

White Working Class Achievement

A Study of Barriers to Learning in Schools

Acknowledgements

This research was commissioned by London Borough of Lambeth in light of the growing national concern about the low attainment of White British children from low income backgrounds. It is hoped that the findings will be of value to policy makers, schools and practitioners. However the views expressed in the report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of Lambeth Council.

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This study has been a genuinely multidisciplinary project and was carried out by a team that included Education Advisors, education researchers and statisticians with different skills and experience in working with schools in the area of school improvement, school inspection and educational research.

We hope that all those mentioned above will feel that their time and effort has been worthwhile and we accept full and sole responsibility for any mistakes or unintentional misrepresentations in reporting the findings.

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Section 1: Introduction

1. Background to the study

A vital element of school improvement in schools in disadvantaged areas is raising the levels of achievement of underachieving groups of pupils. This has been acknowledged by central Government in its White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' (DfES 1997 and OFSTED 2009) which described 'The Government's Core Commitment' as 'equality of opportunity and high standards for all'. The document recognised that inequality of educational attainment is a key factor and a pressing concern of national importance is to close the gap in educational achievement between different social groups.

Lambeth research into ethnic and gender differences in educational achievement (McKenley et al 2003; Demie, et al 2006 and 2007) and pupil mobility (Demie, 2002) has also highlighted the importance of addressing underachievement in schools. The report concluded that while there were pockets of sound practice, many schools in the LA were not nearly as effective as they needed to be in tackling the underachievement of, for example, Black Caribbean, Portuguese and mobile pupils. A longstanding obstacle to progress has been the lack of strong leadership by central Government in addressing the issues of poverty and under-achievement. In particular, the educational under-achievement of White British pupils in inner city schools has seldom been mentioned in the achievement debate and national policy formulation.

In a number of Local Authorities there is increasing evidence that the performance of pupils from a White British background is beginning to fall behind that of some of the other ethnic groups. Analysis of results at all Key Stages within this Local Authority over three years suggests that the performance of pupils by ethnic group is complex and differences in performance within and between ethnic groups are rarely consistent, either within one year, or year on year. In order to explain this lack of consistency in outcomes, other factors have had to be added to the model to ascertain if the explanation for variations in performance is due to factors in addition to, or other than, the pupils coming from one ethnic group or another. This should include gender, social class and poverty data.

However, a lack of data and consensus over social class classification has made research on education and social class difficult in the past. There are a number of different measures of social class in education. The most commonly used measure of the socio-economic position of pupils used in education is free school meals because this data is available within schools. Others used a geographical area approach to identify areas of deprivation rather than individual social class. Census socio-economic classification which is a measure of occupational position¹ is also used in national statistics and much academic research. It is not a measure used by professionals monitoring educational outcomes in schools despite a wealth of data available through the census.

McCallum and Tuxford (1993) took advantage of the availability of the 1991 census data at local authority level, to show GCSE performance correlated strongly with social class and levels of home ownership and negatively with other measures that

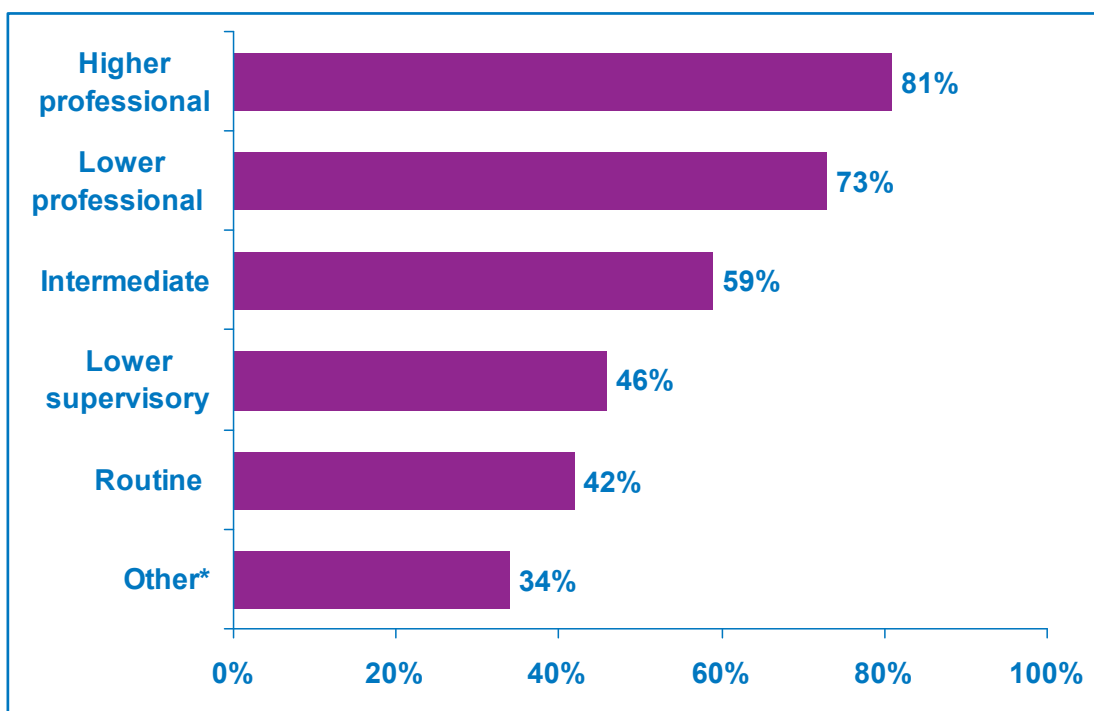
¹ For more details of national census occupational classification see list below:

1. Higher managerial and professional occupations; 2. Lower managerial and professional occupations; 3. Intermediate occupations; 4. Small employers and own account workers; 5. Lower supervisory and technical occupations; 6. Semi-routine occupations; 7. Routine occupations; 8. Never worked and long term unemployed.

included unemployment, social deprivation and over crowding. Subsequent work by McCallum (1996) using GCSE results and social background estimates (i.e. proportion in social classes I and II) obtained comparable results. The findings confirmed that the proportion of Greenwich pupils with five or more GCSE grades A*-C in the highest 'social class quartile' was shown to be at least twice as great as in any other quartile. This was supported by a Lambeth study based on the 1991 census that revealed that, regardless of ethnicity, students from more advantaged social backgrounds performed better and social class, educational qualifications, unemployment, and the index of social deprivation were strongly related to school performance in Lambeth (Demie and McCallum 2001).

The analysis found that poverty and social class was the most influential factor in predicting a student's performance. It also showed that the performance gap between schools that served areas with high levels of poverty and schools serving more affluent areas had continued to widen and the performance of individual students differed dramatically depending upon the overall level of poverty in the school they attended. Subsequent work by McCallum (2007) based on 2001 census also provides incontrovertible evidence of the strong relationship between GCSE performance and the proportion of resident populations in 'managerial or professional occupations at super output area (SOA) level'. Overall these studies confirmed the usefulness of social class data collected as part of the census in exploring the effect of social background on performance.

Figure 1. 5+A*-C GCSE Results by Parents' Social Class in England 2006



* Never worked and long term unemployed.

Source: The Youth Cohort Study (YCS) 2004;
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000560/Addition1.xls> (accessed 3 November 2007).

More recent research on social class and attainment provides another useful means of understanding and talking about social class and social class inequalities (Reay, 1998). Social class has been shown to have a significant effect on educational outcomes and future life chances even when educational achievement is high (Marshall, 2002).

Working class pupils are less likely to achieve 5+A*-C passes at GCSE than their middle class peers and are less likely to go on to higher education (Babb, 2005; OFSTED, 2005). They are also less likely to attend a popular and successful school (Sutton Trust, 2005).

The above findings are also supported by the national Youth Cohort Study (YCS) of England and Wales, which provides useful data on attainment and social class background using parental occupation. Figure 1 and Table 1 shows a clear picture of how different social class groups shared unequally in GCSE attainment. The data reveals that social class is strongly associated with achievement and there is a considerable difference in attainment between pupils with professional and working class backgrounds. It confirms previous findings that pupils with parents of a higher and lower professional occupation do significantly better than those with parents in a manual occupation at GCSE. The proportion of pupils with 5+A*-C in the highest social class was at least twice as great as pupils with a manual working class background.

Trend Youth Cohort Study (YCS) data also shows a rise since the 1999 survey in the proportion of young people gaining five or more GCSE amongst all family backgrounds. Thus the percentage of 16 year olds with parents with routine occupations achieving this level has more than doubled between 1999 and 2006. However, large differences remained in 2000, with nearly 81% of pupils from higher professional backgrounds gaining 5+ A*-C grades compared to 42% of pupils whose family were in a routine occupation, a gap of 39 percentage points. Nevertheless despite the high proportionate increase (see Table 1), there is still a long way to go before young people from lower socio-economic groups narrow the achievement gap with those from the higher socio-economic groups.

Table 1. GCSE performance by parental occupation

Parental Occupation	1999	2001	2003	2006
Higher professional	75%	77%	76%	81%
Lower professional	62%	64%	65%	73%
Intermediate	49%	51%	53%	59%
Lower supervisory	34%	34%	41%	46%
Routine	26%	31%	33%	42%
Other/not classified	24%	26%	34%	34%

Source: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000795/index.shtml>

A statement from the then DfES in 2006 clearly also acknowledges that there is a long-standing association between social class and educational achievement:

‘There is a strong, direct and long-standing association between social class and successful achievement in education’ (DfES 2006:7).

DfES figures for many years (1997-2003) show that pupils from advantaged backgrounds (management, professional) were more than three times as likely to obtain 5+ GCSE A*-C grades than their peers at the other end of the social spectrum (unskilled manual). Indeed, although children from both social groups have improved, in percentage terms, in obtaining 5+ GCSE A*-C grades, the gap between them is getting larger every year. A recent research review commissioned by the DCSF has also revealed that:

'The attainment of White British pupils is polarised by social class to a greater extent than any other ethnic groups. White British pupils from managerial and professional homes are one of the highest attaining groups, while White British pupils from working class homes are the lowest attaining group.' (Strand, 2008)

There are still gaps in the research evidence, particularly when the analysis by social class is broken down by gender and ethnic group. However, more recent work by Cassen and Kingdon (2007) has begun to address this gap and found that:

'White British students on average – boys and girls – are more likely than other ethnic groups to persist in low achievement [although] boys outnumber girls as low achievers by three to two. Nearly half of all low achievers are White British males.'

In addition research has suggested that white working class pupils are more likely to live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty on national indicators. Research into poverty, social class and achievement shows that children in these neighbourhoods and from disadvantaged backgrounds do worse than those from advantaged backgrounds by a greater amount than elsewhere. For example, only about a quarter of students receiving free school meals gain five good GCSEs or equivalent, compared to over half of the overall population (DfES 2006). Overall, recent research work has brought the link between deprivation and low performance at school back on the agenda. Social class, poverty and attainment are an issue that research has highlighted as a central concern, but are often neglected on the national and local policy formulation. A lack of consensus about the relevance of social class, poverty and ethnicity to educational outcomes suggests that there is an urgent need to improve understanding of this particular educational inequality at the level of policy and practice.

2. The aim of the study and research questions

The aim of the research is to study the experiences of white working class pupils and to identify barriers to learning. This research reflects an emerging concern in the research literature that the achievement of pupils from a White British background in inner city schools might have started to fall behind that of some other ethnic groups.

Key questions raised in the research include:

- What is the attainment of white working class pupils in schools?
- What are the key barriers to learning and the factors contributing to underachievement?
- What are the implications for policy, funding and raising achievement?

3. The data and research methods

The methodological approach for this research comprises case studies of selected schools, extensive data analysis and focus group interviews. The empirical investigation is supported by an ethnographical study of the school experiences of white working class pupils. Details of the methodological framework are summarised below:

Data Analysis: Key Stage 2 and GCSE patterns of performance were analysed by ethnic background, gender and disadvantage factors to illustrate differences in attainment.

Focus groups: Parent, pupil, governor and headteacher focus groups were carried out to ascertain their views and to identify whether their experiences mirrored the views of those participants in the case study interviews.

Case studies: Using an ethnographic approach, detailed case study research was carried out to study the school experiences of white working class pupils including the reasons for underachievement. A structured questionnaire was used to interview headteachers, teachers, parents and pupils to gather evidence on barriers to learning, how well white working class pupils are achieving, pupils' views about the school and its support systems. The aim was to triangulate the voices of the various stakeholders in their education. Thirteen schools with a White British population were selected for case study.

The case study schools as a whole covered a range of ethnic groups, community languages spoken, free school meals and pupils with EAL needs. Key criteria for the selection of schools were a number of White British pupils on roll, a headteacher and/or senior managers who understand underachievement issues and who have a clear vision for the school with regard to inclusion, White British underachievement over four years and free school meal entitlement.

The main method of data collection was open ended semi-structured interviews with senior management, teachers, administrative staff and support staff as well as White British parents and pupils. The aim was to then triangulate the voices of the various stakeholders in order to understand more about the educational experiences of white working class pupils. Interviews were conducted by two researchers. Fieldwork visits to each school lasted two days. The findings which emerged from this part of the project are given in the chapters that follow.

4. Terminology: What do we mean by the term white working class?

One of the difficulties with our research has been defining what the term 'working class' means. Everyone we spoke to during the study gave us different interpretations and understandings of the terminology (for details of the findings see page 56-58). As with many terms describing social class, 'working class' is defined and used in many different ways and for differing purposes. This is mainly due to the lack of an approach at national level in classifying the White British group by social class background. For example the government seldom talks about white working class, preferring terms such as 'hardworking families' and social exclusion'. Class is still at the centre of how people see their place in Britain today, and socio-economic background is still a strong predictor of life chances but using clear terminology and returning to the issue of class inequality is therefore long overdue.

In this study we asked headteachers, governors and teachers to tell us what they understand by the term white working class. As we have argued elsewhere the discussion during focus groups and case studies regarding the terminology 'white working class' did not yield any precise definition to be used for this study. Headteachers, governors and teachers talked more in general about how they see the issue from their own school's perspective and experience. Casual usage of 'working class' differs widely. The consensus from the focus group discussions suggests that it is difficult these days to define the term 'working class'.

The variation between different socio-political definitions makes the use of the term as a subject of study contentious especially following the decline of manual labour in post-industrial societies. All argued that 'working class' is a term used in the past

by academics to describe those employed in the lower tier jobs as measured by skill, education and compensation but it is difficult to use the term with precise definition when many parents are unemployed.

However, despite a lack of consensus on the use of the term, researchers and policy makers continue to use the term 'white working class' in a number of recent studies. For example, Mongon and Chapman (2008) and Cassen and Kingdon (2007) defined for the sake of their research the group as pupils from a White British ethnic background who qualified for free school meals. We would argue the term white working class makes sense for an educational purpose as it clearly differentiates pupils by class background. It is useful to focus on underachievement issues in educational debates and it ensures that this focus is not lost or blurred in national policy formulation by providing unambiguous data for policy makers and schools.

For this reason, in this study, we used the term 'white working class' to refer to pupils whose parents are in semi-routine occupations or others who depend on the Welfare State for their income and all pupils who are entitled to free school meals. Free school meals data is available in schools to measure child poverty and has been frequently used as proxy indicator for social class by researchers. Parental occupation is also used by National Statistics to measure social class.

5. The context of the case study Local Authority

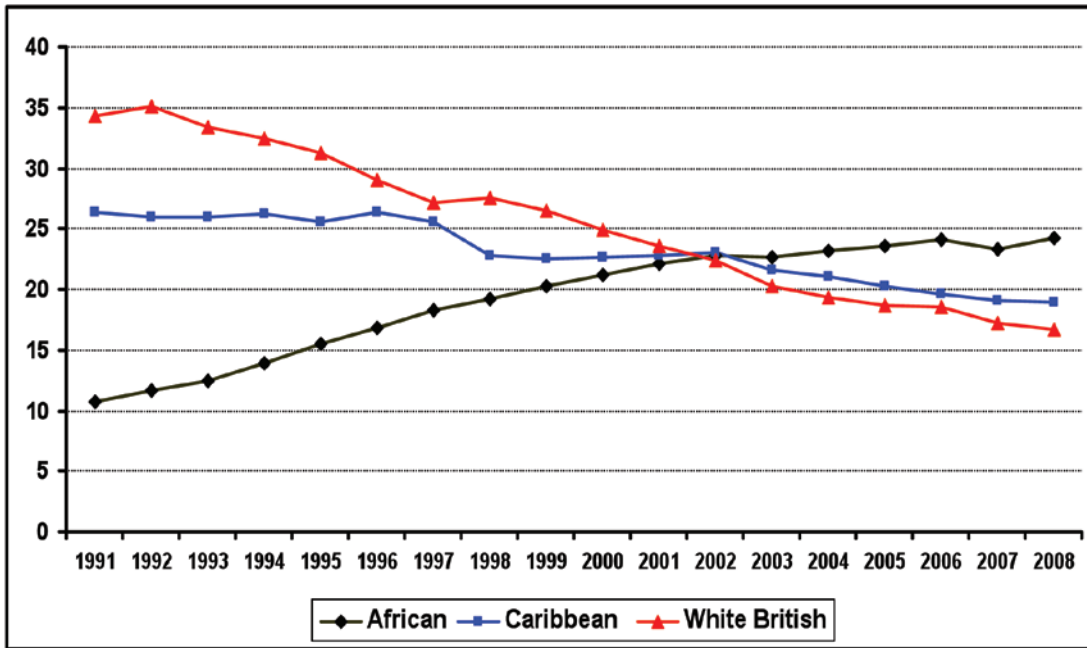
This research paper considers evidence from Lambeth, an inner London Authority. Lambeth is among the most densely populated boroughs in the country and its already rapidly growing population is projected to grow by a further 13% to 322,000 by 2028. The 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) places Lambeth as the 5th most deprived borough in London and 19th most deprived in England.

Recent decades, have seen the displacement of the White British population due to rapid social and demographic change in Lambeth. There has been a significant dispersal of the White British population into suburbs of Kent and Essex and increasing ethnic heterogeneity.

As a result the LA is at present one of the most ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse boroughs in Britain. About 33% of Lambeth's population is from ethnic minority backgrounds and about 67% are White British. The borough has the second highest proportion of Black Caribbean residents of any UK local authority and the fourth highest proportion of Black African people. About 10% of the ethnic minorities are from a mix of white and other ethnic groups.

