

Press release: Drop in poor children's progress at secondary school

Children from poor backgrounds experience a worrying drop off in progress at secondary school, [new research](#) by the Social Mobility Commission reveals today (Monday 27 February).

It finds that the gap between poor pupils' attainment at the end of primary school and the end of secondary school has widened. Since 2012, low-income families have been making less progress year on year, compared to their more affluent peers.

Even when bright pupils from low-income families outperform their more advantaged peers at primary school, they are likely to be overtaken at the next stage of their education.

The report warns that the secondary school drop off means that poor children are failing to finish school with the qualifications that will create opportunities for them to succeed in life.

The research, which was conducted by LKMco and Education Datalab using data from the National Pupil Database, finds that most of the gap (88%) in progress stems from differences in achievement between children at the same school, rather than variations between schools (12%).

The report suggests that this is partly due to the treatment of children on free school meals. These children are more likely to be placed in lower sets, have access to less qualified teachers and have lower expectations set for them by the school.

Home life can also have a big impact on progress with children from low-income families less likely to benefit from effective homework routines, access to books and computers, or cultural and sporting experiences.

Outcomes for children from low-income backgrounds are also affected by the fact that they are more at risk of behavioural issues and exclusion from school.

The research finds that poor pupils located in cities make more progress relative to their more affluent peers than those in rural areas and that the gap is greatest in large schools with average levels of pupil disadvantage.

It also finds that ethnic minority pupils make better progress at secondary schools than poor white children – partly because some evidence suggests that low-income ethnic minority parents seem to provide support that is more effective for their children at home.

The largest gaps in progress are between poor white children and their more affluent peers. Most low-income ethnic minority groups make progress that is in line with the national average for all pupils.

Head teachers interviewed as part of the research said that lower funding was already putting pupils progress at risk and that the prospects for improvement were bleak despite the new funding formula proposed by the government.

With health and social care funding streams also under pressure, schools are facing reductions in external support for children with mental health disorders or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who make the least progress in secondary schools.

The Rt Hon Alan Milburn, chair of the Social Mobility Commission, said:

One of the shocking features of our education system is that the gap between poor pupils and their better-off peers increases during their time in school rather than reducing.

This new research suggests that the progress poor pupils make in primary school is all but wiped out during secondary. The consequence is that successive generations of poor children are being let down by a school system that is supposed to be there to help them move up and get on.

This is not just an issue for the government. If social mobility is to improve, schools need to do more to bridge the education attainment divide between poorer children and their better-off classmates. Closing the gap needs to be top of mind for every teacher in every school.

The government can help by setting an explicit target for narrowing the attainment gap at GCSE and by doing more to get the best teachers into the toughest secondary schools.

Lead author Bart Shaw, from education think tank LKMco said:

Whilst we should be concerned about the high attaining pupils from low-income families who get overtaken at secondary school, it is at least as important to focus on low and middle-attaining pupils from poorer backgrounds.

These children will continue to achieve poorly at GCSE and have diminished life chances unless more is done to accelerate their progress at secondary school.

Our research has found that teacher expectations and actions taken by schools can have a profound impact on outcomes. Parents also have an important role to play by creating an effective home learning environment and taking an active interest in their

children's education.

- children on free school meals achieve almost half a GCSE grade less progress in 'Attainment 8' core subjects than better-off pupils
- 88% of this gap is due to differences between pupils at the same school, meaning that only 12% is due to variations between schools
- school culture: pupils from low-income families are most likely to make progress in secondary schools that focus on them, both in terms of setting and sharing high expectations for pupils
- successful schools use data to track pupils' progress and intervene swiftly and flexibly when pupils fall behind
- high-quality teachers who believe that poor children are capable of making progress are key to ensuring progress
- the teaching of pupils with SEND needs should be prioritised and specialist provision should be easily and promptly accessed where needed.
- pupils from low-income families are less likely to make progress when they are grouped by ability from an early age

Key recommendations:

For government:

- ensure funding cuts do not exacerbate the problem of poor pupils failing to make good progress at secondary school
- make additional funding available for schools to buy-in high-quality specialist provision for SEND pupils
- tackle teacher recruitment issues in areas where pupils from low-income families make low progress
- halt plans to increase selection to prevent further segregation of pupils from low-income backgrounds
- set up an exclusion fund for specialist provision to reduce the changes of 'at risk' children being excluded
- review the quality of specialist provision for looked-after children and make more funding available to offer high-quality support for these children

