>21</sup> Ofsted. (Dec 2015) [The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014/15](#) - Page 73

<sup>22</sup> Ofsted. (Dec 2015) [The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014/15](#) - Page 15

before children start school, the Government should do more to understand this. The experience of London shows that at their best, well-run schools can do a huge amount to **close the gap between the most and least advantaged in our society.**

39. Finally, I want to make sure that every child in the North receives the best possible education to age 16. Schools with high levels of disadvantage in the North often offer a less rigorous and academic curriculum than those in London, and this closes off opportunities for children before they reach adulthood. Schools with high levels of deprivation in the North need to do more to **revise their curriculum to focus on qualifications which genuinely improve the life chances of their students.**

## **Comparisons with London**

40. The remarkable turnaround in the educational performance of London schools has been widely commented upon in recent years. Pupils in London consistently outperform those in the rest of the North with 60.9% of pupils in London state schools achieving 5+ A\*-C grades including English & mathematics GCSEs compared to 55.5% of those in the North, in 2015 <sup>23</sup>.

41. The gap is greater still for disadvantaged pupils. In 2015, 48% of disadvantaged pupils in London state schools achieved 5+ A\*-C grade including English and mathematics GCSEs compared to 34% of disadvantaged pupils in the North. This is particularly striking when we consider that in the early 1990s, London's disadvantaged pupils were falling behind those in the rest of the country.

42. London's strong educational performance in relation to disadvantaged pupils, relative to elsewhere is also apparent at ages 5 and 11, and is sustained into post-16 outcomes.

43. London Challenge has been credited with having a role in the transformation of London schools. Launched in May 2003, the London Challenge was a five-year strategy which aimed to improve results, raise aspirations and expectations, improve teacher morale, and increase parental confidence in London secondary schools (and some London primary schools from 2006).

44. I understand that the causes for educational improvements in London are complex and coincided with other initiatives. However, I do believe that London Challenge was instrumental - a combination of investment in teacher recruitment and infrastructure; evidence-based practice and accountability were held together by strong leadership and a simple focus on improving London schools.

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<sup>23</sup> Department of Education. (Jan 2016) [Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2014 to 2015](#) – underlying data



45. I look forward to seeing evidence from DfE's research on the London Effect and hope that examples of what worked well, will be shared with regions across the country.

## **The structure of the report**

46. My report therefore focuses on these five areas, providing an in depth assessment of the issues, and outlines a series of proposals to tackle educational underperformance in the North of England:

- a. *Building Teaching and Leadership Capacity*
- b. *School Improvement Capacity*
- c. *Raising standards by closing the disadvantaged gap*
- d. *Curriculum*
- e. *System Conditions*

# Section 1: Building teaching and leadership capacity

## Teacher supply

47. Teacher effectiveness is the most important determinant of pupil outcomes<sup>24</sup>. Raising educational standards in the North requires us to attract, train and retain high-quality teachers and leaders in the region so that every child is taught by an effective teacher.

48. While entrants to the profession and the overall workforce have increased, schools in some areas still find it difficult to recruit enough good teachers and at the same time the number of teachers leaving the profession has increased. Teacher supply is challenging across the country and national targets for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) recruitment have been missed in several subjects for the past four years.

49. Schools serving disadvantaged communities can find it particularly difficult to attract and retain the best teachers. Schools in areas of higher deprivation are less likely to have teachers with a relevant degree in some subjects<sup>25</sup>. They also experience greater staff turnover<sup>26</sup>. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are precisely those who benefit most from high-quality teaching; for them, “the difference between a good teacher and a bad teacher is a whole year’s learning”<sup>27</sup>.

50. In my view, the most important step we can take to address educational underperformance in the North is to meet the challenge of teacher supply.

## Understanding the problem

51. One of the challenges in accurately assessing the scale of teacher supply challenge in the region is the quality of the available data. There is a divergence between the experience of schools in the region and the picture painted by the data provided by the DfE. Although teacher supply issues were a theme echoed by everyone I spoke to, DfE’s annual school workforce census reports relatively low teacher vacancy rates, which have remained broadly stable over time.

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<sup>24</sup> Burgess S. (2016) [Human Capital and Education: The State of the Art in the Economics of Education. IZA Discussion Paper No. 9885](#) - Page 69-70

<sup>25</sup> Allen R, Mian E, and Sims S. (2016) [Social inequalities in access to teachers. Social Market Foundation Commission on Inequality in Education: Briefing 2](#)

<sup>26</sup> Department for Education, (Sept 2016) [Schools workforce in England 2010 to 2015: trends and geographical comparisons](#)

<sup>27</sup> The Sutton Trust. (Sept 2011) [Improving the impact of teachers on pupil achievement in the UK – interim findings](#)

52. However, I do not believe that this measure provides a complete picture of the teacher supply position. The school workforce census is taken in November, by which time schools will have found a way to staff their classes, even if that means compromising on subject specialism, quality or the curriculum. The fact that very few vacancies exist by November does not, in my view, provide absolute assurance that schools have successfully recruited the teachers they need. While accurate, the statistic therefore gives an impression of stability which does not accurately reflect the experience of schools and school leaders. I believe that a workforce survey taken in November is not the optimal point in the academic year to collect this data.

### **Recommendation 1.1**

DfE should find additional sources to capture fluctuations in vacancy rates across the school year and to measure the degree of churn schools are experiencing after the termly resignation deadline in May each year.

53. DfE has acknowledged to the Public Accounts Committee that the national vacancy rate masks variation at a local level<sup>28</sup>. However, despite recognising that there are variations in teacher shortages across the country DfE currently takes a national approach to ITT recruitment which does not take full account of regional or local circumstances.

54. Overall, the teacher supply position in the North does not appear to be more challenging than elsewhere in England<sup>29</sup>. However, the evidence suggests to me that northern schools work less collaboratively when bidding for ITT places. School leaders that I spoke to in the course of this review frequently reported supply challenges in particular subjects which are more acute in certain areas and that local supply is partly affected by the availability of ITT places in each area.

55. Ofsted also notes that many teachers are recruited by the School Direct partnerships in which they trained<sup>30</sup>. A regional assessment of need, combined with improved data on vacancy rates across the school year, would enable ITT place allocations to be informed by the best information on any particular regional shortages.

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<sup>28</sup> House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts [Training new teachers : Third Report of Session 2016–17](#)

<sup>29</sup> Department for Education. (Sept 2016) [Local analysis of teacher workforce: 2010 to 2015](#)

<sup>29</sup> Ofsted. (Dec 2015) [The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014/15](#)

### **Recommendation 1.2**

DfE should improve its teacher supply model to take better account of local need, including by subject.

## **Attracting and retaining high-quality teachers**

56. In times of shortage, the most vulnerable schools find it even more difficult than others to recruit high-quality teachers. This leads to them falling even further behind more advantaged areas. Schools in these areas need support to attract and retain high-quality teachers. Securing high-quality staff is the biggest challenge for school leaders and therefore a significant amount of the Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy funding should be directed here.

57. The 2015 school workforce survey shows that 30% of teachers left the profession in their first five years<sup>31</sup> and we know that younger teachers tell us that they are more likely to remain in the profession if they are offered high-quality continuous professional development (CPD)<sup>32</sup>. Currently England's teachers only spend 4 days a year on professional development<sup>33</sup>.

58. DfE should build on this evidence and pilot approaches to attract and retain teachers in schools in the North which face the biggest challenges in recruiting and retaining the best teachers.

59. The programme should pilot a number of initiatives that aim to improve recruitment and retention by encouraging good teachers to work and stay in those schools that need them most, and by supporting schools to manage the issues that can contribute to recruitment and retention challenges.

60. It is important that the sector is engaged in developing the details of the pilots to identify the issues that influence the decisions teachers make about whether to remain in the profession. The development of the pilots should take account of the sector's own ideas about what might work to address retention problems.

61. The programme should be aimed at schools with high rates of teachers leaving and should focus on the teachers that the evidence tells us are most likely to leave.

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<sup>31</sup> Department for Education. (June 2016) [School workforce in England: November 2015](#)

<sup>32</sup> Menzies L, Parameshwaran M, Trethewey A, Shaw B, Baars B and Chiong C. (2015) [Why Teach? Report](#) - Page 31, LKMco and Pearson

<sup>33</sup> Sellen, P. (Oct 2016) [Teacher workload and professional development in England's secondary schools: insights from TALIS](#), - Page 7, Education Policy Institute

62. The scheme should include a full evaluation to test its impact on retention, with a view to rolling it out more widely if it proves to be successful. This will mean that future schemes to attract and retain teachers in the most challenging schools will be developed around evidence-based practice.