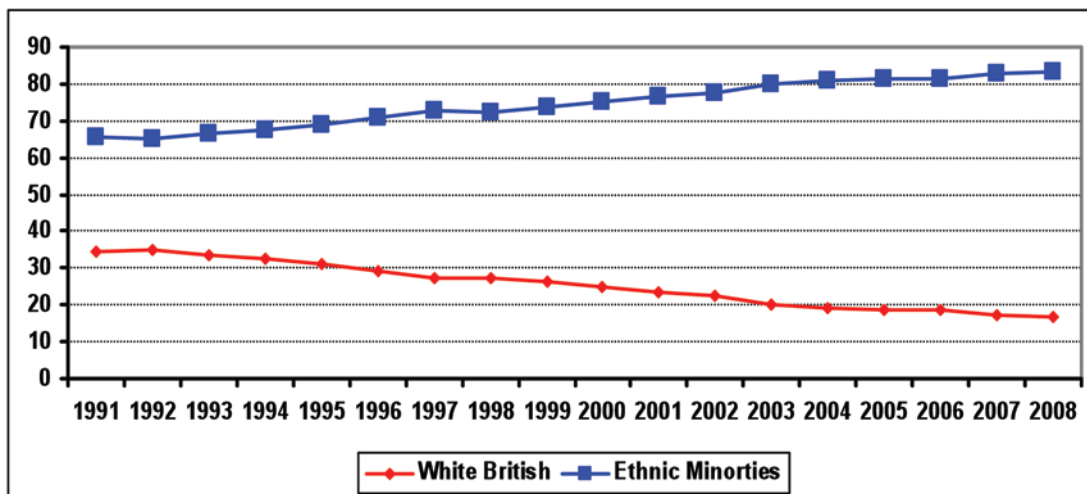
However, the school population suggests that about 83% of pupils are from Black and ethnic minority groups and only about 17% are White British. For example the 2008 census shows that there were 30,517 pupils in the LA's schools. Of these, African pupils formed the largest ethnic group with 24% followed by Black Caribbean 19%, White British 17%, White Other 8%, Portuguese 7%, Other Black 5%, Mixed Other 5%, Mixed White/Asian 0.8%, Mixed White/Black African 1.4%, Mixed White/Black Caribbean 4%, Others 4%, Indian 1%, Pakistan 1%, Chinese 1%, White Irish 1%, Turkish 0.4%, Vietnamese 0.4%, and Greek 0.1%.

Figure 2. Changes in the proportion of White British, Black Caribbean and Black African in Lambeth Schools, 1991-2008 (%)



There has been a change in the overall composition of the black and ethnic minority population in Lambeth schools. The 1991 census showed that overall 66% of pupils in the LA schools belonged to Black and other ethnic minority communities compared to 83% in 2008. Figure 3 shows the change in the composition of black and other ethnic minority pupils within Lambeth schools, an increase of 17 percentage points over the 17-year period.

Figure 3. Change in the composition of White British and black and other ethnic minority pupils within Lambeth schools 1991-2000



Section 2: Disadvantage, Ethnicity, Gender and Attainment in Lambeth Schools

Introduction

There has been a long standing concern about the educational attainment of minority ethnic pupils in England. Early work was summarised in the Committee of Inquiry into the education of children from minority ethnic groups (Swann report 1985) which concluded that 'West Indian children as a group are underachieving in our education system'. While the Swann report focused on public examination results at age 16, other research in the 1980's indicated significant differences between ethnic groups in performance at primary school (e.g. Mortimore et al, 1988) and this continued into the 1990's (Sammons, 1995; Strand, 1997, 1999).

Most recently, comprehensive national data are available through matching the pupil-level School Census (SC) records with the national test and examination results held in the National Pupil Database (NPD). A recent topic paper from the DfES (DfES, 2006) has reviewed the data for Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and GCSE/GNVQ public examinations at age 16. The data reveal consistent differences between ethnic groups in attainment. Broadly speaking, the performance of Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups is below that of their White British peers, while Chinese, Indian and Irish pupils on average score higher than White British pupils.

These data, by themselves, are limited. In England ethnicity is strongly confounded with economic disadvantage, which is itself strongly related to educational attainment. Levels of entitlement to free school meals (FSM), a commonly used indicator of economic disadvantage, are 11% for Chinese, 12% for Indian, and 14% for White British, compared to a rise to 30% for Black Caribbean, 34% for Pakistani, 44% for Black African and 47% for Bangladeshi pupils². Gender also plays a part, with a particularly pronounced gender difference among black groups, with black boys under-achieving relative to black girls. These variables do not necessarily combine in a simple additive fashion. For example, the educational attainment of White British pupils from economically disadvantaged circumstances is particularly low. Thus in 2006 (DfES, 2007) the lowest performing group nationally at GCSE was White British boys entitled to FSM, with only 24% of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades (the equivalent figure for Black Caribbean boys entitled to FSM was 27%). Similar results have been reported in primary schools, for example at KS1 and KS2 in inner London authorities, where White British pupils are often the lowest attaining group (Strand, 1999a, 1999b, 2002, 2006).

Previous analysis by this author of Lambeth data have highlighted the low attainment of White British boys and girls living in poverty, as indexed by entitlement to a FSM (Strand, 2004; 2006). While the focus of these reports was on the attainment and progress of minority ethnic groups (specifically Black Caribbean pupils and Black African pupils respectively) the results revealed that the attainment of White British pupils from disadvantaged circumstances was also of concern. Recent analyses of the nationally representative Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) has also concluded that White British working class pupils and Black Caribbean working class boys are the groups with the lowest attainment at age 16 (Strand, 2008).

² These results are based on national data combining both primary schools and secondary schools reported by Lindsay, Pather & Strand, 2006.

The current analysis presents an opportunity to explore in detail the impact of ethnicity, gender and disadvantage and the way these factors combine and interact in relation to educational attainment. This chapter presents an analysis of the 2008 Key Stage 2 tests (age 11) and GCSE public examinations (age 16) for Lambeth mainstream primary and secondary schools. It analyses performance in these national tests and examinations in relation to ethnicity, gender and socio-economic disadvantage to tease out the interactions between these factors. The overall aim is to identify which groups of pupils (defined by a combination of ethnicity, gender and disadvantage) have low attainment or make poor progress at school in Lambeth.

Key Stage 2 results (age 11)

Measures of socio-economic disadvantage

This study does not have available data on the socio-economic class of the pupils' household. Reliable and valid data on social class are costly and difficult to collect. However two measures of socio-economic disadvantage are available. First, entitlement to a FSM is a direct measure of family poverty and is available at the level of the individual pupil. Second, the Income Disadvantage Affecting Children Index (IDACI) is a measure of poverty in the neighbourhood in which the pupil resides. This data is collected nationally and is available at the level of super output area lower layer (SOA-LL). There are 32,482 SOAs in England, each containing approximately 1,500 people. Further details can be found on the Department for Communities and Local Government website <http://www.communities.gov.uk>.

On both measures Lambeth serves an extremely economically disadvantaged population.

- Within primary schools 36% of pupils are entitled to FSM, more than double the 2008 England primary school average of 16% (DCSF, 2008).
- In terms of IDACI, almost half (48%) of Lambeth primary school pupils live in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England, and two-thirds (72%) live in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England.

Both these factors show a strong relationship with KS2 educational attainment, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

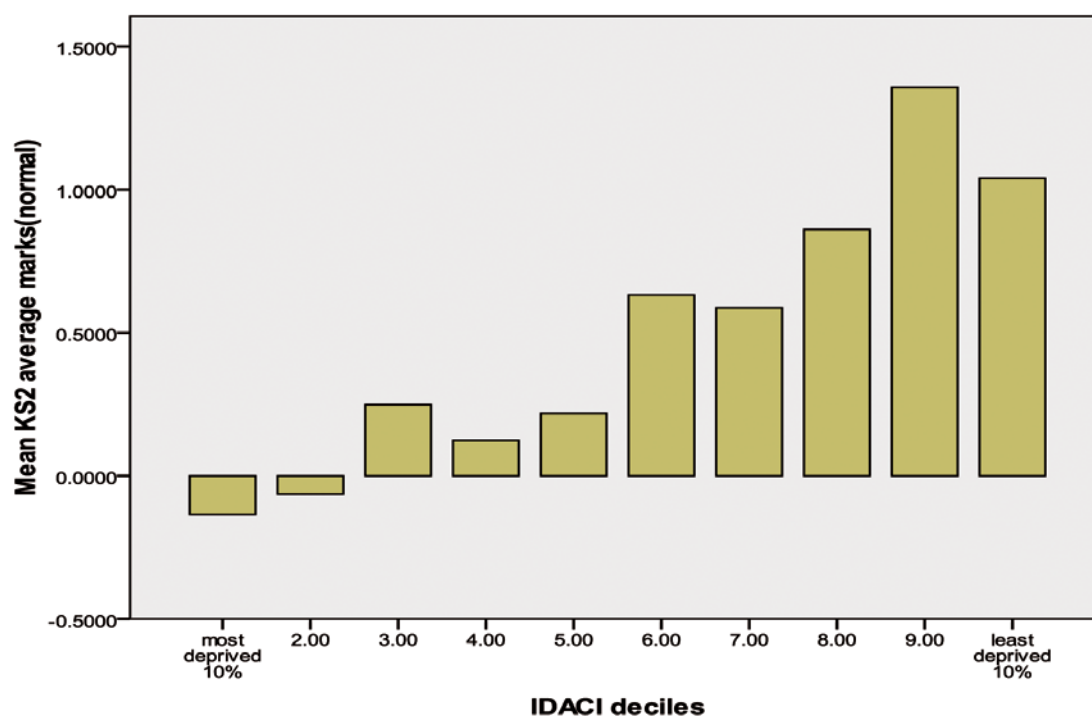
There was a substantial difference of almost half a standard deviation (0.48 SD) in attainment between those entitled and those not entitled to a FSM. There was no significant difference between the KS2 attainment of those pupils living in the 10% most disadvantaged (decile 1) and the 11- 20% most disadvantaged (decile 2) neighbourhoods, but both these groups had significantly lower attainment than those living in less disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

The numbers of pupils within each of IDACI deciles 3-10 are relatively small, so for the purpose of modelling deciles 3-10 were combined to indicate a relatively advantaged group.

Table 1: KS2 attainment by entitlement to FSM and IDACI

Variable	no of pupils	KS2 average marks	%L4+ in English & maths	%L5 in English & maths
Entitled FSM	860	-.305	59	7
Not entitled FSM	1557	.177	74	20
Decile 1 (most deprived 10% in England)	1145	-.135	66	11
Decile 2	569	-.064	65	15
Decile 3	396	.249	75	23
Decile 4	126	.124	71	18
Decile 5	66	.218	64	23
Decile 6	36	.632	86	33
Decile 7	18	.587	83	22
Decile 8	32	.861	91	53
Decile 9	5	1.357	100	80
Decile 10 (least deprived 10% in England)	4	1.040	100	50
Total	2397	.003	68	16

Figure 1: KS2 average test marks by IDACI decile



Combining the measures

The two measures of disadvantage are related as shown in Appendix 1. For example, nearly 80% of those entitled to FSM reside in the 20% most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However the measures do not overlap completely as 20% of those entitled to FSM do not live in neighbourhoods in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods. More importantly of those pupils residing within the 20% most disadvantaged neighbourhoods over 60% are not entitled to FSM.

Various combinations of FSM entitlement and IDACI were tested. Initially a distinction was made between four groups:

- Entitled to FSM and disadvantaged neighbourhood (deciles 1-2)
- Entitled to FSM and relatively advantaged neighbourhood (deciles 3-10)
- Not entitled to FSM and disadvantaged neighbourhood (deciles 1-2)
- Not Entitled to FSM and relatively advantaged neighbourhood (deciles 3-10)

However, the difference in KS2 attainment between those entitled to FSM living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and those entitled to FSM and living in more advantaged neighbourhoods (deciles 3-10) was not statistically significant. FSM entitlement is therefore a powerful and direct measure of family economic deprivation and much more significant than area deprivation. IDACI is however useful in allowing differentiation of relative advantage within the two-thirds of pupils not entitled to FSM. This allowed construction of a measure that reflected both disadvantage and relative advantage with three levels:

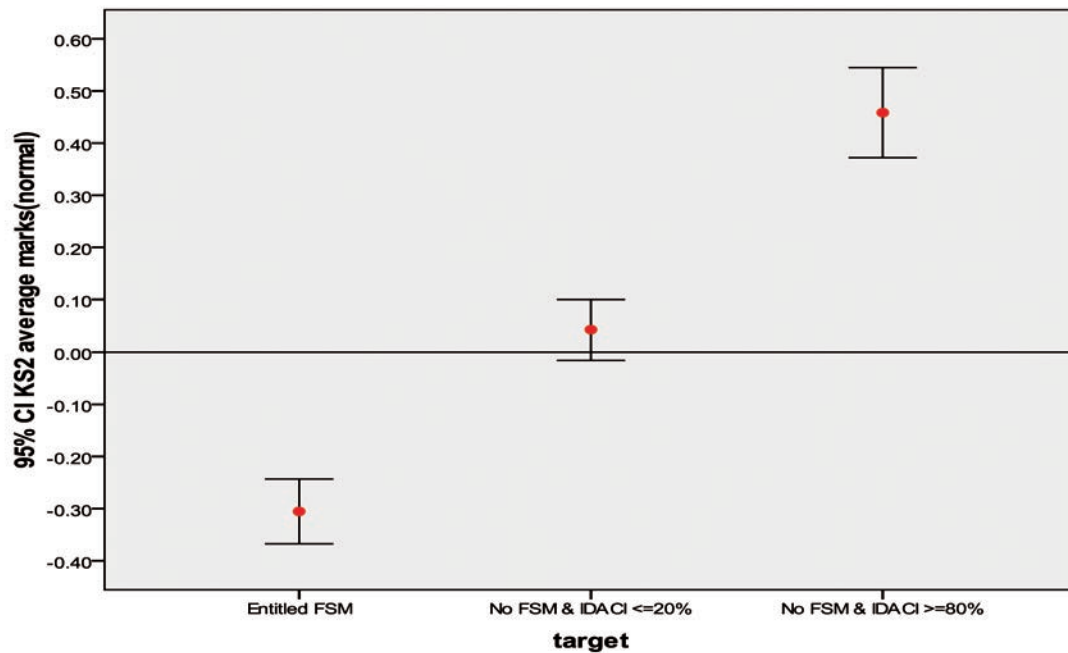
- Entitled to FSM (n=860, 36% of the sample)
- Not entitled to FSM and living in deprived neighbourhoods (deciles 1-2) (n=1035, 43% of the sample)
- Not entitled to FSM and living in relatively less deprived neighbourhoods (deciles 3-10) (n=503, 21% of the sample).

The KS2 results for each grouping are shown in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table 2: KS2 attainment by economic disadvantage

SES group	Number	KS2 average marks (and SD)		Level 4+ English & maths	Level 5+ English & maths
Entitled FSM	860	-.305	(.928)	59%	7%
No FSM & IDACI = <20%	1035	.042	(.950)	71%	16%
No FSM & IDACI >20%	503	.458	(.986)	80%	29%
Total	2398	.005	(.989)	69%	16%

Figure 2: KS2 average test marks by economic disadvantage



For the sake of simplicity these three groups will be termed 'low', 'medium' and 'high' Socio-Economic Status (SES) respectively. It is important to note that these terms describe the relative advantage of pupils within Lambeth, since in absolute terms few pupils within Lambeth would be described as socio-economically advantaged.

Disadvantage by ethnic group

There is significant variation between ethnic groups in their distribution across the different levels of SES, as shown in Appendix 2. For example 27% of White British pupils are entitled to FSM, compared to 35% Portuguese, 36% Black Caribbean and 45% of Black African pupils. At the other end of the spectrum, 41% of White British pupils are in the most advantaged group compared to 25% of White Other, 17% of Black Caribbean and just 13% of Black African, Portuguese and Mixed White and Caribbean pupils. Analyses therefore need to consider both disadvantage and ethnicity simultaneously in determining their relative influences on attainment and progress.

Methodology

The analysis proceeds in four steps, each associated with a particular analytical model:

1. First the associations of ethnicity, gender and disadvantage with attainment are assessed in a simple main effects (additive) analysis. What is the association between each factor and educational attainment?
2. Next interactions between ethnic group, gender and disadvantage are introduced. The statistical significance of the interaction terms are assessed to determine whether a simple additive model is adequate or whether allowing for interactions provides a better, but still parsimonious, model of the data.
3. The third model examines whether any relationships between ethnicity, gender, disadvantage and attainment remain significant when controls are included for a range of further contextual variables such as age, SEN, stage of fluency in English, mobility and school composition.

Table 3: Variables and values included in the statistical models

Variables	Values	Label
Prior attainment	mean=0; SD=1	Average points score at the start of the key stage (transformed to a normal score)
Pupil age	mean=0; SD=1	age in completed months at end of Key Stage (transformed to a normal score)
Sex	0	Boy
	1	Girl
Socio-economic status (SES)	0	Entitled to Free School Meal (FSM)
	1	Not entitled FSM and IDACI decile 1-2
	2	Not entitled FSM and IDACI decile 3-10
Special Educational Need (SEN)	0	No SEN / School Action
	1	School Action Plus (SAP) or undergoing full assessment for/has a statement of SEN
Stage of fluency in English	0	monolingual English
	1	complete beginner
	2	considerable support
	3	some support
	4	fully fluent
Ethnic Group	0	White British
	1	White Other groups
	2	Portuguese
	3	Mixed White & Caribbean
	4	Mixed Other groups
	5	Black African
	6	Black Caribbean
	7	Black Other groups
	8	Bangladeshi & Pakistani
	9	Other Asian (Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese and Other Asian)
10	Any other ethnic groups	
Mobility	0	same school whole of key stage
	1	changed school during the key stage
Interaction terms		Separate terms for two-way interactions between ethnicity and sex, and ethnicity and SES
School composition variables		A wide range of school level variables including: % girls, % entitled to Free School Meals; % mobile pupils; % non-fluent in English; % White British; % SEN; average roll; Church status; Mean IDACI score; mean chronological age

4. The final model examines associations with pupil progress by also including prior attainment at the end of KS1 for an analysis of progress during primary school (age 7-11) and prior attainment at the end of KS2 for an analysis of progress during secondary school (age 11-16).

The variables included in the analysis are summarised in Table 3. The outcome variables (KS2 average test marks and age 16 total points score) have been subject to a normal score transformation so that the mean is zero and SD is 1.