For secondary schools:

- head teachers must ensure that resources are targeted at KS3 and year 7 pupils making the transition from primary school to the same level or beyond the resources targeted at KS4
- head teachers should develop a school culture of universally high expectations and promote practices that support those expectations
- schools should make regular use of data to analyse progress in order to intervene as early as possible when pupils' progress, especially those from low economic backgrounds, stagnates or drops off.
- heads of departments and senior leaders should exercise great caution in using setting and streaming practices that can negatively impact on pupils from low-income backgrounds
- all staff in schools, particularly school leaders, should prioritise

support for pupils with SEND, for example, by providing continuing training which improves teachers' skills and confidence in providing 'quality first' teaching in every classroom

- all school staff should improve their understanding of teaching approaches that support low prior attainers and pupils from low-income backgrounds
- senior leaders should reduce exclusion rates, particularly of pupils from low-income families.
- secondary schools should provide early and regular careers guidance that makes clear the links between progress at school and the freedom to choose from a wide range of careers

Notes for editors

1. The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory, non-departmental public body established under the Life Chances Act 2010 as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the United Kingdom and to promote social mobility in England. It currently consists of 4 commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.
2. The commission board currently comprises:
 - Alan Milburn (chair)
 - Baroness Gillian Shephard (deputy chair)
 - Paul Gregg, Professor of Economic and Social Policy, University of Bath
 - David Johnston, Chief Executive of the Social Mobility Foundation
3. The functions of the commission include:
 - monitoring progress on improving social mobility
 - providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social mobility
 - undertaking social mobility advocacy
4. For further information, please contact Kirsty Walker at the Social Mobility Commission by:

[Press release: Campaign launched to increase low paid workers' knowledge of national minimum and national living wage rights](#)

- Government advertising campaign goes live across the country today to raise lowest paid workers' knowledge of their rights ahead of the National Minimum and National Living Wage rates rise on 1 April

- New poll shows lack of understanding when it comes to being paid, including for travel time and security searches at the start or end of shifts
- Business Minister Margot James: “We are determined to make sure everybody in work receives a fair wage”

The Government has today launched a nationwide campaign to increase low paid workers’ understanding of their rights around pay.

The national advertising campaign – which will be carried on public transport, in shopping centres and other public places – is being rolled out ahead of the Government’s National Minimum and National Living Wage rates rising on 1 April.

It comes as a new poll for the Government shows many people in low paid work are confused about when they should be paid and what deductions from their pay packets can legally be made.

The poll of more than 1,400 workers earning less than £15,000 found:

- 69% didn’t know they should be paid for travel time between appointments
- 57% didn’t know having money deducted from their wages to cover the costs of their uniform is unlawful if it takes their earnings under the National Minimum or National Living Wage
- 48% didn’t know that tips can’t be used to top up pay to the legal minimum

Some of the most common excuses given to HMRC by employers for underpaying workers include using tips to top up pay to the minimum wage, making staff pay for their uniforms out of their salary which takes them below the legal minimum, not paying for shutting up shop or for time waiting for security checks, or the time spent travelling from one appointment to another.

In light of this, the campaign highlights some of the most common examples when a worker may be underpaid the legal minimum in a bid to encourage workers to check their pay.

Business Minister Margot James said:

“We are determined to make sure everybody in work receives a fair wage and while most employers get it right, there are still a small number who fail to play by the rules. This campaign will raise awareness among the lowest paid people in society about what they must legally receive.

“Anyone who thinks they may be paid less than the legal minimum should contact Acas as soon as possible.”

Jennie Granger, Director General for Customer Compliance at HMRC, said:

“Paying the National Minimum Wage is the law – it’s not a choice. Employers must pay their workers what they’re entitled to and follow the rules.

“We will act to ensure ripped-off workers receive their proper pay and

hardworking businesses are not losing out to dodgy dealers who cheat their staff.”

Ahead of 1 April, when the national minimum and living wage rates go up, workers are encouraged to check their pay, speak to their boss about the rate rise and report underpayment to Acas, the independent workplace advisory service.

Stewart Gee, Head of Guidance at Acas, said:

“We welcome this new Government awareness campaign as it is important for employers to stay within the law and for workers to be fully aware of the pay that they are legally entitled to.

“[Acas](#) has free and impartial advice for both employers and employees on the correct national minimum and living wage rates and advice for workers on what they can do if they feel that they are not being paid correctly.”