### **Recommendation 1.3**

DfE should pilot a new 'Teach North' scheme to attract and retain talented newly-qualified teachers in disadvantaged schools in the North.

63. LKMco and Pearson's 2015 paper *Why Teach?* reports that 'quality of life' and 'cost of living' are factors which would encourage over 70% of teachers to teach in a different region.<sup>34</sup> The Northern Powerhouse has a great deal to offer on both fronts and this should be highlighted to newly-qualified teachers.

### **Recommendation 1.4**

Northern Powerhouse cities should take the lead on regional marketing initiatives to attract teachers to live and work in the North and I propose that funding should be allocated to support these initiatives.

## **Leadership pipeline**

64. Research tells us that school leadership is second only to teaching in improving pupil performance.<sup>35</sup> Having an effective pipeline of talented and skilled school leaders has become increasingly important as we move towards a school-led system.

65. DfE funded and targeted teaching and leadership development programmes focus on improving education in areas of social and educational disadvantage. Some began in London, where they coincided with its recent success. DfE has encouraged programmes to draw larger numbers of participants from 'cold spot' areas, including in the North. I believe it is vital that that these programmes focus participation in the most challenging areas.

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<sup>34</sup> Menzies L, Parameshwaran M, Trethewey A, Shaw B, Baars B and Chiong C. (2015) [Why Teach? Report](#) - Page 28, LKMco and Pearson

<sup>35</sup> Leithwood K, Day C, Sammons P, Harris A, and Hopkins D. (2006) [Seven strong claims about successful school leadership](#) - Page 4, DfES London and NCSL, Nottingham

**Recommendation 1.5**

DfE should consider how it can enhance existing and new leadership initiatives and programmes in the North, which will encourage more participants to take up the challenge of closing the disadvantage gap where it is greatest and raise the status of a career in northern 'cold spots'.

## Section 2: School Improvement Capacity

### MAT development and sponsor capacity

66. Academy sponsorship is an important school improvement mechanism. Though all forms of collaboration between schools can be beneficial, in my experience nothing beats formal governance and accountability structures in the form of MATs for enabling outstanding heads to make a difference in more than one school.

67. MATs bring wider benefits too: they can support better recruitment and retention of staff as well as sharing of CPD and good practice across schools. They can strengthen links between primary and secondary schools to help smooth the transition for pupils moving from one to the other, and they can bring economies of scale. The best MATs can deliver strong collaboration between all the schools involved, driving up standards through a collective vision, coherent strategy and systematic approach to school improvement.

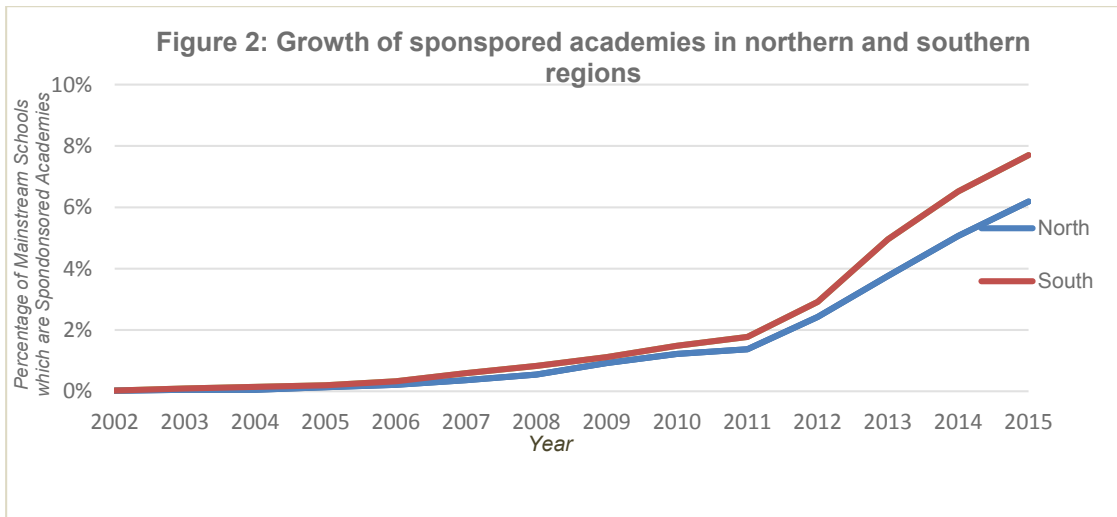
**Maltby Community School** in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, was judged Satisfactory by Ofsted in March 2008, and only achieved 35% 5+ A\*-C GCSEs including English and maths. In 2010 the school became a sponsored academy with U-Explore and performance improved considerably.

The school became [Maltby Academy](#) in 2010 and in May 2012, Ofsted judged the school to be good with outstanding leadership and management. In June 2013, the school became a National Support School and a sponsor in its own right.

In 2015, it achieved 65% 5+ A\*-C GCSEs including English and maths with 92% progress in English and 73% in maths.

The Executive Principal is a National Leader of Education. In addition to its current trust of five schools they have been asked to sponsor other schools. The trust is looking to further expand over the next academic year.

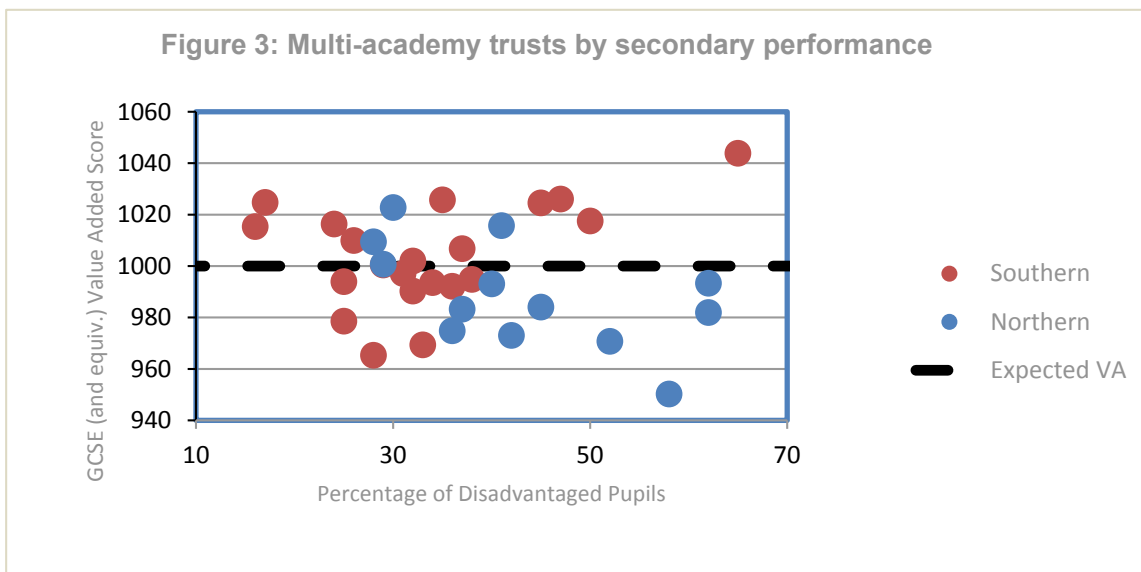
68. The academies movement in the North however, has progressed more slowly than in the South, whether it be from a lack of support, or that schools in some areas prefer soft partnership arrangements over hard federation. Whatever the cause, RSCs report that growth of MATs in the North continues to be slow, and sponsor capacity in some areas is very limited.



Source: *Open academies and academy projects in development, August 2016*<sup>36</sup>

69. I believe that accelerating growth of MATs is key to driving up standards in the North. We need to grow our own capacity in the North, while learning from the experience of successful large MATs here and elsewhere.

70. Moreover, there is strong evidence that for a variety of reasons academisation has been less successful in the North, especially in areas of high disadvantage.



Source: *Multi-academy trust performance measures: 2014 to 2015*<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Figure 2 source: Department for Education. [Open academies and academy projects in development](#) - accessed in August 2016

<sup>37</sup> Figure 3 source: Department for Education. (July 2016) [Multi-academy trust performance measures: 2014 to 2015](#)



71. While there are strong examples in the North of successful MATs in areas of low and medium disadvantage, nobody in our most deprived northern cities and towns has had the scale of impact that Ark and Harris schools have had in London, for example.