Multiple regression analyses of Key Stage 2 average test marks

This text highlights the main results from the analyses. The full results of each model are contained in Appendix 3.

Model 1 – Main effects of ethnic group, gender and disadvantage

Model 1 indicates substantive and significant associations between ethnic group, gender, disadvantage and KS2 average test marks. The gender difference is relatively small but indicates that girls achieve a higher average score than boys (.11). The results also appear to indicate significant underachievement by Portuguese (-.58), Black Caribbean (-.42), Bangladeshi/Pakistani (-.37), Black Other (-.33) and Black African (-.21) pupils relative to White British pupils. The effects of disadvantage are the largest. Relative to pupils on FSM, pupils from middle SES backgrounds score .35 SD higher and those from high SES backgrounds score .70 SD higher.

Model 2 – Interactions between ethnic group, gender and disadvantage

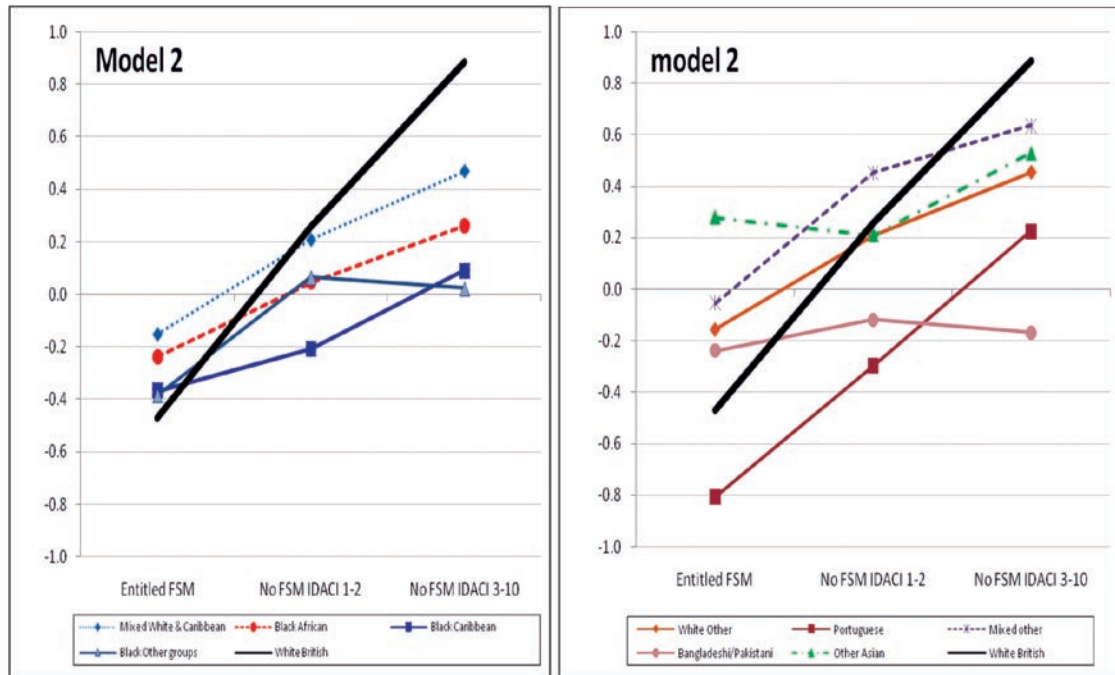
Model 2 allows interactions between ethnicity, gender and disadvantage. The three way interaction between ethnic group, sex and disadvantage, and the two way interaction between sex and disadvantage were not significant and are eliminated. There was only one ethnic group by sex interaction which reached significance; White other girls performed significantly better than White other boys by a much larger margin than was true among White British pupils. The gender gap in favour of girls was also larger among the Black Other, Black African and Black Caribbean groups, but these results did not reach statistical significance. Given there was only one significant result the ethnic by sex interaction terms were also removed. The ethnic group by disadvantage interaction was highly statistically significant and was retained.

Figure 3 presents a summary of the mean KS2 score by ethnic group and disadvantage. For clarity of presentation the left hand figure presents the results for White British and four Black groups (Black Caribbean, Black African, Black other groups, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean). The right hand figure presents the results for all other ethnic groups, again showing White British pupils for comparative purposes.

The contrast in performance of White British pupils at different levels of disadvantage is striking. Among pupils entitled to FSM White British are the lowest scoring group, with the one exception of Portuguese pupils. However, among the advantaged pupils they are the highest scoring group. The SES gradient among White British is more pronounced than for any minority ethnic group, with the exception of Portuguese. Effectively social class seems to matter more in relation to educational attainment for White British pupils than it does for minority ethnic groups, with the exception of Portuguese who show a similarly sharp differential by disadvantage.

Looking at the most disadvantaged group (those entitled to FSM) only Portuguese pupils score lower than White British pupils. The other statistically significant differences here are that Asian other, Mixed other, White other and Black African pupils all score significantly higher than White British pupils. In terms of educational attainment, these groups seem better able to weather the negative effects of socio-economic disadvantage than White British or Black Caribbean pupils.

Figure 3: KS2 average test marks by ethnic group and disadvantage



Statistically significant contrasts between minority ethnic groups and White British at different levels of disadvantage

Ethnic group	Socio-economic status		
	Low	Medium	High
White other groups	+		--
Portuguese	-	--	--
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	+		
Mixed other groups	++		
Black African	+	-	--
Black Caribbean		--	--
Black Other groups			--
Bangladeshi/Pakistani			--
Asian Other groups	++		
Any Other group			--

Notes: The comparator group is White British pupils. A positive sign indicates the group scored significantly higher than White British, while a negative sign indicates the group scored significantly lower than White British. '-' or '+' = $p < .05$, '--' or '++' = $p < .01$.

A different pattern emerges for the middle SES group where Black Caribbean, Black African and Portuguese pupils all achieve significantly lower results than White British pupils. The pattern is even more pronounced among the high SES group. Here White British are the highest attaining group and achieve significantly higher scores than all other ethnic groups (except for Mixed White & Black Caribbean, Mixed other and other Asian groups).

Model 3 – Contextualising for other variables

This model adds further contextual variables to the model and examines whether these alter the patterns of attainment in relation to ethnic group and disadvantage. The additional variables include:

- Age in completed months (normal score equivalent)
- Special educational needs (specifically whether the child was identified at either School Action Plus or had a statement of SEN)
- Stage of fluency in English (specifically stage 1-3 in developing fluency in English)
- Pupil mobility (joined current school after January of Year 3).

A range of school composition variables were tested. These include the mean values for each of the 59 mainstream schools on the following variables:

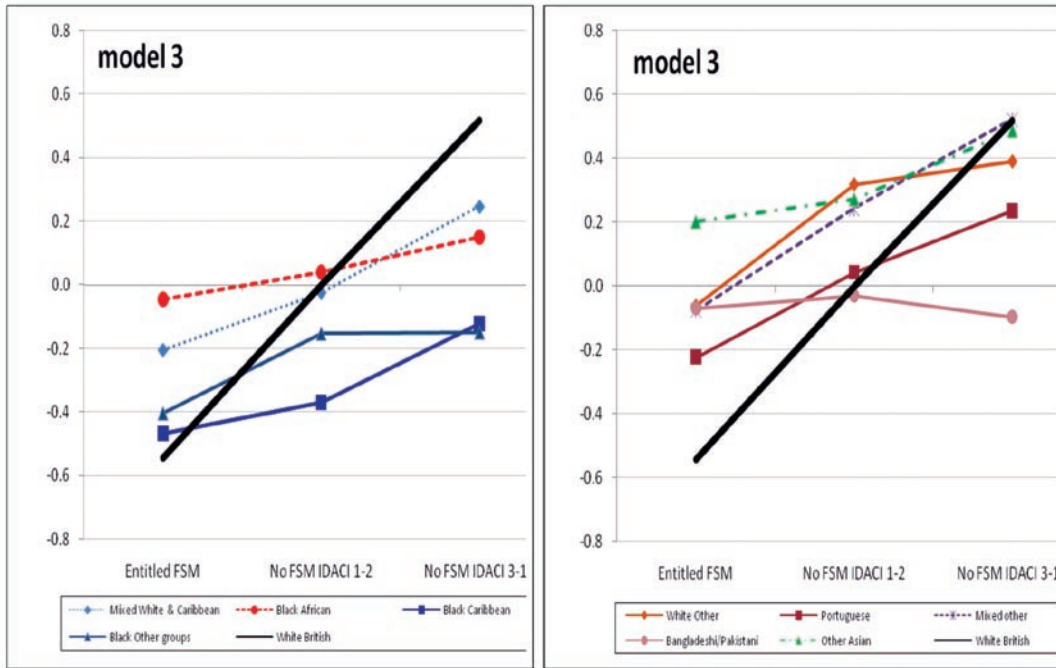
Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
% girls	50.3	9.6	26.7	74.1
% entitled FSM	36.0	15.4	8.3	75.9(a)
% mobile pupils	19.6	10.3	0.0	50.0
% pupils at fluency stages 1-3	22.6	14.5	0.0	71.9(a)
% pupils SAP or statemented	16.5	8.2	0.0	40.7
% White British pupils	15.2	11.5	0.0	50.0
Mean Y6 roll	40.1	17.2	6.0	90.0
Church school	0.30	0.46	0	1
Mean IDACI normal score	0.00	0.42	-0.95	0.83
Mean age (normalised)	-0.01	0.17	-0.46	0.31

Notes: Standard Deviation (SD) is calculated at the pupil level. (a) Excludes one school that had only six pupils all of whom were entitled to FSM and at fluency stage 1-3.

There were strong and significant effects of the additional variables. Overall including these variables raised the percentage of variance explained from 15% to 40%. The most substantial impact was for stage of fluency in English, as assessed in the January prior to the KS2 tests. Compared to mono-lingual English speakers, pupils rated at stage 1 (complete beginner), stage 2 (considerable support) and stage 3 (needing some support) scored -1.74, -0.97 and -0.56 SD below the level of mono-lingual English speakers. Equally pupils with identified SEN scored -0.90 SD below pupils not so identified. Pupils who joined their primary school after the autumn term of Year 3 scored -0.19 SD below those who had been in the same school for the whole of KS2. Pupils who were young for their year group (1 SD below the average age) scored -0.13 SD lower than those who were older for their year group (1 SD above the average age). All these effects are net of all other factors in the model.

Two school composition factors also had statistically significant association with KS2 score, these were the school mean IDACI score (ES=0.12) and the proportion of mobile pupils (ES=0.13)³. On average, pupils in a school with a relatively advantaged intake scored 0.12 SD higher than pupils in a school with a relatively disadvantaged intake. On average pupils in schools with a low proportion of mobile pupils scored 0.13 SD higher than pupils in schools with a high proportion of mobile pupils. Both these factors are over and above the impact of social disadvantage and pupil mobility at the pupil level.

Figure 4: KS2 average test marks adjusting for all pupil and school contextual factors



Statistically significant contrasts between White British and minority ethnic groups at different levels of economic disadvantage – full contextual model

Ethnic group	Socio-economic status		
	Low	Medium	High
White other groups	++	++	
Portuguese	+		
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	++		
Mixed other groups	++	+	
Black African	++		--
Black Caribbean		--	--
Black Other groups			--
Bangladeshi/Pakistani	++		
Asian Other groups	++		
Any Other group	++	+	

³ Effect Size (ES) are calculated by multiplying the school level coefficient by 2 * the SD of the variable (corresponding to the difference between schools 1SD above and one SD below the grand mean) and dividing by the SD of the pupil level KS2 score (See Elliot & Sammons, 2004).

Notes: The comparator group is White British pupils. A positive sign indicates the group scored significantly higher than White British, while a negative sign indicates the group scored significantly lower than White British. '-' or '+' = $p < .05$, '- -' or '+ +' = $p < .01$.

How do these additional factors impact on the ethnic and SES gaps? Figure 4 presents the results. Essentially the effect of SES is still most pronounced for White British pupils. White British are simultaneously both the lowest performing group (among those entitled to FSM) and the highest performing group (among those from advantaged backgrounds). However the inclusion of the other factors, particularly fluency in English, substantially improves the performance particularly of Black African, Portuguese and White other pupils.

Among those entitled to FSM, White British, Black Caribbean and Black Other pupils are the lowest attaining groups and all other ethnic groups have significantly higher attainment. However Black Caribbean pupils from middle SES backgrounds underachieve relative to White British pupils, and among pupils from high SES backgrounds all three Black groups underachieve relative to White British pupils.

Model 4 – Value added age 7-11

The analyses so far have examined gaps in attainment and various factors associated with these gaps. A further question is whether the gaps at age 11 just reflect prior differences already existing at age 7, or whether the various gaps have increased or narrowed over the last four years of primary school (age 7-11). This analysis can only be completed for those pupils with a valid age 7 score. Of the 2445 pupils with a valid age 11 score, 2169 (89%) also had a prior age 7 score. The analysis is completed on this sample. The full results are presented in Appendix 4.

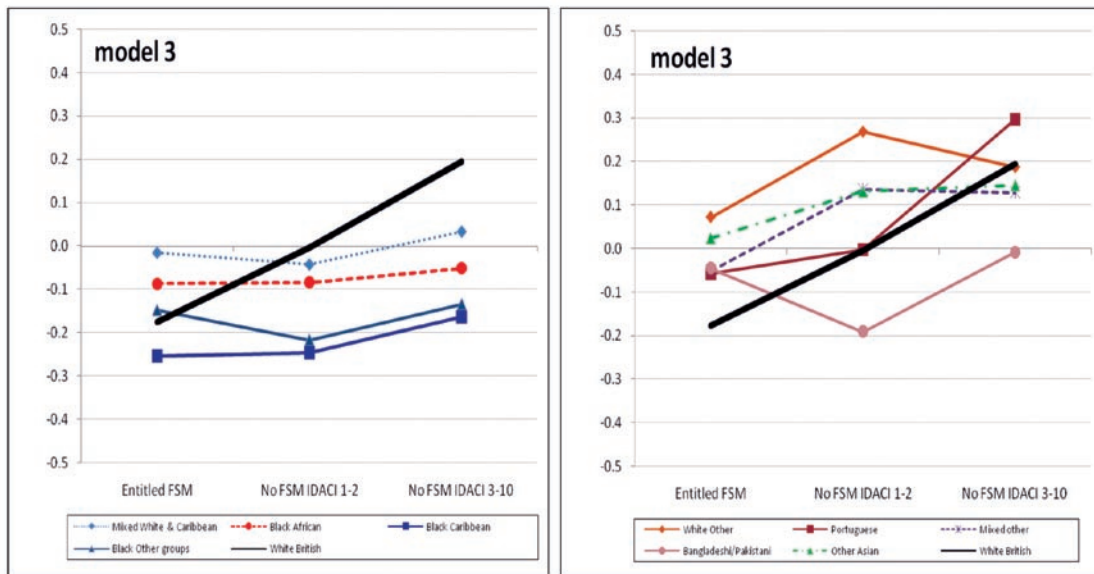
Pupils with identified SEN make significantly less progress than pupils without identified SEN (-.25). Pupils identified at stage 2 and stage 3 of learning English also make significantly less progress than monolingual English speakers (-.24 and -.12 respectively). Girls make slightly less progress than boys (-.15), and older pupils make slightly less progress than their younger peers (-.06). It is interesting to note, as in previous reports, that mobility is not associated with any significant difference in pupil progress. Three school composition variables also had significant associations with pupil progress. Pupils on average made less progress in Church schools than in non-denominational schools (ES -.10), less progress in schools with a high proportion of mobile pupils (ES=-.10), and less progress in schools with a high proportion of pupils with identified SEN (ES=-.13).

The interaction between ethnic group and sex was not statistically significant, but the interaction between ethnic group and SES was highly significant. Figure 5 presents the results. In reading the figure a flat line indicates that pupils from disadvantaged and advantaged homes make similar progress, so any gaps related to disadvantage seen at age 11 are a reflection of pre-existing gaps at age 7. What is striking in the figure is that for most ethnic minority groups social disadvantage has little or no impact on pupil progress, pupils from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds make similar progress. However for White British pupils the gap associated with disadvantage grows significantly during the later primary school years.

White British pupils from disadvantaged and advantaged backgrounds already differ markedly in their attainment at age 7 and this gap widens further during the course of primary school. Compared to pupils entitled to FSM, White British pupils from middle

SES backgrounds make .17 more progress and those from high SES backgrounds make .44 more progress. The only other ethnic group to show a similar widening of the SES gap is Portuguese pupils.

Figure 5: Pupil progress age 7-11 by ethnic group and disadvantage



Statistically significant contrasts in educational progress between White British and minority ethnic groups at different levels of economic disadvantage

Ethnic group	Socio-economic status		
	Low	Medium	High
White other groups	+	++	
Portuguese			
Mixed White & Black Caribbean			
Mixed other groups			
Black African			--
Black Caribbean		--	--
Black Other groups		-	--
Bangladeshi/Pakistani			
Asian Other groups			
Any Other group			

Notes: The comparator group is White British pupils. A positive sign indicates the group scored significantly higher than White British, while a negative sign indicates the group scored significantly lower than White British. '-'= $p < .05$, '--'= $p < .01$.

Looking at the ethnic gaps relative to White British pupils, among those entitled to FSM White Other pupils make significantly more progress than White British pupils. There are no other statistically significant differences, but the poor progress of White British and Black Caribbean pupils entitled to FSM is the most pronounced. Among pupils from middle SES backgrounds Black Caribbean and Black other pupils make significantly less progress than White British pupils, indeed Black Caribbean pupils make no more progress than those entitled to FSM. Among pupils from high SES backgrounds all three Black groups make significantly and substantially less progress than White British pupils.

In summary, particularly poor progress is notable for:

- White British and Black Caribbean pupils entitled to FSM;
- Black Caribbean pupils from middle SES backgrounds and all Black groups from high SES backgrounds.