[Information](#) on the Government’s National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage and to report underpayment.

Notes to editors:

1. From 1 April 2017: The Government’s National Living Wage rate for those aged 25 and over will increase by 30p to £7.50 per hour.
2. For the Government’s National Minimum Wage:
 - the rate for 21 to 24 year olds will increase by 10p to £7.05 per hour
 - the rate for 18 to 20 year olds will increase by 5 to £5.60 per hour
 - the rate for 16 to 17 year old will increase by 5p to £4.05 per hour
 - the apprentice rate will increase by 10p to £3.50 per hour
3. The new rates were been recommended by the [independent Low Pay Commission](#) after careful consideration of evidence from both workers and employers.
4. HMRC enforces the Government’s National Minimum and Living Wage law and over the next year will spend a record £25.3 million on making sure the country’s lowest paid people get the pay they are entitled to.
5. On 15 February, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy [named and shamed](#) a record 359 employers for underpaying workers nearly £1 million.
6. Polling methodology statement: Populus interviewed a random sample of 1,435 UK adults who are currently working aged 16+ earning less than £15,000 a year from its online panel between 14 and 20 February 2017.

Surveys were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults. [Populus](#) is a founder member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

[Jeremy Corbyn MP statement on the passing of Sir Gerald Kaufman MP](#)

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, commenting the death of Sir Gerald Kaufman, said:

“I’m very sad at the passing of Sir Gerald Kaufman MP.

“An iconic and irascible figure in the Labour Party, Gerald worked with Harold Wilson when he was Prime Minister in the 1960s and became a Labour MP in 1970.

“Gerald was always a prominent figure in the party and in Parliament, with his dandy clothes and wonderful demeanour in speaking.

“Gerald came from a proud Jewish background. He always wanted to bring peace to the Middle East and it was my pleasure to travel with him to many countries.

“I last saw him in his lovely flat in St John’s Wood in London, surrounded by film posters and a library of the film world.

“He loved life and politics. I will deeply miss him, both for his political commitment and constant friendship.”

[This has all the signs of a cover up – Ashworth](#)

Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour’s Shadow Health Secretary, responding to revelations that NHS Shared Business Services failed to deliver more than 500,000 letters from hospitals to GPs in the five years to 2016, said:

“This is an absolute scandal. For a company partly owned by the Department of Health and a private company to fail to deliver half a million NHS letters, many of which contain information critical to patient care is astonishing. Patient safety will have been put seriously at risk as a result of this

staggering incompetence.

“Jeremy Hunt now needs to tell the whole truth of why patient safety has been put at risk in this way. This has all the signs of a cover up by the Health Secretary and he immediately needs to make clear what he knew and when.

“The news is heart breaking for the families involved and it will be scarcely believable for these hospitals and GPs who are doing their best to deliver services despite the neglect of the Government. We urgently need to know how this was allowed to happen, how many patients were involved and how many have been harmed, and whether patients remain at risk.

“This happened on the Secretary of State’s watch and now raises serious questions about Mr Hunt’s handling of this shambles.

“It appears this matter was discovered at least by January 2016, and six months later in July 2016 Jeremy Hunt chose to issue a 138 word statement to Parliament. This statement was perfunctory, complacent and evasive, failing to reveal any of the catastrophic detail of how 500,000 pieces of correspondence, including test and screening results and pathways following hospital treatment, had failed to be delivered and were in fact languishing unopened in a warehouse.

“Instead Mr Hunt glibly told Parliament that “some correspondence in the mail redirection service has not reached the intended recipients.” For a Secretary of State who supposedly has transparency as his watchword this looks like he has tried to hide the scandal from patients and the public. It’s totally unacceptable.

“Quite simply the public will be naturally angry that the Secretary of State who oversees NHS Shared Business Services has failed in his first duty to protect patients.”

[Debbie Abrahams MP responds to comments by George Freeman, Head of No.10 Policy Unit, regarding sick and disabled people](#)

Debbie Abrahams MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary responded to comments by George Freeman, Head of No.10 Policy Unit, saying:

“Mr Freeman must immediately apologise for the comments he made regarding sick and disabled people.

“Freeman dismissed the needs of people with mental health conditions saying support should go to “really disabled people” rather than those who are “taking pills at home, who suffer from anxiety.

“Not only does this fly in the face of the commitment to ‘parity of esteem’ for people with mental health conditions, but it directly contradicts Theresa May’s comments on mental health and two recent tribunal judgements.”