Harris Federation is a key partner in sponsoring [Harris Westminster Sixth Form \(HWSF\)](#), which opened in September 2014. The school targets academically able pupils from low income families, with the aim of developing well rounded individuals ready to continue their studies successfully at the best universities in the UK and abroad. Over a third of students received free school meals when they were at school.

HWSF benefits from a close collaboration with the nearby independent Westminster School – with HWSF students able to share the teaching expertise of Westminster. The partnership is also reflected in the strong governance structure of HWSF. The school reports that in 2016 over 4f A level results are at A/A\* and 25% of students achieved at least 3 A grades. As a result, 50% of students will be taking up places at Russell Group universities and 7 students have gained places at Oxford or Cambridge.

In October 2016, Ofsted judged the school to be ‘outstanding’.

72. To go further faster, I believe we need to be more challenging to successful schools in the North, who should feel a moral imperative to support struggling schools through sponsorship arrangements. There should be greater challenge to schools requesting to convert to academies: how will their conversion help to support failing schools in their region?

73. However, this must be approached with caution. Growth is not always straightforward; MATs which expand too rapidly may find that standards slip and DfE intervenes to broker new sponsorship arrangements. Evidence shows that MATs in the North perform less well than those in the South. In particular, fewer MATs in the North are serving the full range of deprivation well, with fewer achieving above expected progress.

74. Sustainability is key for success. Schools that convert to academy status must have strong performance to ensure successful transition. Only reliably strong schools should be allowed to convert on their own, given the higher levels of autonomy and accountability that academy status brings. I have seen examples of schools holding a judgement of good, rushing to convert in anticipation of a lower Ofsted grade under a more rigorous framework at their next inspection. Such schools would be better directed

to join an existing MAT and benefit from its support, rather than being allowed to convert independently.

75. Headteachers often prefer to go it alone when it comes to becoming an academy, for fear of loss of their own autonomy and status. In some areas this has led to a proliferation of single academy trusts with no intention of federating, as well as small MATs who find it difficult to recruit other schools and build sustainability.

**Recommendation 2.1**

In addition to an outstanding or good judgement, standalone conversion to academy status should be restricted to schools with strong evidence of progress over three years.

**Recommendation 2.2**

The governing boards of standalone academy trusts (SATs) and small MATs of 1–3 academies should consider amalgamating with others to build a more sustainable MAT. The retirement or departure of the head teacher or executive head teacher might be a particularly appropriate time to do this.

76. Northern RSCs and their offices will continue to be key to MAT development and sponsor growth in the North and there is a national budget to support capacity building here and elsewhere in the country.

77. In particular, Northern RSCs must be generously resourced in order to unpick some of the previous poor decision-making in the North. For example, some northern local authorities have historically had a negative influence on the choice of the academy sponsorship. This has resulted in over-ambitious expansion of some of the early MATs which have lacked a clear plan for school improvement and who have spread limited central capacity over too wide a geographical area. Within the seven MATs cited by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in his advice note on MAT inspections in March 2016<sup>38</sup>, the North, and in particular the Yorkshire and Humber region, is disproportionately represented.

**Recommendation 2.3**

National consideration should be given to RSC resourcing in areas where there are endemic issues, including issues with previous decision-making.

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<sup>38</sup> Ofsted. (March 2016) [Focused inspections of academies in multi-academy trusts advice note](#)

78. Some northern councils have been deliberately obstructive of academisation, for example insisting that an academy takes on all potential historical employment liabilities for staff while they were council employees. Others have insisted that support staff pension liabilities are paid off in full on conversion, despite the fact that academy staff remain members of the Local Authority Scheme.

**Recommendation 2.4**

It is important that all northern local authorities accept that every Government for almost two decades has had an academy policy. They should encourage and facilitate the growth of strong and effective MATs in their area because it is in the interests of local children and young people to do so.

## **MAT leadership**

79. Strong MATs require strong leaders. The CEO role will vary between MATs depending on the size of the trust, on its operational and leadership model and on the challenges it faces. DfE has recently seed-funded the development of MAT CEO training nationally - I would like to take this further and subsidise training in the North for MAT CEOs.

**Recommendation 2.5**

DfE should assign funding to MAT CEOs from northern 'cold spot' areas to attend MAT CEO training.

80. There are strong MATs in other parts of the country like the Harris Federation and Ark Schools which are at the moment understandably reluctant to expand too widely and move North. There are other highly effective MATs already based in the North like Tauheedal Education Trust and Outwood Grange Academies Trust who do not have the capacity to adopt every school which needs them. We need to develop ways of spreading the influence of such MATs in the North without asking them to overreach themselves. They should be funded to mentor some of the more promising MATs in the North who are just setting out on their journey. In the short term, this would ensure that the new northern MATs are more effective more quickly, can grow more confidently and can avoid some of the mistakes of the past. In the longer term there is the potential for some of these arrangements to lead to a more formal federation.

## **Recommendation 2.6**

DfE should assign funding to a mentoring scheme whereby successful MAT CEOs from across the country mentor CEOs of new or expanding MATs in the North, offering support on effective school improvement models, data analysis, financial management and growth planning.

## **Governance**

81. Effective governance is crucial to MAT success. Strong governing boards provide confident, strategic leadership and robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. Effective boards understand the balance of providing support and challenge to school leaders and are outward facing; they learn from and share good practice with others.

82. Ofsted report that the “best governing bodies are increasingly professional, with members who have the knowledge and background to effectively challenge senior leaders”<sup>39</sup>. However, the evidence tells us that recruiting skilled governors is more difficult in rural, urban or deprived areas and in those schools that ‘require improvement’ or have lower than average pupil attainment. To support the improvement of governance in the North, the DfE should do more to ensure that governing boards:

- recruit individuals from local and national employers to bring in the diversity of skills, knowledge and experience necessary for building board capacity;
- have access to a governance recruitment service which matches skilled volunteers to board vacancies; and
- are able to access to high-quality training and development activity which will support them to develop their existing knowledge and build new skills.

83. The recent expansion of the Academy Ambassadors programme in the North is to be welcomed, but further work is required to encourage trusts to build trust board capability and particularly to develop the recruiting of non-executive Directors from business and the professions who can support growth. At end September 2016, 21% of Academy Ambassadors had been appointed in the three northern regions combined, only 3% in RSC North region. This compares to 23% of appointments being made in the RSC South-East and South London region.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ofsted. (Dec 2015) [Sir Michael Wilshaw's speech to launch Ofsted's 2014/15 annual report for education and skills.](#)

<sup>40</sup> This data is from [Academy Ambassadors](#)

**Recommendation 2.7**

New academy trusts should review their governance arrangements and in many cases must recruit governors with additional skills if governing bodies are to successfully transition into their new role as a board of trustees.

**Recommendation 2.8**

DfE should use their review of governance training activity to assess the specific development needs of MAT boards and MAT board chairs, and should fund training and development activity to meet these.

**Recommendation 2.9**

DfE should ensure that funded programmes to recruit people to governance roles (Academy Ambassadors and Inspiring Governance), address the particular issues faced by northern schools and MATs when planning campaigns to recruit new volunteers to governing boards.