Summary of results for Key Stage 2

In brief, the results for KS2 indicate that:

- White British pupils are the ethnic group most polarised by the impact of socio-economic disadvantage. White British pupils are simultaneously both the lowest and the highest attaining group, depending on the level of disadvantage experienced.
- When identifying the lowest attaining groups, the low attainment of White British pupils entitled to FSM is as much of a concern as the low attainment of Portuguese, Black Caribbean, Black African, and Bangladeshi/Pakistani pupils entitled to FSM.
- Adding further controls for SEN, fluency in English, pupil mobility and school composition accounts for the low attainment of Portuguese pupils entitled to FSM and raises the attainment of Bangladeshi/Pakistani pupils entitled to FSM above their White British peers. White British, Black Caribbean and Black Other pupils entitled to FSM remain the lowest attaining groups.
- Low attainment in absolute terms is a key risk factor for subsequent low attainment at school leaving age, for continuing in education post-16, and for long term employment and occupational outcomes. However there is also evidence of significant underachievement among Black Caribbean pupils from middle SES backgrounds and among all Black groups for pupils from high SES backgrounds relative to their similarly advantaged White British peers.
- Particularly poor progress between ages 7-11 is notable for (i) White British and Black Caribbean pupils from low SES backgrounds, and (ii) Black Caribbean pupils from middle SES backgrounds and black pupils in general from high SES backgrounds.

The results are discussed further in the overall conclusions.

GCSE examinations at aged 16

A similar analysis to that reported above was undertaken in relation to public examination attainment at age 16. Data were analysed for 1,402 pupils from the 10 Lambeth mainstream secondary schools. Results for 65 pupils attending four special schools were not included as few GCSE examinations were completed in these schools, presumably because the level of the exam did not match the needs and abilities of the pupils.

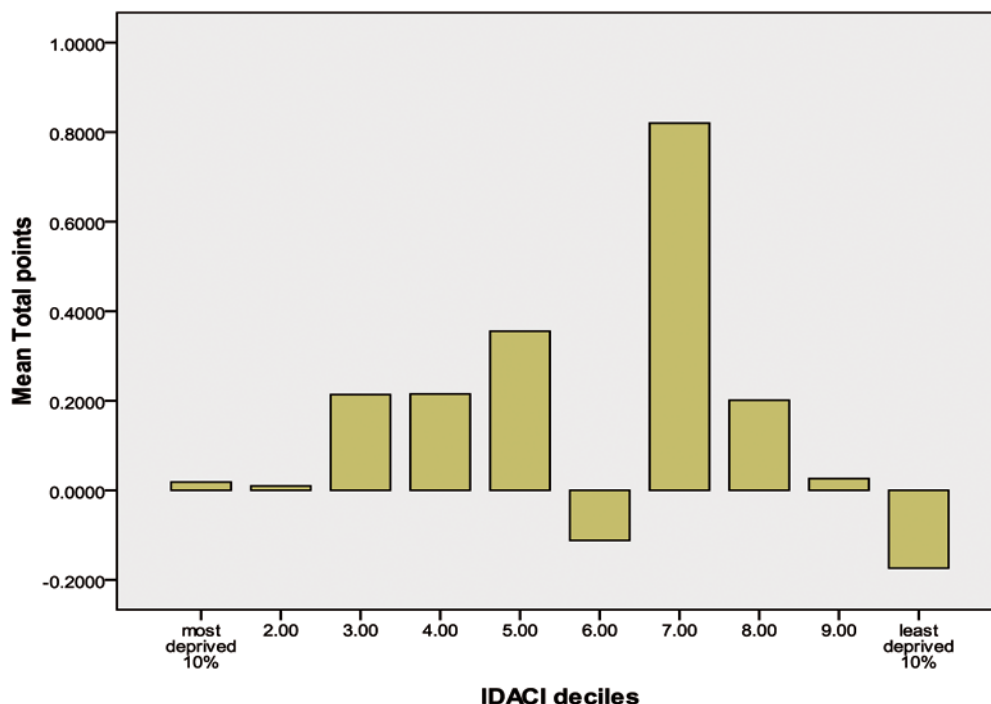
Socio-economic disadvantage

As for the primary school population, the secondary school population show extremely high levels of deprivation relative to national averages. Overall 39% were entitled to a FSM against a national average of 13% (DCSF, 2008) and nearly three-quarters (72%) live in neighbourhoods defined as the 20% most deprived in England. The level of disadvantage may be greater than in the primary phase, since although national levels of entitlement to FSM are higher in primary than in secondary schools (15.5% vs. 13.1%) the reverse is true in Lambeth (36% vs 39%).

Table 6: Attainment at GCSE by entitlement to FSM and IDACI

Variable	Number of pupils	Total points score (TPS)	5+ GCSE A*-G or equivalent	5+ GCSE A*-C or equivalent	5+ GCSE A*-C incl. English & maths
Entitled FSM	552	364.3	92	57	43
Not entitled FSM	850	414.9	97	70	54
Decile 1 (most deprived 10%)	672	386.8	95	64	48
Decile 2	330	386.1	95	62	47
Decile 3	198	417.5	97	69	58
Decile 4	94	418.6	99	72	51
Decile 5	34	437.9	97	74	62
Decile 6	24	368.9	96	71	42
Decile 7	10	511.6	100	100	90
Decile 8	6	418.9	100	67	33
Decile 9	8	397.8	88	75	63
Decile 10 (least deprived 10%)	8	348.9	63	50	13
Total	1384	395.1	95	65	50

Figure 6: Mean total points score (normalised) by IDACI score



The relationship between entitlement to a FSM and GCSE performance was strong, as shown in Table 6. In standardised terms this equates to a difference of 0.31 SD in total points score (TPS) between those entitled or not entitled to a FSM. The relationship between neighbourhood deprivation and GCSE performance was much less strong in the secondary school sample ($r=-.10$) than in the primary school sample ($r=-.19$). There is some inconsistency in the performance of pupils living in neighbourhoods at IDACI decile 6 and above, maybe in part reflecting the small number of pupils living in these more advantaged neighbourhoods. However pupils in the bottom two deciles (the bottom 10% and 20% in terms of neighbourhood deprivation) do not differ significantly from each other, but both score lower than pupils in the more advantaged neighbourhoods (deciles 3-10).

Combining the measures

Again the results indicated no significant difference in attainment between those entitled to FSM living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (deciles 1-2) and those living in relatively advantaged neighbourhoods (deciles 3-10), so all pupils entitled to FSM were combined as a single group. This produced a measure reflecting both disadvantage and relative advantage across three levels:

Entitled to FSM (n=552, 40% of the sample)

Not entitled to FSM and living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (deciles 1-2) (n=567, 41% of the sample)

Not entitled to FSM and living in relatively advantaged neighbourhoods (deciles 3-10) (n=271, 20% of the sample).

As a short-hand this variable will be termed socio-economic status (SES). The GCSE results for each level of SES are shown in Table 6 and in Figure 7.

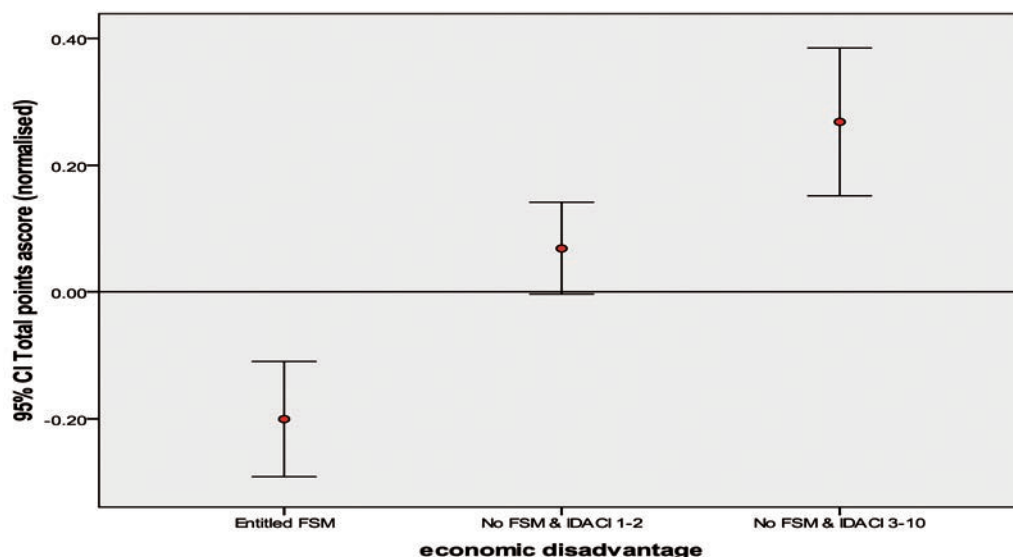
Disadvantage by ethnic group

There is significant variation between ethnic groups in their distribution across the different levels of economic disadvantage, as shown in Appendix 5. For example 30% of White British pupils are entitled to FSM, compared to 41% Black Caribbean, 43% Portuguese, 47% Black African and 64% of Asian Other groups. At the other end of the spectrum, 31% of White British pupils reside in high SES neighbourhoods compared to just 14% of Black Caribbean, 13% of Black African and 12% of Portuguese and Asian other pupils. Analyses therefore need to consider both disadvantage and ethnicity simultaneously in determining their combined influences on attainment and progress.

Table 7: GCSE attainment by socio-economic disadvantage

Socio-economic status	Number	Total points score (and SD)		5+ A*-C grades at GCSE or equiv.	5+ A*-C incl. English & maths
1 Entitled FSM	545	-.200	(1.07)	57%	43%
2 No FSM & IDACI = <20%	567	.069	(0.88)	68%	52%
3 No FSM & IDACI >20%	270	.269	(0.97)	75%	60%
Total	1439	.005	(.989)	62%	48%

Figure 7: GCSE attainment by socio-economic disadvantage



Multiple regression analyses of KS4 total points score

This text highlights the main findings of the analyses. The full results from each model are presented in Appendix 6.

Model 1 – Main effects of ethnic group, gender and disadvantage

Model 1 presents the results when ethnic group, gender and disadvantage are included as main effects in a regression model of total points score. The model indicates substantive and significant effects of ethnic group, gender and disadvantage. Girls achieve significantly higher scores than boys (.21). The effects of economic disadvantage were substantially larger. Relative to pupils entitled to FSM, pupils not entitled to FSM in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (IDACI deciles 1-2) score .29 higher, and those not entitled to FSM in advantaged neighbourhoods (IDACI deciles 3-10) score .47 higher. In relation to ethnicity there are only two significant effects. Black Caribbean pupils have a significantly lower average score (-.28) and Other Asian pupils have a significantly higher average score (.59) than White British pupils. No other ethnic group differences are statistically significant.

Model 2 – interactions of ethnic group, gender and disadvantage

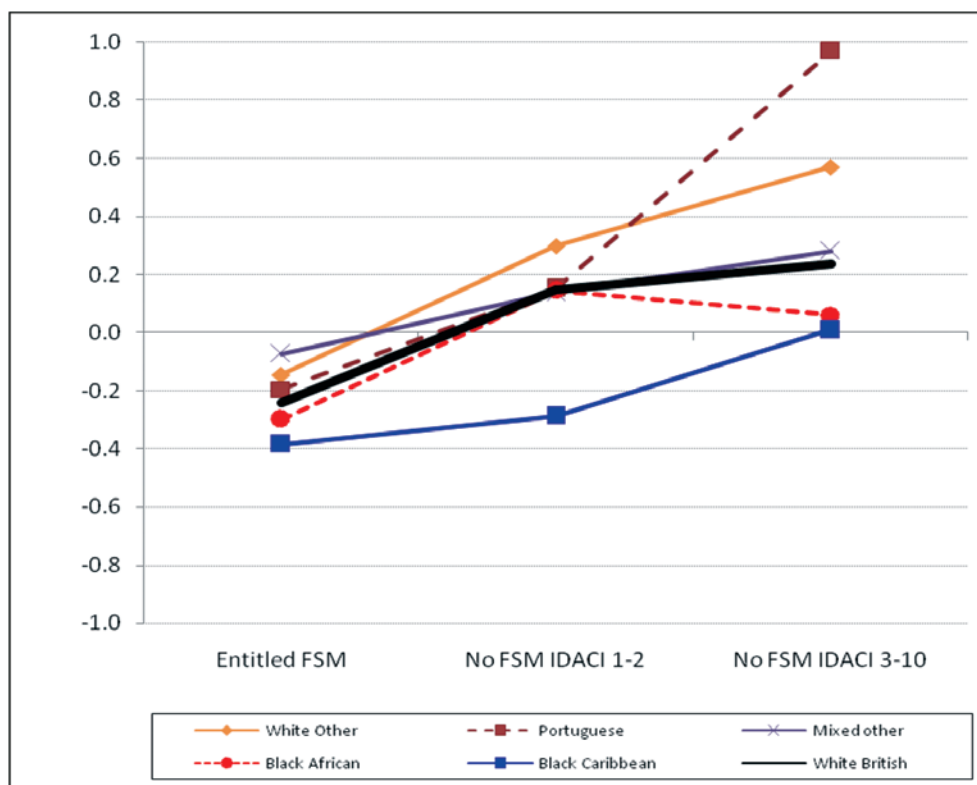
Model 2 allows interactions between ethnicity, gender and disadvantage (the full regression model is presented in Appendix 6). The three way interaction between ethnic group, sex and disadvantage, and the two way interaction between sex and disadvantage were not significant and are eliminated. There was only one ethnic group by gender interaction which reached statistical significance, Portuguese girls performed substantially better than Portuguese boys by a much larger margin than was true for White British pupils. Since there was only one significant contrast the ethnic by gender interaction term was also removed. The ethnic group by disadvantage interaction was significant and was retained.

In absolute terms, the lowest achieving groups (with one exception) are pupils on FSM, regardless of their ethnic group. The only significant ethnic difference within pupils entitled to FSM was that Asian Other pupils performed significantly better than White British pupils. White British pupils on FSM attain equally low scores as their disadvantaged peers from other ethnic groups.

Among pupils from moderate and high SES backgrounds there was evidence of underachievement among Black Caribbean pupils who were the only ethnic group to score significantly lower than White British pupils. This contrast is not just with White British pupils since Black Caribbean pupils also significantly underachieve relative to Black African pupils among those from middle SES backgrounds. It appears that the impact of living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, even if the pupil's family is not defined as in poverty through entitlement to FSM, is greater for Black Caribbean pupils than for other ethnic groups.

Figure 8 presents a summary of the results. All statistically significant results have been reported above, but in graphing the group mean scores a problem arises because of the small sample size for many of the cells. The total sample size for the secondary phase is only 1,402 pupils compared to 2,400 pupils in the analysis for the primary sample. Figure 8 therefore only shows the mean scores for the six ethnic groups where the overall sample size is at least n=50, to prevent spurious and statistically non-significant results being shown.

Figure 8: Total points score by ethnic group and disadvantage



In summary, the analysis reveals a substantial influence of disadvantage on low attainment at age 16, regardless of ethnicity. However it also reveals significant underachievement by Black Caribbean pupils from (relatively) more advantaged circumstances. These results are broadly in line with those reported for the KS2 data.

Model 3 – Contextualising for other variables

Model 3 adds further contextual factors to the model and examines whether these factors alter the patterns of attainment by ethnic group and disadvantage. The additional variables include:

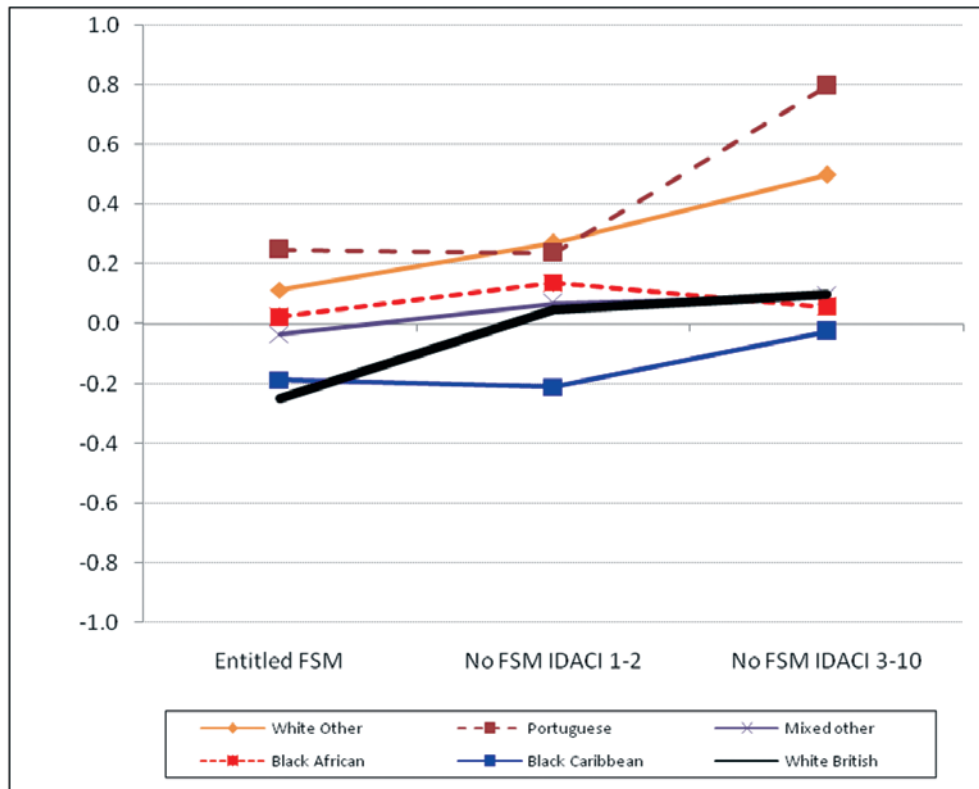
- Age in completed months (normal score equivalent)
- Special educational needs (specifically whether the pupil was identified at either School Action Plus or had a statement of SEN)

- Stage of fluency in English (specifically stage 1-3 in developing fluency in English)
- Pupil mobility (joined current school after January of Year 7).

Because there are only 10 schools in the analysis it is not appropriate to include school composition variables. However fixed effects for school membership are included.

The results are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Total points score after adjusting for all pupil and school contextual factors



There were strong and significant effects of the additional variables. Including these variables raised the percentage of variance in total points score that could be explained from 8% to 26%. There was a significant association with stage of fluency in English, as assessed in the January prior to the GCSE exams. Pupils rated at stage 1 (complete beginner), stage 2 (considerable support) and stage 3 (needing some support) scored -2.2, -1.1 and -.28 below the level of mono-lingual English speakers. Pupils with identified SEN scored -.73 below pupils not identified with SEN. Pupils who joined their school after the autumn term of Year 7 also scored -.17 below those who had been in the same school for the whole of secondary school. Pupils who were young for their year group (1 SD below the average age) scored -.16 lower than those who were older for their year group (1 SD above the average age). All these effects are net of all other factors in the model.