# System Leadership

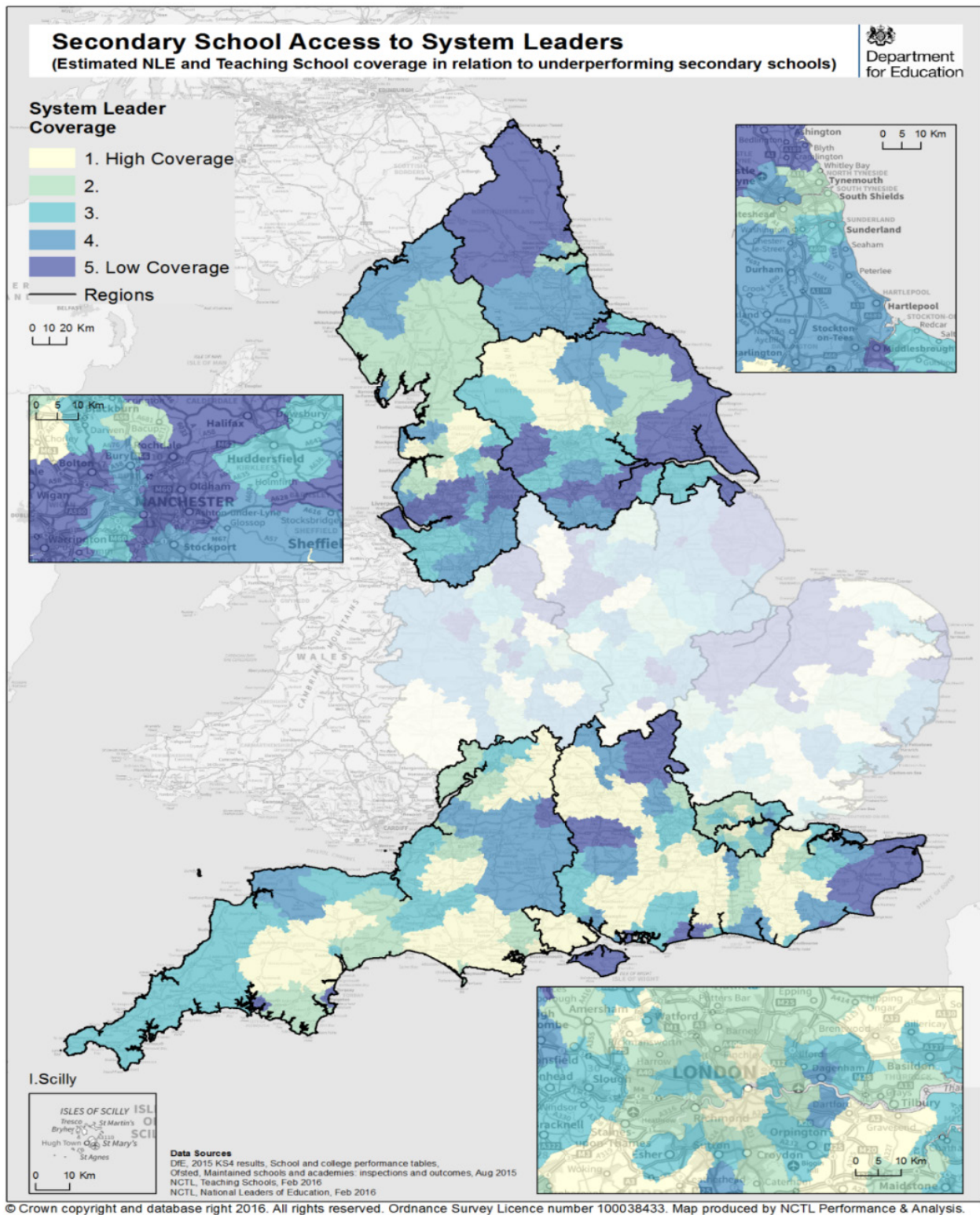


Figure 4: Secondary school access to system leaders

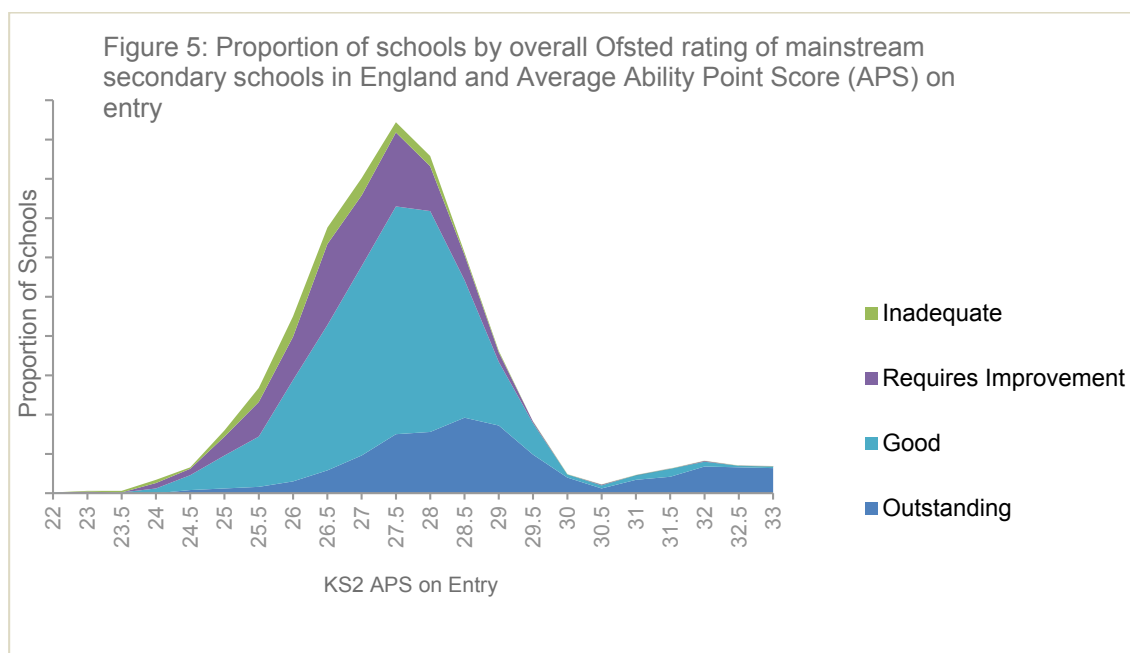
Source: Educational Excellence Everywhere White Paper<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Figure 4 source: Department for Education. (March 2016) [Educational Excellence Everywhere White Paper](#) – this has been reproduced from the map on page 77



84. Finally, system leaders are key to school improvement. Those leaders experienced in achieving high standards and turning schools around in challenging circumstances are best placed to lead school improvement in cold spot areas. However, the *Educational Excellence Everywhere* White Paper<sup>42</sup> identified a shortage of both National Leaders of Education and of Teaching School Alliances as a feature of ‘cold spots’, many of which are in the North.

85. This is especially true of urban areas, and coastal or rural areas with high social disadvantage. The impact of a shortage of these system leaders is mixed, but more notable for secondary than primary, and can restrict the local system’s capacity to self-improve. Although such areas can access Teaching School Alliances and National Leaders of Education (NLEs) from slightly further afield, anecdotal reports suggest that this capacity does always not come with the necessary experience of working in areas of high social disadvantage.



Source: Ofsted Monthly Management Information, Key Stage 4 Performance Tables<sup>43</sup>

86. This situation is not surprising, given the requirement for a school to hold a judgement of outstanding from Ofsted in order to qualify as National Support Schools or Teaching Schools. It is right that only the best schools should have either status, but Ofsted judgements alone are closely correlated with the ability of students on their entry to the school, as Figure 5 illustrates. It is as true of primary schools as it is of secondary schools that it is not impossible to achieve a judgement of good or outstanding if serving

<sup>42</sup> Department for Education. (March 2016) [Educational Excellence Everywhere White Paper](#)

<sup>43</sup> Figure 5 source: Ofsted. (Oct 2016) [Monthly management information: Ofsted's school inspections outcomes](#)– accessed in August 16 and Department for Education. [Secondary Schools Performance Tables](#)

an area of high deprivation, but it is much less likely when pupils' prior attainment is below or well below the national average.

87. Outcomes and Ofsted judgements in schools like the Excelsior Academy in Newcastle may not look as impressive as some at first sight; pupils have very low attainment on entry and they have high levels of turnover among its student population. However, when one looks more closely at the progress made by its students and breaks this down for low, middle, and high-ability students, there is much to suggest that schools like Excelsior have more to offer other schools serving the most deprived areas than others who carry the designation to do so.

88. Ofsted judgements are a good starting point to identify the best schools in disadvantaged areas, but we need a more sophisticated mechanism to identify those schools who can best contribute to building educational capacity in our hardest-to-reach communities. Although system leadership designation should continue to be based on a track record of excellence in school improvement, the white paper commitment to reduce reliance on Ofsted as a proxy for NLE and Teaching School designation is very welcome.

**Recommendation 2.10**

NCTL should press ahead with plans to enable the best schools with good Ofsted judgements to apply to become Teaching Schools and NLEs as soon as possible. The revised designation approach should also take greater account of those heads that have a track record of transforming the schools they lead and support, and consistently achieve high levels of progress for pupils with low prior attainment.

89. This move will help the urgent need to build system leader capacity in many parts of the North and will contribute to the Government's plans to improve social mobility.



## Section 3: Raising standards by closing the disadvantaged gap

90. Large pockets of deprivation are a feature of the North, whether they are in former mining towns, coastal towns or rural areas. I have direct experience of this as a headteacher in Bradford, and I know many other heads in the North share this experience. Collectively we all want to break the link between disadvantage and poor attainment so that no child's progress in life is determined by the socio-economic circumstances in which they are born.

91. Unfortunately, we are not succeeding: the disadvantage gap in the North remains stubbornly wide. The latest GCSE attainment data shows that 34% of disadvantaged children in the North achieved 5+ GCSEs grades A\*-C, including English and mathematics – this is lower than the national average of 37% and 48% in London<sup>44</sup>.

92. The Social Mobility Index 2015<sup>45</sup> reports big regional differences in the chances of disadvantaged children doing well later in life in terms of educational attainment, jobs and housing. No local authorities from the North East or Yorkshire and Humber are represented in the top performing local authorities for social mobility ('social mobility hotspots') and yet almost a third of Yorkshire and Humber local authority areas are represented in the bottom 20%.

93. It doesn't have to be like this. London has similar if not greater levels of disadvantage, but the disadvantage gap is considerably smaller. I believe there is much we can learn from London's approach. I am not advocating a lift and drop: clearly London's schools operate in a very different economic, social and geographic context, but there are certainly lessons to be learnt from their approach which can be adapted to the North.

### Early years

94. Clifton et al report that there is a large gap between northern and London children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of their Reception Year<sup>46</sup>. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)<sup>47</sup> results show that in London, 59% of children who are eligible for free school meals achieve a good level of development when

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<sup>44</sup> Department for Education. (Jan 2016) [Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2014 to 2015](#) - LA Tables – Table LA9

<sup>45</sup> Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission and Social Mobility Commission (June 2016) [Social Mobility Index](#) – Pages 5-7

<sup>46</sup> Clifton J, Round A and Raikes L. (May 2016) [Northern Schools: Putting Education at the Heart of the Northern Powerhouse](#) - Page 19

<sup>47</sup> Department for Education. (Oct 2015) [Early years foundation stage profile results: 2014 to 2015](#)

they complete reception class at age five. Meanwhile in the North of England only 49% of similar pupils do so.

95. At the national level, the development gap opens early, then widens at primary and secondary school. Tackling the development gap early is vital. This report does not attempt to cover early years education prior to Reception, or consider the home learning environment – I simply couldn't do the subject justice within the report's remit or timescales. However, government does need to seriously investigate the reasons for this gap and identify what works in closing it.

### **Recommendation 3.1**

DfE should commission research into the early years gap in the North as well as effective practice for closing it.

96. Although this report does not cover wider early years issues, I do want to discuss schools' role in addressing this gap. Much can be achieved with an intensive focus on closing the gap in Reception. If schools cannot close the performance gap of disadvantaged pupils early on in their school career, the children will not be ready for further learning and will fall further behind. I have seen the difference that this can make in my own schools, and would strongly urge schools to target pupil premium funding here, learning from best practice in schools with high free school meal (FSM) rates and low GLD gaps at the end of Reception.

### **Recommendation 3.2**

DfE should identify the schools that are most effective at closing the gap in Reception classes and support them to disseminate best practice to schools in the North.

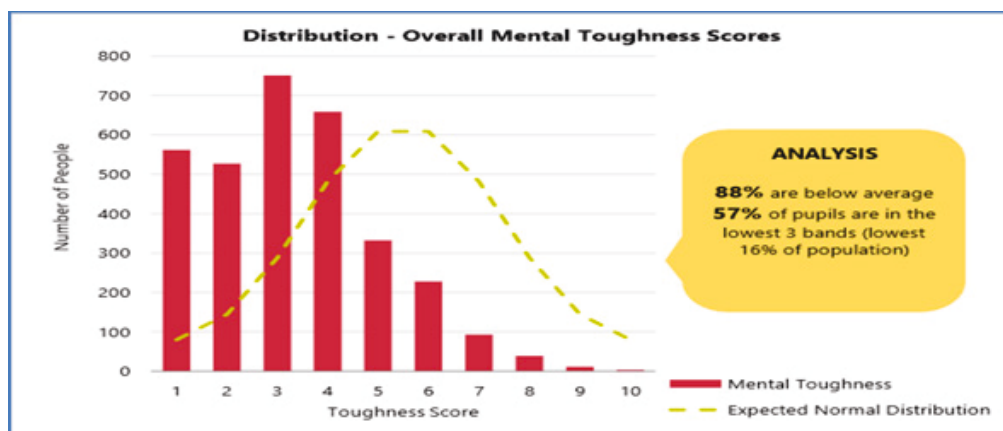
97. Given the potential for children to catch up in Reception, I am concerned that the freedom to start children later in the school year (i.e. deferred entry) may mean that disadvantaged children who start school late will never catch up. I would urge any study of effective practice in early years to include consideration of the impact of this.

## **Designing schools around the most vulnerable**

98. Research supports the importance of character for improving a range of outcomes including mental health and wellbeing, educational, labour market and occupational outcomes, physical health and behaviours, and family structure, political interest and

involvement in crime<sup>48</sup>.

**Figure 6: Student Mental Toughness in an area of high disadvantage**



Source: Right to Succeed, Blackpool Report: Mental Toughness Baseline Report, Mar 16<sup>49</sup>

99. The Mental Toughness Questionnaire (MTQ48) is a psychometric tool developed by AQR in conjunction with Peter Clough, Professor of Applied Psychology at Manchester Metropolitan University<sup>50</sup>. Its main applications have been in the areas of business management and sports psychology.

100. Right to Succeed have used it in a coastal area of high disadvantage, and the results clearly demonstrate the correlation of poor mindset with a disadvantaged achievement gap<sup>51</sup>.

101. Whilst specific interventions to develop character can make a significant contribution, they are no more than sticking plasters over school failure without strength of mission, values and culture. Transforming the mindset of pupils is no easy task, because it requires the school to challenge and overcome the culture in which the pupils have been born and raised.

102. Although many disadvantaged children come from happy, stable families, some of the disadvantaged children I see are vulnerable in some way – for instance, lacking confidence, not always behaving appropriately, or having little aspiration for their future.

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<sup>48</sup> Goodman A, Joshi H, Nasim B and Tyler C. (2015) [Social and emotional skills in childhood and their long-term effects on adult life: A review for the Early Intervention Foundation](#)

<sup>49</sup> Figure 6 source: Right to Succeed. (March 2016) [Blackpool Mental Toughness Baseline Report](#)

<sup>50</sup> AQR International. [Mental toughness questionnaire](#)

<sup>51</sup> Right to Succeed. (March 2016) [Blackpool Mental Toughness Baseline Report](#)

This can seriously inhibit their ability to thrive in school, holding them back for life as a result.

103. In areas of high levels of disadvantage, I believe in designing schools around the needs of the most vulnerable children: building confidence, eradicating low-level disruption, and raising aspiration. The environment, ethos, routines and support structures should all be designed to maximise their chance of success, not to further isolate them from their peers. In the best schools, that means a school where every pupil feels known and valued. It means an ambitious mission coupled with practices such as same-day intervention to address gaps in learning or behaviour issues, a longer school day for additional learning time and a full extra-curricular programme. Strong classroom routines minimise low-level disruption and support the most vulnerable pupils in particular, who can find it difficult to adapt to the idiosyncrasies of a variety of teachers. Academy trusts such as Ark, Harris and Mossbourne have had great success with similar models in deprived areas of London, but it is a much less common model in the North.

104. This is not to suggest that this model is right for every context. But I do believe that every school should have a strong understanding of the context in which they operate and best practice in operating in such a context. Their ethos, behaviour policy and structures should all be designed to build character, resilience and aspiration for their pupils, starting with the most vulnerable.

105. Some schools are already doing outstanding work in this area in the North – for instance, the 2016 winner of DfE’s Character Awards was Thoresby Primary School in Hull. However, in general, this strong whole-school ethos designed for the most vulnerable pupils is something I have observed far less of in the North compared to London.

**Thoresby Primary School** is an inner-city school at the heart of a diverse, transient local community with around 500 pupils on roll and 29 languages spoken. It is a founding member of HCAT (Hull Collaborative Academy Trust) and embodies the trust's mission statement: "Children first."

The school's vision of 'the highest aspirations for all' drives a curriculum that focuses on developing the key skills, knowledge and characteristics to achieve success in particular; resilient thinking, communication and application.