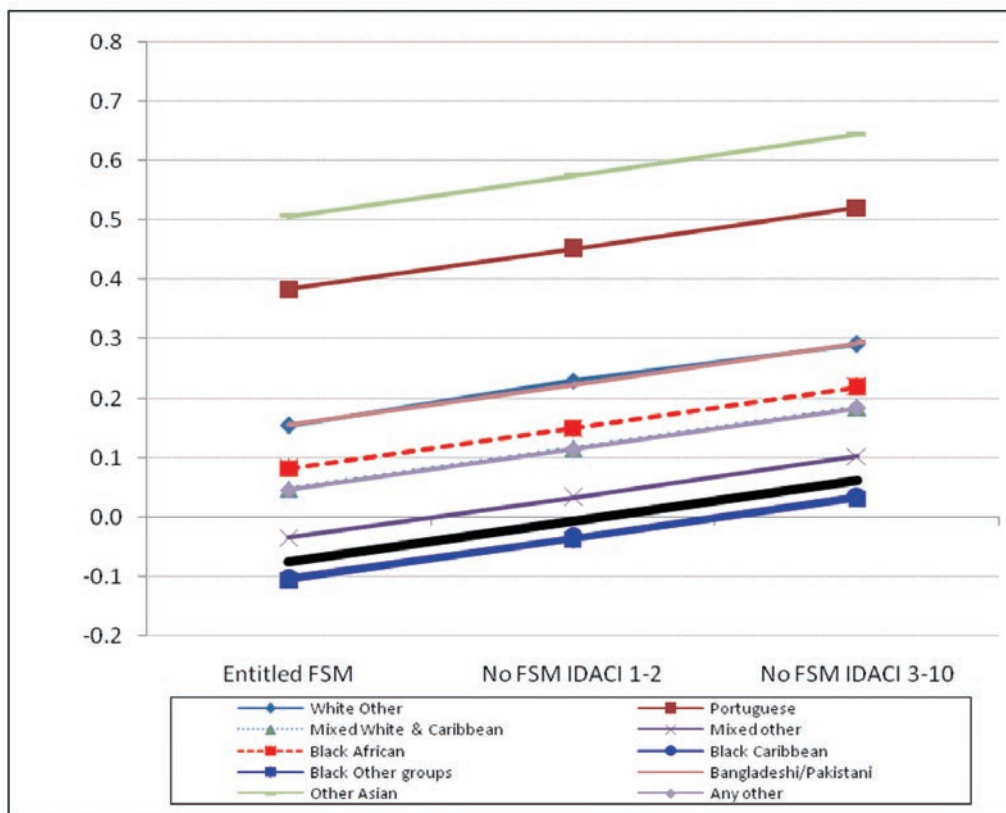
School fixed effects were added after the other contextual factors. This had only one notable effect which was to decrease the size of the estimated Black Caribbean-White British gap for pupils from middle SES backgrounds, although the gap remained statistically significant ($t=2.59, p<.01$). It is possible therefore that some part of the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils might be a school effect, associated with Black Caribbean pupils being underrepresented in the higher performing schools

(e.g. schools 3, 5, 6 & 7). However since the addition of school fixed effects did not eliminate the lower relative performance of Black Caribbean pupils this cannot be the only issue.

Model 4 – Value added or progress age 11 to age 16

The analyses so far have examined ethnic, gender and SES gaps in attainment at age 16. This analysis seek to determine whether these gaps just reflect prior differences already existing at age 11, or whether the gaps have increased or narrowed over the five years of secondary school. This analysis can only be completed for those pupils with a valid age 11 score. Of the 1,402 pupils with a valid age 16 score, 1,199 (86%) also had a prior age 11 score. The analysis is completed on this sample. The full results are presented in Appendix 7.

Figure 10: Pupil progress age 7 to 11 by ethnic group and disadvantage



Interactions between ethnic group and sex, and between ethnic group and disadvantage, were present but were not statistically significant. A simple main effects analysis was therefore adequate to represent the data. Pupils with identified SEN make significantly less progress than pupils without identified SEN (-.44). Girls made significantly more progress (.26) than boys. The effects of stage of fluency in English, pupil mobility and relative age were not significant. Pupils from high SES neighbourhoods (IDACI deciles 3-10) made more progress (.14) than pupils entitled to FSM. Relative to school 1, pupils in school 8 made significantly less progress (-.33) and those in schools 2, 5 and 6 made relatively more progress (.39, .28 and .29). After controlling for all these factors Asian Other (.58), Portuguese (.46), White Other (.23) and Black African (.16) pupils made more progress than White British pupils.

Figure 10 presents the results. Because the interactions of ethnicity, gender and disadvantage were not statistically significant, all the lines are parallel and show the average score for both boys and girls. White British and Black Caribbean pupils entitled to FSM make the least progress over the course of secondary school.

Because girls make significantly more progress than boys, it is White British and Black Caribbean boys entitled to FSM who make the least progress.

Conclusions

In absolute terms pupils in Lambeth schools experience extreme levels of social disadvantage relative to national norms. More than two times the national average of pupils in primary schools are entitled to a free school meal (FSM) (36% vs. 16%), and in secondary schools the Lambeth rate is three times the national average (39% vs. 13%). Nearly three-quarters (72%) of pupils live in neighbourhoods defined nationally in the highest 20% in terms of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). While absolute levels of disadvantage are high, these measures can be used to create a measure of relative disadvantage within the Lambeth context. The measures are combined to create a single measure of socio-economic status (SES) that reflects both disadvantage (entitlement to a FSM) and advantage (not entitled to a FSM and living in a relatively advantaged neighbourhood). Pupils not entitled to a FSM but living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods constitute an intermediate group.

There are strong associations between disadvantage and attainment, and between ethnicity and attainment. The results also indicate strong interactions between ethnicity and economic disadvantage. Analyses that consider only the additive effects of ethnicity and disadvantage substantially misrepresent the data. White British pupils are the ethnic group most polarised by the impact of socio-economic disadvantage. White British pupils are simultaneously both the lowest and the highest attaining ethnic group, depending on the level of disadvantage experienced. Making comparisons without explicitly considering this interaction, i.e. treating White British as a single group, is extremely misleading.

White British pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, both boys and girls, are among the lowest attaining of all groups. Portuguese and Bangladeshi/Pakistani pupils entitled to FSM also have low attainment, but lack of fluency with the English language seems to account for this. After controlling for a range of contextual variables the two groups with the lowest attainment are White British and Black Caribbean pupils entitled to FSM.

It is important to attempt to understand why social disadvantage does not impact so heavily on a number of other ethnic groups, particularly Asian Other (Indian, Chinese, Vietnamese), Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Mixed Other, White Other and Black African pupils. It is not just language factors since Asian Other and Black African pupils entitled to FSM score significantly higher than their similarly disadvantaged White British peers even before language factor are taken into account. Controls for SEN, age, mobility and school composition do not remove this finding. Recent research with a nationally representative sample suggests that high pupil and parental aspirations, positive academic self-concept and motivation and effort as indexed by frequency of completing homework might be important factors in accounting for ethnic gaps within pupils from low SES backgrounds (Strand, 2007, 2008).

The above analysis has focussed on the lowest attaining groups in absolute terms, since low attainment at age 11 is a key risk factor for subsequent low attainment at school leaving age, for continuing in education post-16, and for long term employment and occupational outcomes. However the data also reveal significant underachievement relative to White British pupils for Black Caribbean pupils from moderate SES backgrounds and for all Black groups from high SES backgrounds.

A key question is why these groups underachieve relative to their high SES White British peers. This underachievement is greater for Black boys than for Black girls, but both Black boys and Black girls are underachieving relative to their White British peers among those from middle and high SES backgrounds.

It is important to look at how the attainment gaps grow between age 7 and age 11. SES seems to have little impact on progress within most minority ethnic groups, high and low SES pupils make roughly similar progress. However White British pupils from high SES backgrounds make substantially more progress than their White British peers from low SES backgrounds, pulling ever further ahead during the last four years of primary school. Importantly they also make more progress than their high SES peers from several minority ethnic groups, most notably Black Caribbean, Black Other and Bangladeshi/Pakistani pupils from middle or high SES backgrounds. The measure of SES employed here is relatively broad and undifferentiated and may not adequately capture the full extent of the relative social advantage enjoyed by the high SES White British group.

Part of the higher attainment of high SES pupils arises from attending schools with a high proportion of high SES pupils and a low proportion of mobile pupils. These factors seem to be important over and above the individual pupil's SES and mobility status. However in this dataset these factors do not explain the better scores among the high SES group. Other research by this author (on both national datasets and with Lambeth schools) suggests that 'differential' school effects are not the major focus of equity gaps in educational progress. For example in an analysis of national KS2 test results for all schools in England, Strand (2009) reports that primary schools that add the most value to White British pupils, pupils from high SES backgrounds, and girls also add the most value for Black Caribbean pupils, pupils from low SES backgrounds and boys. A 'differential' school effectiveness analysis is not reported here, but further work on aggregated data over a three year period with Lambeth primary schools is planned.

The results for GCSE show a similar pattern to the results for KS2, but are somewhat less pronounced. In particular pupils residing in the more advantaged neighbourhoods (IDACI deciles 3-10) do not show the same high attainment at GCSE that pupils residing in such neighbourhoods show at KS2. This is likely to reflect selective loss of some of the highest attaining pupils from the more advantaged neighbourhoods at the point of primary-secondary transfer. Clearly there is a large reduction in the overall size of the cohort (2,398 to 1,402 is a reduction of 1,000 pupils, or 41% of the primary population) but this might not be spread evenly across all social groups. The pupils remaining within Lambeth secondary schools, and indeed within the state system as a whole, may not be representative of the population that attended Lambeth primary schools. If it has not already done so, the LA must document possible selective drift, by comparing the KS2 results of those who remain in, transfer out or transfer in to Lambeth secondary schools at Year 7. A similar recommendation was made in Strand (2006).

Like much data, this analysis does not provide clear cut answers to the cause of gaps in educational attainment or to direct remediation strategies in relation to such gaps. However it has articulated more clearly where such gaps lie. This suggests that interpretations focussed exclusively on the role of socio-economic status or on the impact of racism do not explain the complex interactions within the data. What might be termed 'monotheistic' interpretation based on class, ethnicity or gender do not adequately explain the complexity of the interaction between these factors.

This does not mean that some elements of these explanations are not valid. For example the underachievement of black pupils from middle and high SES backgrounds may reflect the greater access to social and economic capital of white advantaged pupils. Equally it may reflect factors within the school system such as teachers' low educational expectations. But accounts also need to be able to explain why the effect of disadvantage are so much less pronounced for most minority ethnic groups, and in particular why pupils from low SES backgrounds in most minority ethnic pupils are so much more resilient to the impact of disadvantage than their White British peers.

Complex social issues such as differential educational attainment are not amenable to simple explanations. To quote Mencken (1880-1956) 'For every complex problem there is a simple answer – and it's wrong'. The value of this report is in identifying the nuances in the data and in raising questions for more focussed further research.

Section 3. Raising the Achievement of White Working Class Pupils: Barriers to Learning

Introduction

The aim of this section of the research was to develop an understanding of the school experiences of white working class pupils through discussions with parents and pupils and to explore what steps need to be taken to raise standards. Specific objectives were to explore barriers to learning and examine what steps need to be taken to raise achievement.

An ethnographical approach was adopted to explore the objectives above. Researchers undertook case studies in thirteen schools and held semi-structured interviews with a number of staff in order to learn more about the school experiences of white working class pupils.

Separate parent and pupil focus groups were run in the schools, in which the researchers introduced themselves, welcomed parents and pupils and explained the purpose of the focus group. Pupils involved were from KS1, 2, 3 and GCSE cohorts and in many cases comprised the school council.

As part of the research we interviewed the following members of staff in 13 case study schools:

- 11 Headteachers/Principals
- 14 Deputies/Vice principals
- 21 Class teachers
- 14 Teaching Assistants
- 8 Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs)
- 2 Learning Support Teachers
- 2 Learning Support Assistants
- 1 Head of Referral Centre
- 8 English As Additional Languages (EAL) Co-ordinators
- 2 Assessment Managers
- 8 Learning Mentors
- 1 Children and Families Support Worker
- 1 Family Services Manager
- 1 Extended Schools Co-ordinator
- 3 School Office staff
- 2 School Governors
- 39 White working class Parents
- 61 Pupils

As part of the interviews teachers were asked, '**what are the main barriers to achievement in schools?**' The main findings and barriers reported through interview were lack of parental aspiration and engagement in school life, poverty and inadequate housing stock, marginalisation and perceived loss of culture and language difficulties.

The main findings are summarised below.

The lack of aspiration amongst white working class families

Of major concern to those involved in raising the achievement of white working class pupils is the perceived lack of aspiration amongst parents for their children's education and future. Headteachers expressed their concern at the gap between the high aspirations for children's learning held by the school and the lower aspirations of the parents. Many highlighted a lack of education amongst white working class parents as a causative factor for low aspiration.

'Many of our parents are young with a legacy of hostility to the school. They do not feel themselves to be stakeholders in education, rather, that sending their children to school is just something they have to do, 'even stepping over the threshold of the school is a barrier for some parents.' (School A)

A headteacher in School A expressed her concern for the generational lack of aspiration apparent in the white working class families at her school:

'Many are young single mothers who had a negative experience of school and became pregnant soon after leaving school, as did their mothers, they follow the pattern. Many are on benefits. There is a vicious cycle of poverty which keeps them on benefits. Many have never worked; they are the 3rd generation of non workers in their family. They do not want to work.' (School A)

'They are settling for scraping by each week. I see mothers outside the school gate with their own mothers having the attitude, I'm ok, I'll just do what my mum does.' (School G)

'We have a group of families which fits this profile. They have the old school attitude to education. They see education as just being the business of the school. They have low aspirations, a family history of little school success, a lack of employment and unemployability within the family. There is a fast pace of change in Lambeth but these families don't change. There is a feeling of hopelessness with some families.' (School B)

Parents' attitudes to school impact significantly on their own children's learning. One teacher in School A commented:

'The children themselves often present as quite passive in the classroom. Education does not have a high priority at home and this has an impact on what children feel about their work at school. It is not on the cards to go to University. If you are generally ok you don't need to worry about this.' (School A)

Similarly a teaching assistant in a Year 1 class expressed concern that one child had told her *'I don't need to get a job'* when they were discussing what they all wanted to do in the future.

Amongst school staff there was an opinion that the high value that other community groups place on education in Lambeth, the high aspirations that they have for their children would seem lacking in many white working class families. A teacher at School H commented that the white working class parents in the school did not *'possess the immigrant mentality. For example, we do not see the positives and high aspiration of the immigrant community in some white families.'*

A member of the leadership team in School J, who is of Portuguese heritage, contrasted the dramatic improvements in the achievement of Portuguese pupils in the school with those of White British heritage. Many of the Portuguese families, originally from Madeira farming communities, had moved into the Stockwell area over a decade ago. It took time for them to adjust to the language and the education system but the strategies the school has used have been highly successful in raising standards of attainment. Reflecting on how this group differed from the White British she stated:

'The Portuguese have been successful because they have a work ethic. Here we are talking about a country where education is free and there is a Welfare State, so people take it for granted to some extent. They do not value it because it is free whereas the Welfare State did not exist in Portugal until seven years ago. In order to eat you had to migrate to other parts of Europe.'

A senior learning mentor (School G) held a unique perspective on this theme. She epitomised the local community in that she is of mixed heritage and had experienced the differing values placed on education by her white mother and black Caribbean father. She has over twenty years experience in the school, as a parent, a volunteer and as an employee:

'My mum is White British and she was not bothered about school but my dad was. She would let me have days off school but would say 'don't tell your dad.' My dad is from Barbados and he had high aspirations for me. My mum never expected me to go to University whereas my dad did. In Barbados education had to be paid for and there was very high value to it.'

The learning mentor considers that these conflicting expectations failed to motivate her to succeed at school. Nevertheless her own desire to further her career came when she was employed at the school and a colleague recognised her potential. She believes that school holds the key to motivating children to improve the quality of their lives, by identifying and harnessing the potential within each child. However she appreciates that many:

'white working class families see it (school) as something that gets their children out during the day. It's something that they have got to do. They will do it with a push. They don't see it as an open door, an opportunity; they don't have the confidence to push the door open. There's a feeling of I'm fine, so why do I need to do anything else. Therefore families I work with have poor attendance. It's only because I am on the phone saying 'where is Johnny? Or if Johnny's ill... I will come and collect Billy and bring him to school, I see that as the mentor's role.'

Poor attendance was a recurrent theme throughout discussions in schools. A school administrative officer from School E feels that parents need to take on the responsibility of getting their children to school and on time in the mornings and cited examples of white working class children who are not attending regularly.

'X pupil doesn't come to school often and it's a real difficulty for him. He doesn't really have friends and no sooner does he come to school some days then he's back in the head's office. A girl in another year group, her mother is keeping her home for company, they don't get up in the morning, and she has about 64% attendance. Her mother isn't putting her educational needs first.'

Another barrier to aspiration is the general lack of knowledge and understanding of the world that many white working class children in the borough have. It was reported that many pupils do not even go to the local park and know little of a life beyond their home and school. Many appear polarised in their outlook on life.

'The parents don't go anywhere. They stay in their flats watching TV. They do not travel, they don't go into other parts of London. Some go to Spain or Butlins. Many don't even go to the local park.' (School E)

'This might be a cost issue or it might be that they are perfectly happy here. I'm fine in my world. Why do I need to go any further? There is a self imposed glass ceiling. My mum and dad didn't go to college, they did alright. You need one member of the family with a spark and they move out.' (School E)

A parent governor expressed her concern about older children in the area where she lived. She told us about the 'gangs, many of whom are white boys that hang around the area.

'They have no aspiration or ambition and no parental support. One of the boys told the others he wanted to be a policeman- next thing he knew his car had been damaged.' (School H)

'It is a general thing here that children do not get out of the area but don't see it; there is little understanding of a larger world. Children, whose families came here from another country or have lived in two or three countries, have a wider world to relate to, whilst white pupils don't have this, they do not have a mental map of the world.' (School D)

One mother in the parent focus group talked of a programme she had seen on the TV about children on a council estate in Battersea:

'These children never expected to leave the estate; they had never even seen the Thames. School could be the only way to help these children. It gives them a chance, shows them another life.'