A broad range of enrichment opportunities linked to the core values and building character start the moment the children enter the school. Community projects, visits, visitors are regular and common features of the curriculum. All children have extended opportunities within the school day to learn to play a musical instrument, participate in performing arts, excel in a wide range of sporting disciplines and competitions. Business links and enterprise opportunities are well developed with a specific focus on developing an entrepreneurial mindset.

The school's annual fortnight-long "Kaleidoscope" arts festival is now in its 19th year. This incorporates explorations and debate around issues such as discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice through whole school themes such as 'freedom' and 'heroes'. The fortnight culminates in a carnival where every child performs to parents, local community stakeholders and businesses.

106. London schools, for instance, often place a strong emphasis on mastery learning and a knowledge-based curriculum, such as at the Future Academy at Pimlico. A clear emphasis on building cultural capital and an ambition to deliver a public-school experience within the state sector is also typical, with initiatives such as the Harris Experience in their secondary Academies and the Harris Westminster Sixth Form.

107. Whilst not all of these schools share every feature, they are all common to many of them; they all define an identifiable movement within London education; and they all build character and cultural capital in a way which could benefit areas of disadvantage in the North as much as they do in the capital.

### **Recommendation 3.3**

DfE should bring together schools who have a track record in closing the disadvantage gap and raising attainment of the most disadvantaged pupils to report on what works effectively for different schools and circumstances.

## Section 4: Curriculum

### Improving literacy and numeracy in primary schools

108. Although IPPR North rightly suggests that government intervention should focus on secondary schools in the North because Key Stage 2 results are roughly at the national average, London's success in recent years is at least in part attributable to very strong performance at primary. I believe that northern primary schools could go even further in preparing students for success at secondary schools through outstanding teaching of literacy and numeracy.

109. There is a growing body of evidence on what works in education. Ben Goldacre's 2013 report *Building Evidence into Education*, argues convincingly that there is a "huge prize waiting to be claimed by teachers" if evidence of what works is collected and used routinely<sup>52</sup>. Since then, tools have been developed to encourage this. These tools which help teachers to judge for themselves the effectiveness of different interventions and they should use them to inform their professional judgements. For instance, the Sutton Trust-Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching & Learning Toolkit summarises the cost and strength of evidence supporting a variety of curriculum interventions, including developing literacy and numeracy.

110. However, simply making information available is not always enough: some schools and teachers will understandably want to see proof of their effectiveness in their own context before they are willing to invest in curriculum interventions. The designation of the first five Research Schools nationally (including Huntingdon School in York) by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) will further support the use of evidence to improve teaching practice.

111. There is already good evidence around effective literacy interventions. The EEF's North East Literacy Campaign is designed to improve primary literacy outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They are producing three guidance reports summarising evidence and recommendations. They intend to reach all 880 primary schools in the region by partnering with local organisations to support schools to act on the guidance and provide funding to test and scale up the most promising literacy programmes. There is, however, less evidence about effective interventions in mathematics which presents northern schools with a great opportunity to work with the EEF to further develop evidence-based practice in this area.

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<sup>52</sup> Goldacre, B. (March 2013) [Building evidence into education](#)

### **Recommendation 4.1**

DfE should work with the EEF to scale up the North East Literacy Campaign to other priority areas in the North.

### **Recommendation 4.2**

DfE should work with the EEF Research Schools to further develop the EEF's focus within northern schools, to identify and evaluate effective programmes and practice with children who do not meet age-related expectation or who are not secondary-ready.

112. The EEF's work is important because it can provide proof of concept for northern schools. After an initial period, once its effectiveness has been proven, schools will then pursue the intervention themselves.

The [Outwood Grange Academies Trust](#) adopts a model of collaborative planning across its seventeen secondary and five primary academies.

They lead the Yorkshire and Humber Maths Hub working with multiple partners across all phases and are involved in the Shanghai maths programme and the Singapore textbook project. The maths leads from all their schools work together as a means to develop a deep understanding of the conceptual levels required in each maths area and which they can then pass onto the teachers in their own schools.

All secondary teachers then contribute to the design of the materials to teach the concepts in key stage 3 and 4. The primary teachers have the support of a high-quality textbook and schemes. Whilst the pedagogical approach must be of the 'required standard', which has been discussed and agreed between the team, it is left to individual teachers to exercise their own professional judgment and skills in delivering the lessons. Planning sessions act as effective continuous professional development and collaborative working also means that workload is shared.

This means there is a coherent maths programme across the Trust, with a consistent standard but teachers are free to teach in a way that can be adapted, according to professional judgement and to pupil needs.

## **An academic curriculum for all**

113. Building on the successes at primary, every child should receive a high-quality education through to age 16. Whether they go on to pursue academic education, high-quality technical education or into work with training, being literate, numerate and having a good understanding of science and humanities will serve them in good stead. It opens doors and allows them to make a genuine choice about the pathway they follow post-16.

Recent Sutton Trust research shows that in 300 schools who transformed their curriculum offer to increase EBacc entries between 2010 and 2013, pupils were more likely to achieve good GCSEs in English and mathematics, more likely to be taking a level 3 qualification post-16, and less likely to have dropped out of education entirely<sup>53</sup>.

114. However, schools in the North have traditionally offered a far less academic curriculum than those in London and have been slower to change their curriculum. As is shown below in figure 5, of the top twenty local authority areas in the country for Progress 8 coverage in 2015, thirteen were London boroughs, whilst only one (with a relatively low level of disadvantage) is in the North. In contrast, no London boroughs appeared in the bottom twenty but thirteen northern local authority areas did.

115. Figures provided by Education Datalab, based on Fischer Family Trust (FFT) estimates, demonstrate that too few students in the North were able to fill all 8 slots under the upcoming Progress 8 measure methodology<sup>54</sup>. This is despite the broader range of qualifications available to fill these slots.

116. Further, looking at percentage point changes in EBacc entry rates since 2011, northern schools have been slower to adapt their curriculum offer, which has served to widen the gap between North and South (though with notable exceptions – for instance, schools in Halton have dramatically improved their uptake since 2011).

117. Of course, the North-South gap in Progress 8 coverage has significantly closed in 2016, now that it has become a standard national measure of performance. Nevertheless, northern headteachers need to consider whether a more proactive and far-sighted approach to change would have benefitted their students more than a last-minute rush to compliance.

If this is a wider indication of how readily the northern education system adapts to change, it is perhaps one explanation of why northern students have been left behind.

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<sup>53</sup> Allen R, Thompson D. (July 2016) [Changing the Subject, Sutton Trust Research Brief Edition 13](#)

<sup>54</sup> These figures represent the percentage of pupils who are able to fill all 8 slots under the [Fischer Family Trust](#) Progress 8 methodology. It should be noted that the figures from the Fischer Family Trust are estimates based on their own methodology and will not be directly comparable with official DfE figures. Additionally, it should be noted that this does not reflect behaviour change for schools, as Progress 8 was announced after the pupils involved would have selected their GCSE choices.



Table 1: The top and bottom 20 local authorities by FFT estimates of Progress 8 slot fulfilment, 2015

Top 20	Local Authority	Progress 8 Coverage (FFT estimate)	Bottom 20	Local Authority	Progress 8 Coverage (FFT estimate)
1	Barnet	83%	130	South Tyneside	58%
2	Kingston-upon-Thames	82%	131	Gateshead	58%
3	Harrow	81%	132	Walsall	57%
4	Kensington & Chelsea	80%	133	Salford	57%
5	Richmond upon Thames	78%	134	North East Lincolnshire	57%
6	Brent	77%	135	Redcar & Cleveland	57%
7	Hammersmith & Fulham	77%	136	Barnsley	57%
8	Wokingham	77%	37	Doncaster	56%
9	Westminster	76%	138	Wolverhampton	56%
10	York	76%	139	Bradford	55%
11	West Berkshire	76%	140	Isle of Wight	55%
12	Ealing	75%	141	Oldham	54%
13	Surrey	75%	142	Sandwell	54%
14	Dorset	75%	143	Rochdale	53%
15	Rutland	75%	144	Rotherham	53%
16	Sutton	74%	145	Nottingham	53%
17	West Sussex	74%	146	Kingston-Upon-Hull	52%
18	Hounslow	74%	147	Middlesbrough	47%
19	Hackney	74%	148	Stoke-on-Trent	43%
20	Enfield	73%	149	Knowsley	36%

Source: Fischer Family Trust - Datalab<sup>55</sup>

118. To put these figures in context, in 2015, in Knowsley, only around half of pupils were studying science at GCSE and only 1 in 4 were studying a language. In comparison, Hackney is one of the most deprived areas of London. Despite this, almost 4 in 5 pupils there were studying science at GCSE and 2 in 3 studied languages by 2015, which would help them to undertake higher education or employment. This demonstrates that the low take-up of academic subjects in local authorities such as those listed above is inexcusable.

119. Given the range of benefits identified by the Sutton Trust research I am concerned that some northern schools are poorly serving their students by offering qualifications which have less currency in the labour market and limit progression to higher education.

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<sup>55</sup> Table 1 data: These figures represent the percentage of pupils who are able to fill all 8 slots under the [Fischer Family Trust](#) Progress 8 methodology. It should be noted that the figures from the Fischer Family Trust are estimates based on their own methodology and will not be directly comparable with official DfE figures. Additionally, it should be noted that this does not reflect behaviour change for schools, as Progress 8 was announced after the pupils involved would have selected their GCSE choices.

120. The Government should support schools to do this by taking action to help ensure that schools can access the teachers they need to deliver a more academic curriculum, as I discussed in the earlier section on teacher supply.

**Recommendation 4.3**

Northern schools which have not already done so should revise their curriculum offer. We should all ensure that the curriculum and qualifications we offer are of sufficiently high status to open up opportunities for our students, rather than so low in status as to close them down.

## Section 5: System Conditions

### Provision

121. A feature of the North is the large number of ‘cold spots’, which tend to have high levels of deprivation, low levels of attainment and, above all, few good or outstanding schools. Given their scarcity, it is important to avoid overloading these few strong schools or stretching their resources too thinly. An inadequate number of Special School places in many ‘cold spot’ areas, for example, will further overload an already failing mainstream system with needs it is not designed to meet. In March 2016, DfE published the first stage of its consultation on introducing a national funding formula for schools and high needs<sup>56</sup>. These consultations recognised that resources have historically been allocated unevenly to local areas. Schools in the North typically receive less funding per pupil than those in London, despite having lower attainment and serving communities with greater disadvantage.

122. Research by the Isos partnership shows that the distribution of funding for high needs correlates poorly to the actual needs in different areas<sup>57</sup>. I therefore welcome the Government’s proposals to introduce a national funding formula for high needs.

123. However, there are also inequalities in the funding for additional needs allocated to schools within individual areas. This can present real difficulties for schools serving disadvantaged communities, particularly if there is insufficient appropriate specialist provision in the area, leading to an unusually high concentration of pupils with additional needs in these schools. The Government should ensure local authorities provide a fairer allocation of resources from their high needs budgets. This could mean providing additional funding for schools with a particularly high proportion of pupils with SEN, or commissioning more Special School places to meet more complex needs. Otherwise schools can find their resources severely stretched as notional SEN funding is often insufficient to meet such a concentration of need.

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<sup>56</sup>Department for Education. [High needs funding reform consultation](#)

<sup>57</sup> Department for Education. (July 2015) [Funding for young people with special educational needs: research report](#)

**Recommendation 5.1**

DfE should reform funding to ensure schools with high concentrations of students with special educational needs are fairly funded.

**Recommendation 5.2**

DfE should provide local authorities with additional support and funding (including capital) so they can ensure Special School provision is sufficient to meet demand, particularly in cold spot areas.

124. Similar funding pressures can occur in areas where local authorities either top-slice or specify conditions for use of pupil premium plus funding for looked-after children. This again is a particular problem in 'cold spot' areas, where there are very high concentrations of Looked After Children in the few good or outstanding schools locally. In such schools, the percentage of Looked After Children can be two or three times the national average of 0.8%. In making decisions on where to place Looked After Children, my view is that local authorities should consider the wider local context and challenges that schools in 'old Spot' areas are facing. In addition, holding back pupil premium plus funding limits schools' ability to put in place appropriate support based on individual students' needs. For instance, I have been told of situations where local authorities mandate that all looked-after children receive a laptop or tablet from their school from this funding; for a child with attachment disorder, additional staffing is likely to be far more beneficial.

125. Finally, I believe that mono-cultural disadvantage is a particular problem in the North, whether this is white working class children in former mining towns or Pakistani students in former mill towns, for example. In both cases, the progress and attainment of boys in these areas is a particular problem. In some areas there is little that can be done about the mono-cultural make-up of schools. In others, however, two communities can live close by locally, but self-select separate schools for their different communities. Although the admissions code does allow schools to encourage greater cultural diversity through the use of nodal points and priority admission areas, schools can be challenged by the adjudicator in respect of Equal Opportunities legislation and the holding of single waiting lists. I would welcome DfE clarity on the Admissions Code in this area.

### **Recommendation 5.3**

DfE should review the Admissions Code to ensure clarity for both schools and adjudicators on how nodal points and catchments can be used to encourage greater diversity.

### **Recommendation 5.4**

Schools with high concentrations of mono-cultural disadvantage should consider how changing their admissions policy might encourage a more diverse mix of students, for example randomised selection from a city-wide or whole-town catchment.

The [Tauheedul Education Trust](#) (TET) is a high performing mixed Multi-Academy Trust which runs 15 schools in the primary and secondary phases. Anchored in the north of England, the Trust now has schools in five hubs across the country. These are a mix of Muslim faith and non-denominational schools. The Trust has a track record of providing high quality character-based education and leadership development. All of the Trust's schools that have been inspected by Ofsted are rated Outstanding.

The establishment of both faith and non-faith schools is at the heart of the Trust's mission to improve cultural interaction, shared understanding and social mobility. The design of the Trust and its commitment to engagement with local communities enables it to deliver an innovative range of programmes including inter-faith activities, school twinning arrangements, multi-cultural sporting events, civic leadership and community service initiatives.

## **Establishing clear standards**

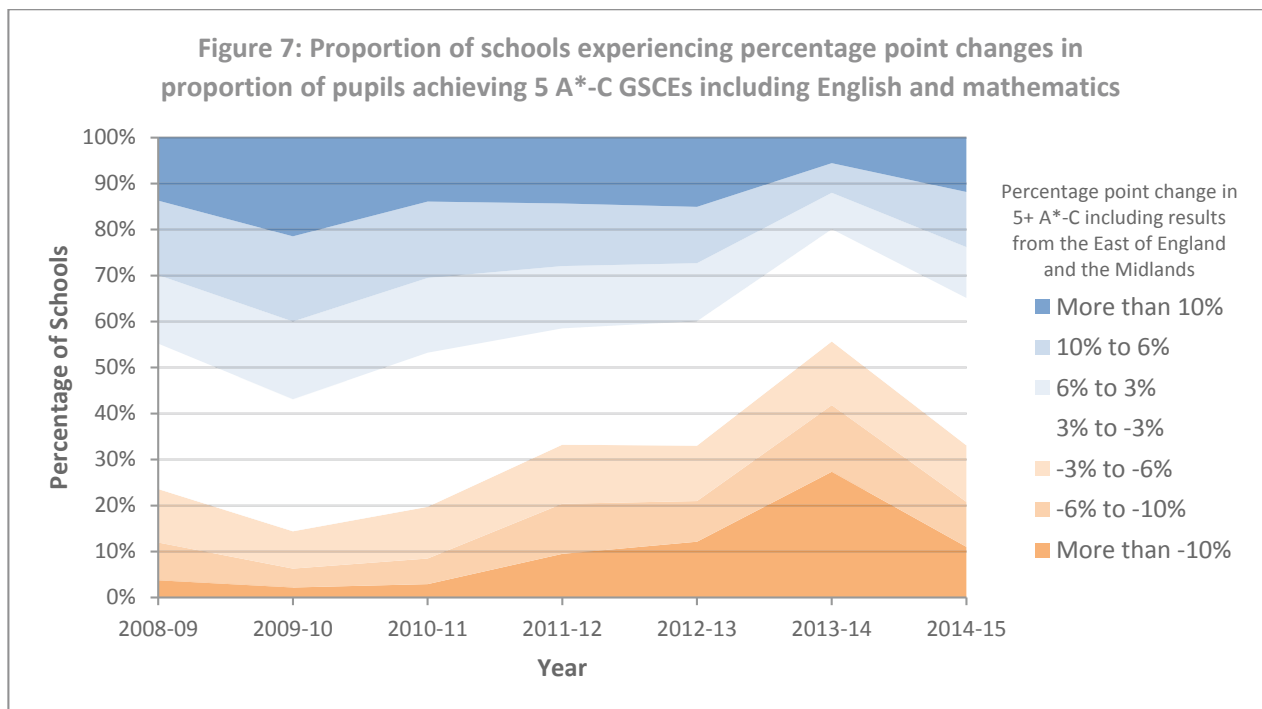
126. When improving any organisation, the ability to accurately measure that improvement is vital. Results from standardised national exams, at their best, can be a particularly valuable way of measuring progress year on year.