The issue of 'a small world' is a serious one as not only is there a sharp contrast between the aspirations of White British parents for their children's future lives, and those of other ethnic groups in the school, but an assistant head from School D warned against the assumption that might be easily made that children have had a broad range of experiences, simply because they live in London. Teachers might assume that because children have grown up here and that they 'look the same as you,' that they have had similar experiences; 'even going to the park, or the seaside'. The curriculum can also assume the same. Although we assume that children of a different heritage may be unfamiliar with some experiences of growing up here, we don't always do that for our white children. She has reflected on this issue as an Australian living in this country as an adult, 'although I look the same as British people, my experiences of growing up have been different as I grew up in Australia'.

Lastly the lack of future thinking and aspiration presented challenges to schools in raising standards. This thinking often manifested itself in parental attitudes to their children's welfare e.g. their behaviour and diet. One headteacher (School E) reflected:

With the materialistic culture of Thatcher's time it exploded and everyone wants their bit. There is no concept of saving up for things, saving for a 'rainy day'; everything is about instant gratification. Children seem to have the best in material things; two boys, their mother showers them with whatever she has, yet their behaviour and attitude towards learning is appalling. We just want someone to see past tomorrow.' (School E)

'There is a culture of instant gratification. Reality TV doesn't help. I know that two boys I used to teach, and worked really hard with are now local drug dealers. One single mother with 7 children said to me recently, 'you can't tell me what to do, I earn more than you in a month.' (School C)

'There is a celebrity culture- you don't have to do anything for your money- the hard work bit in between is missing.' (School B)

There is an issue with parents not engaging with the school over supporting a line with behaviour. Some parents are accepting of their children's inappropriate behaviour, praising them and seeing it as sweet, *'bless him, little terror.'*

On the issue of children's diet the headteacher (School E) raised her concerns:

'Every morning we see our white children eating a sausage roll from Greggs bakery in the playground. Parents seem unconcerned about the impact of this food on the future health of their children. They won't send them to breakfast club- they don't like the food. This food has empty calories, it leads to fluctuations in blood sugar levels and the children don't concentrate in class.' (School E)

Some school staff reported an obstruction by parents to the school supporting children's achievement. For example:

'One White British mother always talks about her child getting tired so she won't send her to extra lessons, e.g. 1:1, booster.' (School J)

A lack of engagement with children's schooling

A teacher talked about her experiences at a previous school outside of London where white working class children were in the majority:

'In this school parents did not want their children to do better than them. They wanted to keep them close, they didn't want them to move away but live with them or in the same street. But it's not like that here, the parents want their children to do well, they just don't want to play a part in this. Whilst many parents want the best for their children they don't realise that they can take some responsibility for this, not just the 'will you do it attitude.' (School E)

It was felt generally that with many parents:

'There is a culture of it's up to the school to educate the child. There is little concept that the parent is the child's first teacher.'

A school administration officer also reflected:

'I don't think parents like being told what to do. Other groups might be a bit more subdued. They don't like to be told that their children are failing.'

'I used to work in a school in Bermondsey. There you had to fight to keep parents out of the school. Here, it takes lots and lots of nagging to get them in.' (School E)

'One parent fights us every step of the way. Her attitude is that she's got by without an education so what's the problem for her children? She is all too willing to lend a sympathetic ear to her children's complaints about school.' (School E)

A teacher at the same school stated:

'I find some of my white parents are very defensive- they never come to anything at the school. At the end of the first term I had an informal parents' evening 'If you want to come and ask me anything about your child's education..... I had 2 out of 18 parents come to see me. Many of these parents are prepared to be nurtured by the school, to be dependent on the school, but they don't want to be told what to do. They don't feel it's their role to get involved in the school. We do whatever we can do break down barriers in this school. We provide lots of positive opportunities for them to come into school but they don't.'

One headteacher contrasted their lack of engagement with the 'system' with that of West African and West Indian parents:

'In my time here I have rarely known a white parent come in to ask about secondary transition. Other groups know the system, this group is more passive and they generally seem to have less ambition or fight to move on.'

Similarly the school finds it hard to engage this group in Family Learning activities, especially those that focus on healthy eating, or behaviour management suggesting that this might be because, *'they see this as us blaming them and become defensive but also with Adult Learning activities, it might be that they lack the confidence to have a go.'* (School A)

Although many schools felt that certain Family Learning programmes were ideal for this group of parents there is a general lack of take up in these methods of support or the Extended Day activities.

'The children are out on the streets in their uniforms after school. The mothers don't do anything with their children, they don't go anywhere as a family. There is no family structure. The discipline has been taken away from them. They let the children control them- they have no parenting skills. The mums are so much younger and the children are just copying their parents. The women used to be the strong ones- they would push their children out to work.' (School E).

'It's about knowing that you are the adult, they need you and want you to say no, they will constantly push the boundaries.'

Because of general difficulties with behaviour management in some white working class families, schools work hard to encourage parents to attend parenting courses e.g. with Fegans, a Christian charity that offers support to children and families, but they reported that parents are very reluctant to do anything unless it is run from school, not wanting to *'step out of their comfort zones.'*

Similarly the Local Authority has organised family support workers for families at schools but one headteacher reported:

'they don't answer the phone to the family support worker, they don't go to appointments made for them with e.g. Housing. 'It gets to the point where there is nothing more you can do. One parent lost her flat, she ignored the letters, just buried her head in the sand, it was easier not to think about it. She won't engage with the family support worker. The child is going back into care. There is support out there but they have to ask for it.' (School E)

A family services manager at a school with a long tradition of delivering services to parents expressed his concern at the lack of engagement from white working class families at the school;

'We have started a new homework club for Years 3, 4 and 5. No white pupils in the school come along to this.' (School G)

The learning mentor had referred many white working class children to the breakfast club. Attendance, however, was often erratic and staff reported that often children would want to watch TV at home instead. Similarly, none of these families use the after school club facilities. The school's Extended school co-ordinator told us that in the summer holidays some white families were offered free places at the football sessions, however these families only came a couple of times then gave up, whereas when places were offered to African families they came everyday. One white parent when offered a place for his daughter at an after school activity said, *'If I've got to pay, then no.'*

One member of staff reflected that:

'The after school extra curricular activities do not always reach disadvantaged families. They do not always see the letters, they don't ask for them, they do not want to come out again and pick up a child if they've already been out at 3.30pm.' (School D)

In another school, staff were positive about the take up of family learning activities e.g. Laptop library amongst white parents but reported that they were inclined to drop out of the bit where they are asked to work with their children in the afternoon claiming:

'I don't want to work with my child, they are in school, this is time for me. There is a desperate lack of aspiration for their children and engagement in their learning.' (School G)

Teachers give further examples of the lack of parental engagement, even in the Nursery, where traditionally relationships with parents are formed. The Nursery teacher who has three White British children in her class comments:

'One white British mum is going to College herself and she finds it difficult to help her son with literacy. She attempts it, but other parents may not. We treat our parents with respect and hopefully they'd feel able to come in, but many White British parents do not. They have difficulty 'opening up'; it is not as if all parents feel comfortable to tell you everything. Some parents are very involved and some are going through tremendous difficulties at home and it affects the child. We do see some of the dads of White British children, two in particular, on a regular basis in the Nursery. Some children do not have fathers in their lives at present.'

A Year 4 teacher has only two White British pupils in his class:

'One has a lot of social issues, underachieving, he is in the minority. His attendance is poor. His mother is dependent on him. His father is in prison- he has a lot on his plate. We try to assure his mother that the best place for him is at school, but it is getting through to his mother that is the difficulty.'

Marginalisation and a perceived loss of culture amongst white working class families

Demie et al (2008) state that since 1998 there has been a 10% decline in the White British population in Lambeth and they no longer represent the largest group. This is maybe reflected in the words of a member of staff at School A when she suggests:

'Twenty years ago half the school population was White British- now most of them have disappeared. Many have moved out to Kent or Essex or Croydon. Twenty years ago there was also a culture of someone bringing in some money. Those that are left in the area have no social mobility and no way of getting out.. Many of them were born and brought up in the immediate area. Other groups change and move on and out. This group is stuck.' (School A)

Another staff comment struck a similar chord:

'They themselves (mothers) feel marginalised; they huddle together in the playground. They are the white minority in a majority black school. They tend to only engage with the school when there is a problem. It could be because they see the school as 'authority', despite the school providing many opportunities to involve parents in social and curricular evenings. The school therefore plays a key role in social cohesion.' (School G)

Many staff in the case study schools reflected upon the impact of this marginalisation upon some children:

'I think it is very difficult for the white children to identify culturally with the other, more dominant, cultures in the school. They aspire to Eminem or street culture and I would say that a lot of their role models are black. They speak with South London patois. The white girls hang out with other white girls, when they are in dance club it is noticeable that they are not as grown up as the black girls, emotionally or physically. They do not dance as well, neither do the boys.' (School C)

A teacher (School G) who described herself as 'part of a minority' recognised the unusual situation that white pupils now find themselves in as an ethnic minority in the school:

'there can be an emotional barrier and a lack of self-esteem; it can be true of any minority. If you feel undervalued within the whole school community, it can have a profound effect from an early age. Children can feel confused about where they fit into the world. In our school we are very good at diversity, but may be there is an assumption that because you are British and White, you are already included in things. But do we celebrate being British? It is very subtle and from an early age you can be affected by it and it can affect how you perform and how you engage in school. We are aware of the White British being a minority in the school. Last week we had a staff meeting looking at attendance and achievement, but the issue of social class is a difficult one.'

A Year 4 teacher in the same school echoed these sentiments:

'We are very explicit in celebrating other cultures, but there is always that difficulty in identifying what is British culture? How many of our pupils would understand what Maypole Dancing is about? We had a Memorial Day celebration yesterday, but we stressed all the people who died. We celebrate Christmas and Easter but even that is done in a diverse way. I think white families are expected to just fit into the curriculum, it is seen as the norm for them and we focus on the children new to the country/EAL children. We can't assume that the white children get taken anywhere.'

A learning mentor in School J reflected that:

'There are stigmas to being White British where you cannot do anything without being criticised for being politically incorrect. You are expected not to wear even an England football shirt. White British people take a lot of flack but most people are trying to make things work for everyone. Every White British parent I have come across is willing to accept others, but they just want things to work fairly.'

Not only does the issue of a declining white population in schools lead to a perception of marginalisation within the community but many schools reported that a barrier to achievement for some working class white children was the achievement of the white middle class children in Lambeth schools. Balancing the different agendas of the white middle class parents with those of the working class has long been a challenge for headteachers to manage. In one headteacher's view:

'the middle class can be alienating and they don't seem to be able to understand how this impacts on others: an example of this was at a raffle organised by the PTFA a few years ago. One working class parent bought 20-30 tickets and she won two prizes. The middle class parent suggested that this parent put one of the prizes back! Mayhem broke out! I had to smooth it over and explain to the middle class parent why this parent might have wanted to keep both prizes!' (School L)

Similarly another headteacher expressed concern at the stigma placed upon many white working class families:

'Are we looking at what might have been classed as the undeserving poor, the critical mass who are seen to be feckless, lazy, won't get on with it (symptoms- poverty, unemployment and a vicious cycle of early pregnancy). They are seen to lack aspiration with an attitude of dependency, why should I work if the state will pay for me. That's not for me- I'm not going to sacrifice so much.' (School E)

A parent governor expressed his concern about the huge take up of local community facilities by the white middle class, but not the white working class families, the target audience.

'This area has a thriving local neighbourhood centre, which is the designated Children's Centre for the area which also has strong links with the school. Yet few of the poorer white families use it.'

Children's Centres aim to improve outcomes for children under 5 years old. They are service hubs where children and their families receive seamless and integrated early education and childcare, support for parents e.g. advice on parenting, health services and helping parents back into work.

Yet this governor states:

'The purpose of the Children's Centre is to enable parents of young children to get back into work but what you get is your Children's' Centre full of middle class parents who are working.'

On the subject of marginalisation a headteacher (School C) reflected on the bonds that tie other community groups together that do not exist in the white working class group:

'In the Caribbean community there is an ethos of hard work, with Church and music providing a strong focal point for families. Whereas the White British probably have nothing but the pub...there is no pride in the white community, no strong sense of a cultural identity.'

'Whilst other community groups have the Church as a family focus many white families do not attend. Not only is this something that can be done as a family but the church places expectations on you-of helping and supporting each other. Similarly the Muslim families cook together, help each other, a focal point is the mosque.'

Overall a recurrent theme of the parent focus group discussion was the isolation that many white working class parents felt within a 'diverse' community declaring themselves as the new 'ethnic group.' One young mother claimed that she was the only white person living in her housing block where she felt there was a lack of community spirit. A number of parents in the focus group expressed a desire to leave the area. Some parents talked about what they felt as an unfair allocation of housing which resulted in marginalisation of the white working class in the area. Another parent argued that:

'I have never felt excluded. I am eligible for any financial help as every one in my situation on low income. I feel I am treated equal to everyone else.'

The impact of poverty on white working class children's achievement

Poverty was seen to play a major role in the underachievement of white working class pupils in the case study schools. Low incomes, benefits and the pressure of not having any money were seen to play their part, affecting the stability of family life.

It was reported that for recreation some white working class parents turn to cheap alcohol. This can often have a destabilising effect upon regular bedtime and family meals. One member of staff from School B stated:

'We have a family on a local estate. There are safeguarding issues. There are no parenting skills in the family. The mother can't extricate them from the environment. There is such poor self esteem in the family. The school set up a CAF for the children. They have a Family Support Worker and were referred to Social Care but they didn't meet the threshold. I know that the family are fed up with the level of intervention and that there is a feeling of real hopelessness.'

Case Study: School C

One headteacher gave us a profile of the white families in her school. There are 33 White British children at the School C who belong to 18 families. The White British at the school tend to be the 'stable' population in a generally mobile school. 25 from the 33 families have been here from the Nursery. 'Two children came later to the school, having been permanently excluded from other Lambeth schools. 'We offered them a place of safety.' This is the indigenous population, the black families move on. They all live on the local estate. The deprivation factors in their families are high, child protection cases, School Action plus, single parents, illness, mental illness, learning difficulties, low attendance, prison, school exclusions. Also, in a sea of immigration, these families are isolated.'

Family profiles:

- Family A: Back bone of school, good family who sign up for things, are involved. A girl who is doing well
- Family B: Child Protection issues, father in and out of prison, boy being abused by an uncle, boy excluded from another school
- Family C: New to school- all boys with very low self esteem, chaotic life style
- Family D: Mum 'up and down' single parent, tries to be positive and this is reflected in children
- Family E: Moved out of area to Bromley- patchy attendance but bright child
- Family F: Single parent- girl, could be doing better at school
- Family G: Dad in prison for fraud, mum is 'tough' and wants the best for her children
- Family H: Children are underperforming
- Family I: Mother works in the school, doing her best, shows in the children
- Family J: Highly deprived family- patchy attendance, lots of anger in family, drugs involved. Girl gently getting through life
- Family K: Boy who couldn't write his name in Year 3 when came to school-due to go to special school
- Family L: Swapping of relationships-dad in prison
- Family M: Oldest child with 'nan'- youngest with mum, attendance patchy, asked to leave from another school
- Family N: Mum not interested in education
- Family O: Boy is autistic, learning needs, dad can't read, mum's educational opportunities were limited. Patchy attendance.

25% of the statements in the school lie with the 18 White British families and 6 out of the 9 child protection cases. 'In our 18 families, 4 of the males are in prison, 6 have a father who is around and plays a part in collection from school. 12 are single parents, 12 have no job and are on benefit. All are in council property.'

Case Study: Child X

Child X's mother has some literacy skills, although probably didn't receive a full education. She is described as 'highly deprived'; she has had a 'hard life and her ability to parent is compromised. She has often been a victim for men throughout her life'. There are huge child protection issues in the family and Dad is in prison. Child X joined us in Year 4, having been excluded from a neighbouring school. There have been a few times at his present school where he has been asked to go home as he has not been coping. 'He is a bright but isolated child who tends to gravitate towards younger children who are similar to him.' During an IT project in Year 5, supported by Clapham Park Project, all the children were given a mini book which they could share with their families. Child X would be awake into the early hours of the night using it. 'He was bright enough to convince the computer he was 18 and was able to play fantasy games at that level. Mum was not aware.' He has had the same teacher for two years who is an advanced skills teacher. She has good behaviour management skills, she makes learning interesting and the children want to be involved. There are extra adults in the classroom, due to two statements in the class. All the adults are aware of Child X and his needs as are the children to a certain extent. They know about his attributes e.g. his play acting, his ability to mimic which the teacher has brought to the fore. The teacher has given him a 'buddy', a child who wouldn't necessarily have been his friend: this has focused this child as well as Child X.

Child X stays to do homework twice a week, to be social, as much as to get support. He gets very upset if he can't stay. 'His mum doesn't like him coming home on his own. However Child X has learnt how to control his mum. There is a lack of boundaries and any that are put in fall apart as soon as an issue arises. There is also an issue of parents always seeing their children in the right against the school but also giving up with 'What can I do about it; you'll just have to tell the social worker.' Due to his lack of barriers at home he has struggled with the boundaries at school, 'acting out' if expected to do things at an 'inconvenient' time, although the boundaries do make him feel safe.'

'The staff have been consistent in their approach to him, tried hard to analyse what is going on for him, to make a positive out of a negative. We've engaged other adults to help with this e.g. the learning mentor.' Staff have been flexible with him. He wanted to start a chess club. Staff let him spend time making small permission slips for other children to get into ICT room to play chess. He is also allowed to sit inside with a friend to use his mini book. He is trusted to do these things. His teacher has gradually built his confidence through role play etc. He has also won the approval of his class mates and is proud of his achievements. 'In Maths he is a 4A/5C but in writing a 3C, the ideas and composition are there but not the structure.'

Case Study: Child Y

Child Y has always lived with his grandmother. His mother is in and out of his life but 'he never mentions his relationship with mum in a positive or a negative way. At times his mother and grandmother fall out, at one point his mother moved to Kent as a result. Relations with their closest relatives are unsettled. The grandmother was a governor at a local school, which Child Y attended. He hurt a supply teacher and was given a fixed exclusion which Gran 'rejected' as she

‘protects Child Y in all cases, even now she swings from being very supportive to not being supportive, not liking it when anything negative is said about Child Y. She takes a lot of school time, she needs the contact’. This led to a breakdown in the relationship between home and school and Child Y was out of school for months. The EWO found his present school.