127. However, curriculum and exam changes in recent years have made it difficult for head teachers to directly compare their school's results year on year. Moreover, Ofqual may have maintained stability at national level, but I have consulted many headteachers in preparing this report, and many have a perception that results are not as fair and accurate as they used to be at student and school level.

128. Since Ofqual was established in 2010, the number of grades at A-Level and GCSE changed on appeal has more than doubled from 38,450 in 2011 and 90,950 in 2015 English GCSE is a particular problem, where more than 10 of grades were challenged in 2015, and more than a fifth of these challenges were upheld. While the

proportion of all grades changed was 1.1% overall, it was 2.2% for English GCSE – more than one in every fifty<sup>58</sup>.

129. Changes to the examination system, high stakes accountability and a perceived lack of quality control create a problem for schools and for the development of a self-improving system. Since 2010, the proportion of schools experiencing 10 percentage point drops or more in their 5+ A\* - C GCSE pass-rate has increased noticeably.



Source: Key Stage 4 Performance Tables<sup>59</sup>

130. The increased number of drops of 10% or more between 2010 and 2015 is clear to see, rising from 3% of schools to 12% of schools nationally over a 5-year period. The spike in 2013-14 is an anomaly created by the late announcement of a change to the treatment of first entries: it can be ignored. However, it should be noted that 2014 and 2015 data are not directly comparable to earlier years due to changes in the methodology as a result of policy changes, so numbers are illustrative only.

131. While variability in results has many causes and can mean results go up as well as down, this matters for schools in the North because many schools are in need of improvement, and instability in the system makes effective school improvement more difficult. There are also more schools in the North hovering just above national floor standards. An unexplained drop in results for any school is traumatic; for vulnerable schools it can be catastrophic in terms of Ofsted judgements and local confidence. It can

<sup>58</sup>Ofqual. (May 2016) [GCSE and A level enquiries about results: Subject level analyses: Summer 2015 exam series](#)

<sup>59</sup> Figure 7 source: Department for Education. [Secondary Schools Performance Tables](#)

be hard to tell whether a dip in results is simply a random blip or a sign of a systemic problem leading to a longer term downward trajectory until the next set of results a whole year later. London Challenge, which is credited by some with a major turnaround in the fortunes of London schools, took place in a period of relative curriculum and exam stability. Northern schools now need the same.

132. Nor is this an issue for the secondary sector alone. The argument that northern primary schools have done better than their secondary counterparts is well-rehearsed, but they have done so under a relatively stable assessment system over many years. The scrapping of National Curriculum Levels and the introduction of new Year 6 tests in 2016 has introduced greater variability and uncertainty in primary schools' main measure of performance. I welcome the new Secretary of State's recent emphasis on improving delivery at the DfE rather than generating policy change.

133. I also welcome the move to the new Progress 8 and Attainment 8 performance measures, which credit the performance of all students, not just those at the C/D borderline. I would, however, urge DfE to monitor the impact of recent changes to curriculum and examinations on disadvantaged students. While the repeated re-entry of students in some schools did need addressing, in my view the move to reliance on end-of-course examination only was a very blunt instrument to address it.

**Recommendation 5.5**

DfE and Ofqual should address schools' concerns about the examination system.

**Recommendation 5.6**

DfE and Ofqual should monitor the impact of recent changes to the examination system on disadvantaged students, and take this into account when making future refinements to the examination system.

## Summary of Recommendations

- Rec 1.1** DfE should find additional sources to capture fluctuations in vacancy rates across the school year and to measure the degree of churn schools are experiencing after the termly resignation deadline in May each year.
- Rec 1.2** DfE should improve its teacher supply model to take better account of local need, including by subject.
- Rec 1.3** DfE should pilot a new 'Teach North' scheme to attract and retain talented newly-qualified teachers in disadvantaged schools in the North.
- Rec 1.4** Northern Powerhouse cities should take the lead on regional marketing initiatives to attract teachers to live and work in the North and I propose that funding should be allocated to support these initiatives.
- Rec 1.5** DfE should consider how it can enhance existing and new leadership initiatives and programmes in the North, which will encourage more participants to take up the challenge of closing the disadvantage gap where it is greatest and raise the status of a career in northern 'cold spots'.
- Rec 2.1** In addition to an outstanding or good judgement, standalone conversion to academy status should be restricted to schools with strong evidence of progress over three years.
- Rec 2.2** The governing boards of standalone academy trusts (SATs) and small MATs of 1–3 academies should consider amalgamating with others to build a more sustainable MAT. The retirement or departure of the head teacher or executive head teacher might be a particularly appropriate time to do this.
- Rec 2.3** National consideration should be given to RSC resourcing in areas where there are endemic issues, including issues with previous decision-making.
- Rec 2.4** It is important that all northern local authorities accept that every Government for almost two decades has had an academy policy. They should encourage and facilitate the growth of strong and effective MATs in their area because it is in the interests of local children and young people to do so.
- Rec 2.5** DfE should assign funding to MAT CEOs from northern 'cold spot' areas to attend MAT CEO training.
- Rec 2.6** DfE should assign funding to a mentoring scheme whereby successful MAT CEOs from across the country mentor CEOs of new or expanding MATs in the North, offering support on effective school improvement models, data analysis, financial management and growth planning.



- Rec 2.7** New academy trusts should review their governance arrangements and in many cases must recruit governors with additional skills if governing bodies are to successfully transition into their new role as a board of trustees.
- Rec 2.8** DfE should use their review of governance training activity to assess the specific development needs of MAT boards and MAT board chairs, and should fund training and development activity to meet these.
- Rec 2.9** DfE should ensure that funded programmes to recruit people to governance roles (Academy Ambassadors and Inspiring Governance), address the particular issues faced by northern schools and MATs when planning campaigns to recruit new volunteers to governing boards.
- Rec 2.10** NCTL should press ahead with plans to enable the best schools with good Ofsted judgements to apply to become Teaching Schools and NLEs as soon as possible. The revised designation approach should also take greater account of those heads that have a track record of transforming the schools they lead and support, and consistently achieve high levels of progress for pupils with low prior attainment.
- Rec 3.1** DfE should commission research into the early years gap in the North as well as effective practice for closing it.
- Rec 3.2** DfE should identify the schools that are most effective at closing the gap in Reception classes and support them to disseminate best practice to schools in the North.
- Rec 3.3** DfE should bring together schools who have a track record in closing the disadvantage gap and raising attainment of the most disadvantaged pupils to report on what works effectively for different schools and circumstances.
- Rec 4.1** DfE should work with the EEF to scale up the North East Literacy Campaign to other priority areas in the North.
- Rec 4.2** DfE should work with the EEF Research Schools to further develop the EEF's focus within northern schools, to identify and evaluate effective programmes and practice with children who do not meet age-related expectation or who are not secondary-ready.
- Rec 4.3** Northern schools which have not already done so should revise their curriculum offer. We should all ensure that the curriculum and qualifications we offer are of sufficiently high status to open up opportunities for our students, rather than so low in status as to close them down.
- Rec 5.1** DfE should reform funding to ensure schools with high concentrations of students with special educational needs are fairly funded.

- Rec 5.2** DfE should provide local authorities with additional support and funding (including capital) so they can ensure Special School provision is sufficient to meet demand, particularly in ‘cold spot’ areas.
- Rec 5.3** DfE should review the Admissions Code to ensure clarity for both schools and adjudicators on how nodal points and catchments can be used to encourage greater diversity.
- Rec 5.4** Schools with high concentrations of mono-cultural disadvantage should consider how changing their admissions policy might encourage a more diverse mix of students, for example randomised selection from a city-wide or whole-town catchment.
- Rec 5.5** DfE and Ofqual should address schools’ concerns about the examination system.
- Rec 5.6** DfE and Ofqual should monitor the impact of recent changes to the examination system on disadvantaged students, and take this into account when making future refinements to the examination system.

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