Child Y regularly gets into ‘challenges’ with teachers. He gets the upper hand and has been known to climb out of the window onto the street. He is very strong on injustice if he perceives a punishment to be out of proportion to his action. His relationship with his teacher is now much better, she had been new to the school. He has been put into the top group for maths which has been very good for his confidence. He is on report 3 times a day with the deputy head teacher. Child Y has reddish hair, feels that he stands out and frequently ‘feels picked on and recognised for things’ he didn’t do. An example was an incident when a younger child had claimed two children were ‘horrible’ to him and picked out one as having ‘red hair’. He has extremely poor self esteem, ‘in one PE class with a new teacher he was asked to do push ups as part of a warming up exercise- he couldn’t ‘have a go’ or ask for help, so he went into one’- he didn’t want to be shown up in front of the class and just doesn’t have the strategies for dealing with this.’

He has learning mentor support although Child Y tends to get very angry with him when he goes through the less positive things about Child Y’s week after the positive and claims that he doesn’t want his help anymore. ‘As a school I feel we have gone overboard for Child Y, if things had been in place at home he would have done very well in school. He is very lazy- but also it’s an unwillingness to have a go e.g. with writing, he’ll make mistakes and just opt out. His class teacher collates all the work he doesn’t do in class for him to do as homework – Gran always comes to make excuses for why he hasn’t done it at home though.’

The impact of unsuitable housing stock on the achievement of white working class children

A parent governor told us that housing is the first concern of many of the white parents in his school. He commented that:

‘If you don’t have a safe place you can call home then everything else is difficult. There are 1.7 million families waiting for a suitable home in this country. It really worries me that the BNP play on this issue. We need to take a holistic approach to this. Housing affects achievement.’

Two teaching assistants from the same area shed light on this issue by sharing their personal experiences. One had lived in the area all her life and worked at the school for 28 years, the other had worked at the school for 10 years. Both stated housing related issues as having depressing effects on children’s achievement at the school.

‘Their Housing is temporary; there is little space and they are cramped, there is too much noise, there is nowhere for them to play, there is often little security. Even when they live in private accommodation which the Council pays for they live with the threat of eviction because a private tenant might come along who can pay more to the landlord.’

'Boys are energetic, they need space. I know of a single mum with two boys in a small two bedroom flat. She is struggling.'

'Many parents are in the benefit trap because if they worked they wouldn't be able to afford the rent. The council are paying a vast amount of money a year for my daughter to live in a private flat because they couldn't give her a council flat. This happens a lot. Much of the new housing that's been built here is for key workers not for the local community. This is dividing our community-the young people are being forced out.' (School E)

Anecdotal evidence also suggests a perception amongst some white working class parents that they are positioned as the losers in the struggle for scarce housing resources, whilst minority ethnic groups are the winners. This is however questioned by one parent interviewed which stated that:

'As a white working class parent, I have never felt excluded. I feel I am treated equally. I am eligible for any housing needs and financial help as every one in my situation who are on low income.' (Parent)

A learning mentor in another school commented:

'One family has 6 or 7 children. They live in a 2-3 bedroom flat and are finding it impossible to move house. Dad is illiterate and mum too has poor literacy skills. They find it difficult to cope. The children tend to self parent. There has been a lot of involvement from Social Services.' (School D)

A teaching assistant suggested that:

'This is not just an issue for children in council accommodation but children in private one bedroom flats. They are sleeping with mum because they have bought small to get onto the property ladder.' (School D)

The fact that many children live with noise, rubbish and security issues on a day to day basis was summarised by a young girl in Year 3 from a family who are seeking to be rehoused. She said:

'the teenagers outside keep me awake at night- they are noisy but I am in bed worrying that bad things will happen to them because I watch the news and know what can happen to children. There are always broken bottles on my estate, once I cut my foot and I'm worried I will do it again. I wish people would put them in the bin or the recycling.' (School D)

Low literacy levels and language deprivation amongst white working class children

Two secondary schools reflected on how the low prior attainment of some pupils starting school in Year 7 is the greatest barrier to achievement and is a causative factor in behaviour problems and low achievement throughout their school life:

'The problem is that whereas their black Caribbean peers start with high achievement and some underachieve, white working class students start low and end up lower. Here we are up against problems of non attendance. This group often keeps below the radar and politically remains below the radar.' (School B)

'I'd say it's the largest route of behaviour problems in the school. The literacy levels of some parents is an issue. White working class students are at a disadvantage here because they do not receive EAL support and unless they have SEN their specific needs do not fall into a category. They almost need primary teaching; we can't give that here.'

The consequences of an inability to express ones self either verbally or in writing can lead to low self-esteem and often aggression.

'The two groups that are over represented in terms of exclusions, both internal and external, are white and black Caribbean boys. They have low levels of literacy, low CAT scores, their reading ages are low and their national curriculum levels are low. These students have chaotic home lives too.' (School H)

A teaching assistant talked of a young man known to her who:

'started to camouflage his lack of progress with bad behaviour. He slipped through the net. He was 16 when he left school to do a college course in motor mechanics. The first year was practical and he got on well but the second year was theory and he dropped out because his literacy skills are not good. With support he got an interview for a part time job but he told me he wasn't going to sit in a room full of dunces. He was talking about himself of course. We have a boy like that in school now. He has no confidence, low self esteem, I think Mum does his homework for him. She won't be able to do that when he goes to secondary school.'

The issue with language would appear to start in the Foundation Stage as one teacher in a primary school stated:

*'Many of the white children, as do others, come into school well below average, they haven't got the skills, they can't recognise their own name.'
In the nursery if peers haven't got good English language skills then they don't get the language models unless an adult is there during their play. This is especially an issue for boys as they are less likely to want to come and work at an adult directed activity, they would rather get on and do what they want to do!'* (School K)

Similarly a headteacher talked of some young children, more frequently the white working class, coming to school only being able to grunt because they had been 'stuck in front of a TV all day.'

Primary colleagues reflected that many white working class pupils are:

'at Stage 3 language. They do not progress in the way that many EAL pupils do. They are stuck at stage 3. They do not have the academic language or the language enrichment with which to progress. Many write in a colloquial way. They therefore don't have the language to achieve at secondary school.'

'They do not have the language models. They are exposed to the media, text culture. They do not have maybe the mindset of EAL learners. EAL pupils take on new vocabulary all the time, they are used to it, learning English is a continuum, they acquire new vocabulary, academic language.' (School D)

‘the English that many white students speak at home is often different from what they speak, or are expected to speak at school. They do not have an enriched vocabulary or academic language but we have to be careful that we do not denigrate the language they speak at home, the way their parents might speak.’
(School H)

Members of staff felt that the EMA grant needed to be rethought as there is currently no money to support the language deficit within the white working class community. Although schools are working creatively to support those who are most in need of language support some EMA co-ordinators felt that their hands *‘are tied, I am only really supposed to be supporting the EAL children.’*

EMA co-ordinators acknowledged that many EAL pupils are articulate by the time they reach Year 6 due to the level of support they have had.

Furthermore many schools reflected on the fact that pupils with EAL needs arriving new to a school receive a thorough induction process into the school. At one school they have an hour’s interview with the EMA co-ordinator, this is not necessarily the same for White British pupils. Although this level of induction exists in the Foundation Stage this is a disadvantage for pupils who arrive at other times during the year.

Curriculum barriers

‘The curriculum that has been on offer has not been meeting the needs of White British pupils. There has been much emphasis in recent years on elements of black history and a celebration of cultural days such as Portuguese Day. There has been nothing for the British culture. This might have led to a sense of them losing their identity. This could have led to the marginalisation of this group of pupils.’
(Headteacher- School A).

‘The National Curriculum is a classist curriculum- we are planning an alternative curriculum with far greater cross curricular links pertinent to our own school community.’

The learning mentor and teaching assistant acknowledge that there is the expectation that White British pupils *‘will just fit into the curriculum’* and *‘as the focus is never specifically on those children, they might not achieve their full potential as they are never the focus.’*

The learning mentor believes that the way forward is in addressing children’s emotional literacy when determining provision. She gives the following example *‘a White British child I can think of gets all her knowledge from the computer because she never gets taken anywhere by her mother.’*

One headteacher felt that the secondary school situation is another reason.

‘If you are a boy or young man you encounter further problems. It is enormously difficult if you are a young man in this country. People are naturally suspicious of young men and do not give them a chance. We have to look at a more vocational type of education in our secondary schools for our young people, as we did years ago.’ (School L)

Lack of targeted support

Some parents felt that there was an unfair weighting of resources towards immigrant children or those learning English. One parent commented,

'There should be support outside the classroom for children coming into school not speaking English. It disrupts our children.'

One parent commented that she felt there was a lack of resources for white working class children at school. She stated:

'One of the major problems for us is that we are not recognised. There is no extra help for our children. There is a Portuguese club after school, but not one for English children; if there was we would be called racist. We are not racist we just want a balance.' (The Portuguese club is externally funded.)

School EMA co-ordinators recognised that their 'hands were tied' and that as much as some white working class pupils needed specific language support to progress and access the curriculum, they were not in a position to give this support, unless as part of whole school strategies. One EMAG co-ordinator stated:

'Many of our EAL pupils are highly articulate by the time they reach Year 6 as they have had a lot of support. I was with some children the other day in a classroom- it was the EAL children who had the necessary comparative language- bigger, biggest. The white children did not have this vocabulary.' (School I)

There was a general feeling amongst staff, governors and parents that little support was targeted at white working class pupils:

'White working class people feel no one is listening or speaking for them. They have been shaved by politicians of all parties as part of broader strategy to woo middle class voters and occupy the political centre. As a result there are few national strategies or little targeted support to tackle generations of low aspiration and to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.' (Governors and Headteachers focus group)

Governors believe the current system of additional funding means some schools serving white working class estates do not receive adequate financial support. The question of social class and poverty has remained in the background. It is a hidden barrier but the negative impact of poverty, disadvantage and inequality upon achievement cannot be underestimated. One governor commented:

'Disadvantage also undermines the resilience of communities and depresses aspiration in a destructive cycle.' (Governor)

National policy makers often seem to overlook the particular difficulties faced by white working class children. *"The government seldom talks about class in general and white working class in particular, preferring terms such as 'hardworking families' and 'social inclusion' as part of a strategy to attract middle class voters. This has alienated and affected the white working class."* (Runnymede Trust (2009). It is important that this issue is addressed through additional funding. At present, entitlement to free meals is used to direct resources to schools.

Many children in receipt of these meals are white from disadvantaged backgrounds. FSM eligibility is a significant factor in funding to schools and there are also a number of programmes which are aimed particularly at schools in areas of generally high economic disadvantage. It is disingenuous for some policy makers to suggest that the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant (EMAG) is the only additional funding source for schools in disadvantaged areas. However, it needs to be recognised that funding through entitlement to free schools meals is not enough to tackle the huge challenge facing white working class pupils. There is now a need for additional funding to support targeted initiatives to raise aspiration and achievement of white working class pupils. However, this does not mean we should take away EMAG funding from other disadvantaged groups like ethnic minorities. What is needed from policy makers is to commit new additional funding to support this group similar to EMAG funding.

SECTION 4: Parents, Headteachers and Governors Views About White Working Class Pupils Underachievement: The Focus Groups Evidence

Focus group discussions were carried out with parents, headteachers and governors. The main aim of the focus group was to develop an understanding of the schooling experience of white working class pupils and to ascertain the views of headteachers, governors and parents about the barriers to learning and their views in regard to what practical steps need to be taken in order to raise achievement. Focus groups were run separately for headteachers and governors, parents and pupils to encourage open discussion. Group discussions were centred on three questions:

1. What do we mean by the term white working class?
2. What barriers to learning do you think white working class pupils face from school, community and home?
3. What do schools need to do to understand and meet the needs of white pupils from low-income backgrounds?

The main findings are summarised below.

Parents' views

Thirty nine parents were interviewed in six case study primary schools. Of these eight were fathers and thirty one were mothers and grandmothers.

Many of the parents in the group referred to themselves as 'English' preferring this way of identifying themselves to White British. It is interesting to note that their children when asked about their identity saw themselves in a wider sense, a mixture between English, Irish, Scottish and American.

Every parent interviewed felt that it was important for their children to get a good education but many felt there were a number of barriers to learning that made this a challenge:

- A lack of white culture is reflected in school life and the curriculum
- The marginalisation they feel within their communities
- An unfair weighting of resources towards immigrant children or those learning English
- The unfair allocation of Housing stock and the impact on their children's lives
- The coverage in the national curriculum at the expense of learning the basics

Although many parents were willing for their children to learn about a range of cultures at school many shared the perception that their own white culture no longer seemed to have a place in inner city school life. Some parents felt that they were the only people who teach their children their history and heritage. Parents said:

'There is a lot on heritage/Black History month- we need to get a balance.'

'The British identity is lost. It's not celebrated anymore. What about having a British day in school? When I was at school we celebrated May Day, St George's day, Halloween, Guy Fawkes Day. We had fêtes. We don't see any of this anymore. Christmas is not celebrated properly. Our children have to celebrate everybody else's culture because it's politically correct. What about ours?'

'Our children are expected to learn and celebrate everybody's culture- Black History month, but no-one learns about our culture. I think we should celebrate everybody's culture equally, St George's day, Florence Nightingale, the Christian religion. We think it's good to learn about other people's culture, we just want it to be fair. Our children didn't learn about Christmas; Easter, they just got a cream egg, you'd have to tell them about the history of Easter yourself if you wanted them to know about it.'

'There is a notice board in the school foyer which advertises the 'language of the week'- every week I look- I am still waiting for it to be English.'

Some parents also expressed:

'Everybody should have to celebrate Christmas and enjoy Father Christmas; they are in a British school. Our children don't know the meaning of Christmas.... they get hats, presents and a dinner but they don't know why. We have to celebrate their religions. It's the same with Easter; children need to know why we celebrate these things.'

And that:

'It's the school's job to explain to parents from other countries that the children should celebrate everyone's cultures.'

Two mothers who were teaching assistants in their children's school recognised and appreciated the various cultures of the teachers in the school. 'I like the fact that our teachers come from all over the world, one from Australia saw snow this winter' but shared the concern about the lack of balance in their children's learning. Aware that their children learn all about other cultures they would also be keen for them to learn about 'their own, the wars, how the royal family evolved'. They felt that it would be good for the parents too to learn a bit more about their own culture too.

'It's important to learn about other cultures but we need more on our own culture. There's not enough time for children to take it all in. Some kids are aware, others aren't because their parents aren't. At the moment they know more about other cultures than their own.'

'I'd like the children to learn a bit more about British culture-about the Royal family, war, poppies- why do we have them? We want children to learn why they are here, because of what my granddad did in the war. We need to learn more about the area, where we live and what it was like, my block used to be an air raid shelter.'

'I would like people to know more about why they are all living here.'

*'The school dinners need to be more English- just plain potatoes.'
'I don't like this healthy eating. They tell us what to put in our children's packed lunches.'*

Many parents also expressed concern that their children did not always get the support they deserved because there are so many needs within the school, for example pupils who do not speak English and those who come in to the school throughout the school year who need immediate support.

'There should be support for children coming into school not speaking English. It disrupts our children in the classroom.'

Also a sense of injustice was expressed by two parents through:

'A lot of the Somalis do not wear the school uniform. Their Hajabs should be in school colours. If they wear long dresses they should be in the school colours. They get treated differently and they shouldn't be allowed. To accept the ways of this country- what does it matter what religion you are, who you are, religion is a personal thing. We are all scared to say it.'

A recurrent theme of focus group discussion was the isolation that many parents felt within a 'diverse' community.

'We are the ethnic group now,' declared one mother and the others in the group agreed.

One young mother claimed that:

'I am the only white person in my block. There is no community spirit. People don't pull together anymore.'

Another parent added:

'No one knows anyone anymore. We have nowhere to go- no community centre- we have to go to each others' flats.'

One family felt that their only source of support in the community was the British Legion as the father had served in the Forces.

Another mother stated:

'Where I am now there is only me and every other country and culture.'

One mother stated:

'Lambeth secondary schools are very black-parents want their children to be in a diverse community not to be in a minority. I sent my child to Wandsworth because there was more of an ethnic mix. If you can afford it you move out. This makes a class divide though. She also expressed I worry about my child at secondary school dumbing down her intelligence due to peer pressure.'

'Another mother stated, during the world cup I wore my England football shirt into school- I got asked to take it off- all the other flags were around-the Portuguese shirts and flags were everywhere.'

In another school a mother stated:

'We are losing our roots. We need to promote our history. We need to learn about the veterans, what they did for us.'

'We need to celebrate our festivals- we should celebrate St. George's day- I put flags up around my flat.'

Many parents expressed a desire to leave the area and live somewhere where they didn't feel they were in the minority and where the schools had a bigger representation of white children. Most of these were outside of London but this required money that they said they do not have.

'My sister moved out from Brixton Hill to Kent because there were only ten white pupils in the school. No other white kids for her son to play with. In her new school there are loads of white kids.'

The same parent added,

'I have lived here all my life and I love it. There are stabbings and shootings now. My next door neighbour got shot. When I was growing up you would only get fights. Now you wouldn't interfere if there was a fight. But I am used to Lambeth and multi-culturalism, when I go up to Scotland I miss it because it's boring there, all the people look the same. I grew up with black children, all my friends are black. It is hard now though with other religions.'

The housing situation

'There is a sense of being downtrodden. I hear a little voice 'what about the white people' on the estate. It worries me that the BNP will take advantage of this.'
(parent)

The perceived lack of justice when it comes to the allocation of housing and the fact that some White British parents feel isolated in their homes are broader issues for society to address. For some of the mothers interviewed they were the only white family in their housing block. They felt marginalised and angry that in their opinion Housing prioritised larger families coming into the country from abroad over their needs.

'I have been told that if I want to move I have to wait 12 years. I only have one bedroom for me and my children. They told me that for myself I have to put a camp bed up in my kitchen.'

'I cannot get a full-time job... I have tried for years. I cannot even get on the Council list for a flat because I've been told I am a minority... I said: 'excuse me, I was born here'. I have been told I don't have enough children. For ten years I have been looking for a job and have been on the Council housing list.'

'When I grew up, we were all the same – black and white. There are far more foreigners in Lambeth now. We are the only white family in our block. My mum is the only white person in her block; my mum and me we used to go in their houses and eat their food. They were African and Caribbean people.'

One mother, however, felt strongly that housing conditions did not always impact negatively on children's achievement as her nephews/nieces had done very at school despite living in cramped conditions.

In one school a group of parents brought to our attention the recent benefits scam adverts which only depict white people which meant that these parents felt prejudiced against.

Coverage in the curriculum

Some parents expressed concerns over the amount that young children were expected to do at school and that it was unnecessary in their opinion that primary aged children should be learning another language when they couldn't read properly in their own language yet:

'I don't think they need to learn another language at primary school; they should concentrate on learning to read and write in English.'

'They also need to follow a reading scheme in stages- build up to it gradually.'

'There should also be more teachers that speak English properly. I'd like them to teach proper English here, not Cockney slang.'

Three parents interviewed in School J have children in Year 7 at the new Evelyn Grace Academy in Lambeth. They are very keen on the idea of the longer school day:

'to play sports and music; it prepares them for when they will go out to work later. It won't be such a shock for them. Maybe we could have that in Key Stage 2- a longer day until 4/4.30pm.'

'We like the structured strict routine, children taking responsibility for themselves. I didn't like it when I had to go in and take S's water bottle because she'd forgotten it but I'd signed a contract so I had to do it.'
'They also have a safe route home policy.'

Maybe the onus on children taking responsibility for themselves will combat the passivity that that was reported to pervade many of these families – the culture of 'someone else will do it for me.'

One parent, who usually is able to take and collect his children from school as he works from home had a recent insight into the life of a working parent as he was called to jury service:

'I realised how hard it can be for parents working long hours to engage with the school. I really think the Government should consider giving parents for example, mandatory ten hours a year, paid, in which they can visit the school to take part in maths and literacy workshops to learn how to support their children's learning. It can be hard to take time off work to do this.'

Overall the focus groups were a useful mechanism for gauging parental views and feelings about the education of their children in schools. The findings from the focus groups indicate:

- Parents perceive that the British identity is lost and not celebrated any more in schools and that their children are expected to learn about other cultures but not their own. All parents expressed a desire for their children to learn about other cultures but that it should be fair when asked about the content of the school curriculum
- There is a sense of marginalisation in the white community and that 'We are the ethnic group now.' Some mothers expressed concern that there were very few, sometimes only one white person in their block and there is no community spirit and that no one knows anyone any more
- An unfair weighting of resources towards immigrant children or those learning English was a perception amongst some parents
- The unfair allocation of Housing stock and the impact on their children's lives. Housing is a big issue. For some of the mothers interviewed they were the only white family in their housing block. They felt marginalised and angry that in their opinion Housing prioritised larger families coming into the country from abroad over their needs
- The coverage in the national curriculum at the expense of learning the basics. Many parents felt that it was unnecessary for their children to be learning another language at primary school especially if they were not secure with the basics.

Headteachers' Views

Nine Headteachers attended the focus group offering a range of perspectives from faith schools, community schools and special schools in Lambeth. The following views are representative of these headteachers and discussions held with headteachers in the thirteen case study schools.

What do we mean when we use the term white working class?

Headteachers were asked to reflect on what 'white working class' meant for their school and who this group were. Below are the comments from individual headteachers:

- 'They are a minority in our school- a group of white boys who exhibit disruptive behaviour; they come from highly deprived families, with child protection issues. The families are finding it hard to cope and the parents are disengaged from school'
- 'This group presents low level child protection issues and poor attendance. We have a sizeable and vocal middle class white group and our white free school meals children do worse than other white free school meals children in Lambeth. Maybe the middle class presence is demotivating'
- 'We have 23 white families- all of our families are on free school meals, benefits; most of these parents are single. There is a strong sense of isolation in the community'

- 'We are blocked by political correctness in terms of defining class. The working class attach value to education but our parents are not engaged at all'
- 'We've all known that it's been happening – we've neglected white children and not recognised the issues. We need to get parents engaged and to appreciate the value of education. There should be no crude judgement about free school meals'
- 'The white families are in a minority and are an underachieving group at school. They don't engage and they don't send their children to booster classes as they don't see the point as they say a lack of education has not done them any harm. It is a challenge for us to engage them in secondary transfer'
- 'They aren't the lowest achievers in our school but the parents need to intervene more, they have low levels of language'
- 'They are in the minority. There is good social cohesion. Nothing has raised its head as a reaction to our focus on other groups. There is a relationship between attendance and achievement though. The learning mentor is a young white male and he can get them into school'
- 'Where do you stop... especially when pupils of dual-heritage over three generations, could be described as White British?'
- 'Are we also including Travellers, who have always been mobile?'
- 'The proportion of White British pupils in a school must be taken into account – in relation to the proportion of pupils from other ethnic groups.'

Six headteachers described themselves as coming from a 'working class' background. This, they say, makes them acutely aware of the challenges which beset under-privileged children and motivates them to ensure that children get the best possible start in life.

A headteacher who comes from a working class background in North East Cumbria is uncompromising on pupil achievement and is clear in his view that poverty is not an excuse:

'I come from a white working class background myself, my parents worked as a mechanic and in a shoe factory, and my granddad down the pit. My family valued education and learning. Education was my chance to do something they didn't do. I've clawed my way to where I am now. My lesson is that perseverance pays off.'

Another headteacher acknowledges the sensitivity of categorising people in terms of social class:

'It is a sensitive area and will be until we are brave enough to say it and address it and look at it as a social class issue. White British are not underachieving overall, but because the social class issue exists, it masks the underachievement of some pupils. It needs a different term; it is not 'working class' because they are not upwardly mobile. Neither is it about nationality or culture, it is about social class. I remember when the Vietnamese boat people arrived and the West African pupils; they knocked the socks off other groups in their achievements. It's about the history of the family and their aspirations. We have families here who have had 100 years without working, with very low aspirations.'

Another headteacher compared her own upbringing as a working class girl to the families that now attend her school:

*'I remember when I was growing up in a working class family, we lived with thrift, make do and mend. We had pride. I suppose it goes back to the Fabians- the respectable poor; help those with the willingness to help themselves'.
'Maybe here we are looking at what might have been classed as the undeserving poor, the critical mass who are seen to be feckless, lazy, won't get on with it. They lack aspiration; they have an attitude of dependency, why should I work if the state will pay for me. That's not for me- I'm not going to sacrifice so much.'*

Similarly another headteacher, who has a commitment to the school which spans nineteen years and was brought up in a working class home in Manchester, reflects on the differences between her own experience as a child some years ago and those of a White British child today. She is clear about when the changes began:

'Mrs Thatcher in her years in government developed a culture of envy and greed which led to a culture of blame. If my kids are not doing well it must be because someone is getting more! Social class has always been an issue and the working class will always feel that, no matter what you do to try and change it.'

'There is the respectable working class and then there is the 'under-class'. The characteristics of the 'under-class' are poverty, unemployment and a vicious cycle of early pregnancy (this part of London has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Europe). We can see it now, you can almost identify certain children who you think will become pregnant by the time they are fourteen. Low and behold we see them a few years later as parents. We have a significant number of one parent families in the school.'

Is the situation any worse now?

'It is worse now because of housing and immigration, according to parents here, it is an unfair system. Unemployment is also a big factor and the secondary school situation is another reason. Additionally, if you are a boy or young man you encounter further problems. It is enormously difficult if you are a young man in this country. People are naturally suspicious of young men and do not give them a chance. We have to look at a more vocational type of education in our secondary schools for our young people, as we did years ago, when if you didn't go to College you could do an apprenticeship somewhere or work in an office or factory. The worrying thing is no-one seems to care about them and there is nothing going for them at all.'

One headteacher wondered whether the views of some 'vociferous' middle class parents tended to dominate, when parental views were sought.

Overall discussion regarding the terminology, 'white working class' did not yield any precise definition to be used for the study. Headteachers talked more in general about how they see the issue from their own school's perspectives and experience. The consensus from the headteachers' discussions suggests that it is difficult these days to define the term working class. The variation between different socio-political definitions makes the use of the term as a subject of study contentious especially following the decline of manual labour in post-industrial societies. Working class is the term used in the past by academics to describe those employed in the lower tier jobs as measured by skill, education and compensation, but it is difficult to use the term

with precise definition when a lot of parents are unemployed. However, despite lack of consensus on the use of the term white working class, recent studies continue to use the term (Mongon and Chapman 2008). The term white working class makes sense for educational purposes as it clearly differentiates pupils by class background. It is useful to focus on underachievement issues in educational debates and ensures that this focus is not lost or blurred in national policy formulation by providing unambiguous data for policy makers and schools. For this reason, in this study, we used the term 'white working class' to refer to parents who are not middle class or professional or managerial class. In this study this terminology covers skilled, semi skilled and unskilled manual workers or others who depend on the welfare state for their income.

Barriers to achievement

Headteachers in the focus group were asked about the barriers to achievement of white working class pupils. Through discussions a picture of a community that is isolated, that does not have the resilience to cope with inner city life anymore emerges. The perception of headteachers is that many white working class pupils come from single parent families. Parents and grandparents may have lived in the immediate area for several generations in quite 'close knit' communities. Unemployment is an issue and they don't have a working culture which is passed down to the children.

However many of the families have left the area and these pupils are now a minority in most schools. For example, The Clapham Park is a rejuvenation area, people have had to vacate the estate. People have been offered attractive money to leave and many have bought flats. Some white families have left often moving to Bromley. The area has changed, 'white flight.' It was reported that the ones that are left behind are not aspirational. Many of these families have nowhere to go to socialise, in many areas the pubs have been changed into wine bars.

It was generally agreed that the lack of parental engagement with the education system was the main barrier to achievement. One of the key barriers to learning and experience of White British children is according to the headteacher, *'the legacy of hostility towards the school system, which has been handed down in families over at least three generations.'*

Headteachers have built up the trust of black parents valuing them through Black History month, showing them the school cares about them, but although White British parents would usually attend 1:1 meetings with a class teacher to discuss their child's progress, there was little or no further engagement with the school. They were unlikely to attend 'curriculum evenings' or social events. The low aspirations of the families were at odds with the high aspirations of the school and there is a lack of respect for authority and teachers.

Headteachers also talked about the lack of role models and that children would often look up to reality TV stars which epitomised the 'instant gratification culture'. One headteacher noted, *'If the working class do well, they are not working class anymore. Who are their role models? They cannot necessarily relate to me as a white middle class woman, I dress differently, I talk differently.'*

Headteachers reported low levels of literacy amongst this group of pupils. On entry to the Foundation Stage children have poor language development and limited *'knowledge and understanding of the world'*. This was described as *'language deprivation'* or a limited *'language for learning.'*

Also in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils tend to have little experience of life beyond their immediate locality, rarely even visiting a park. In contrast to other ethnic groups (many having come to this country from abroad or have family living elsewhere) who have a broader perspective on the world.

Some headteachers felt that the pressure on schools to establish a curriculum which is relevant to a diverse range of pupils has possibly marginalised white pupils, who cannot see themselves or their lives reflected in the curriculum.

Reflecting on the curriculum one headteacher stated:

'We are going to do a topic on Britishness but it's hard to think of a title that isn't arrogance, we don't want to create a problem. I am interested in identity- what is it which binds us together? I want it to be an opportunity for the whole school to work together. We've covered other groups and countries, places that we have a high representation from. It seems to be easier to celebrate the good things about other cultures- the dance, the food, the stories and to ask parents to come in and share their food, their traditions with us. We've worked through the cultures and have left this one to last. I'm not sure whether it's because we lack a strong identity? I wonder if because we don't have a strong sense of national identity whether that's why people hold on to theirs when they come here and we take in theirs e.g. our national dishes have become pizza and curry. I think we might focus on football, children's rights and responsibilities as citizens, places near to us and why they are important e.g. Big Ben, the River Thames, The Wheel.'

Reflecting on identity within this group of families she continued:

'I feel we have a lack of strong cultural identity. African children have their links to home, even if they haven't been there their parents are visiting. They have the link with the church or the mosque, which involves the whole family. The Caribbean families have cultural links too. Brixton is a centre, with the market and the hair salons, they have ties and are always rubbing up along a significant group. Jamaica is a prominent place in many children's lives, everybody has some connection with it. With the South American children and the European, either the language binds people or some elements of their culture are shared. The Polish families seem interconnected as do the Portuguese, they all seem to go through one address at some point, so they are interconnected somehow. But, the white families, nothing binds them, some are cousins I suppose but they are not seeking anybody out, I can't think of anything that would bind them together.'

Strategies for raising achievement

Headteachers have 'always known that there was an issue' about the underachievement of some White British pupils and see the value of integrated service approaches, e.g. family support workers, who provide a 'listening ear' to parents.

Strategies that headteachers suggested include:

- Parenting courses
- Adopting EAL strategies for the teaching of all pupils

- ‘Children’s Voice’ to influence what is taught in the curriculum
- Identifying the concept of ‘Britishness’ – what does it mean? How can it be included in the curriculum?
- A curriculum about what it means to be British that could bring in other cultures. It could also explore features of traditional British life, the seaside, roots of music
- Learning Mentors to follow up on attendance and punctuality issues
- ‘Drawing a line’ for parents with regard to expectations of behaviour
- The recruitment of staff from the local community is seen as vital to parental confidence and their identification with the school
- The faith school element might work in some schools – you go to church together, ethos of family, school and church matches
- Targeting specific children with peer mediators
- At International evenings making sure the white culture is represented – St George, St Patrick, St David and St. Andrew.

Governors Views

As with the headteacher discussions the governors were asked to focus on the three questions listed above. Ten Lambeth governors and one LA officer from Governor Support Services attended the focus group discussion.

Discussions with governors regarding the terminology centred upon ‘how do we determine what ‘British’ actually means’? Also the term ‘Working Class’ was felt to be inaccurate, as many pupils came from homes where there was only one parent and this parent was not working.

Governors identified main barriers to the achievement of pupils from low income White British backgrounds as a ‘historical, inherited culture of low levels of literacy and poor achievement’ in some low income White British families in Lambeth. There was a belief that good verbal skills and commonsense were valued because they are necessary for everyday life, but much of what is taught in school is irrelevant. Governors felt that low income White British pupils have never been a target for any initiative to raise their achievement.

They also wondered whether all teachers have the skills and knowledge to support these pupils (as they may be few in number and could be overlooked because they are White British) and that white working class children often fail to achieve their potential because of cultural identity and that their behaviour at home or on the streets is so different from what is expected of them in school. They do not all conform to school authority like middle class children might possibly do. One governor commented:

‘White working class parents are less likely to give guidance on behaviour, school or anything else of value to their children (in the school context) compared to middle class parents. This is reflected in their attitude to school, authority and society in general.’

Governors in the focus groups also argued that ‘the white working class parents have low aspirations for their children’s education’. This was perpetuated by a low level of parental education and feelings of marginalisation within the community. This lack of educational opportunities has ‘a negative affect on parents’ interest in their child’s education and parents’ ability to help with school work. It can also affect their children’s aspiration and their development.’

Governors also indicated, poverty and low family income are major factors affecting the white working class. The capacity of parents to support their children’s learning, the limited choice of schools that they might enjoy in comparison to many other parents all impact on students preference to continue in post compulsory education and nurture a culture of low achievement and aspiration within the white working class community in the area. One governor strongly argued that ‘poverty can not be used as an excuse but the fact is that it is a reason for low achievement among white working class pupils.’

Governors believe the issue of white working class underachievement is gaining more recognition both at LA and national level. ‘The root of this problem is not race, but class’. The schools that are doing better with white working-class pupils are those that acknowledge class as a determinant and value white-working class culture. Thus, they raise attainment and aspirations. It is imperative for schools to be at the centre of the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda, in order to get to the root of the underachievement of certain groups. They believe that to tackle this, strategies could be developed to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, and generational low aspiration. Some suggestions are listed below:

- Teachers could make writing more interesting, especially for boys, by encouraging them to write about football, in cartoon form or other genres’
- ‘Establishing ‘Fathers Groups’ to encourage fathers to be seen reading and to read with their sons’
- ‘Parenting classes’
- ‘Explore Family Learning opportunities (although there was some doubt about whether parents would attend)’
- ‘Governors to have a ‘critical eye’ with regard to the range of Extended School activities offered and the ‘take up’ by pupils from low income White British families’
- ‘Language development classes for parents and pupils’
- ‘The dissemination of good practice in schools with other teachers locally.’

Governors strongly argued the current system of additional funding means some schools serving white working class estates do not receive adequate financial support. The question of social class and poverty has remained in the background. It is a hidden barrier which policy makers might not be comfortable to discuss. The national policy makers often seem to overlook the particular difficulties faced by white working class children and the government seldom talks about class in general. There is now a need for additional funding to support targeted initiatives to raise aspiration and achievement of white working class pupils. What is needed from policy makers is to commit new additional funding to support this group similar to EMAG funding.

Section 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of the research is to study the experiences of white working class pupils and to identify barriers to learning in multi-racial schools. The main findings from the study confirm that the worryingly low achievement levels of many white working class pupils has been masked by the success of middle class white children in the English school system. This is because Government statistics have failed to distinguish the White British ethnic group by social background. The empirical data shows that White British pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, both boys and girls, are among the lowest attaining of all groups and their outcomes at both KS2 and KS4 are considerably below those achieved by all other major ethnic groups in the LA. White British pupils are the ethnic group most polarised by the impact of socio-economic disadvantage.

The data also suggests that there is a strong association between poverty, social class and successful achievement in education. Making comparisons between the educational attainment of different ethnic groups without explicitly considering the effect of economic disadvantage, effectively treating White British as a single group, is extremely misleading.

Amongst the main reasons for pupil underachievement, identified in the case study schools and focus groups are low parental aspirations for their children's education, economic deprivation, the failure of the National Curriculum to reflect adequately the needs of white working class pupils, poor literacy skills and language deprivation. These are perpetuated by feelings of marginalisation within the community exacerbated by housing allocation, a lack of community and a perception that their identities are not affirmed through school and community life.

Policy implications

The low attainment and poor progress of White British working class pupils is a key concern. Despite much academic debate and concern the needs of white working class pupils have not been addressed and have been overlooked by local and national policy makers. The main obstacle to raising achievement is the failure of central Government to recognise that this group have particular needs that are not being met by the school system. Through discussions a picture of a community that is isolated, that does not have the resilience to cope with inner city life anymore emerges. Anecdotal evidence suggests a perception amongst some white working class parents that they are positioned as the losers in the struggle for scarce housing resources, whilst minority ethnic groups are the winners. Housing allocation may be easy to represent as a site of unfairness, particularly when it can be identified with new migrants. The dynamics of this are entirely local. Because of a scarcity in the housing sector only people who are technically homeless, and/or have multiple social problems, disabilities, or dependent children, can aspire to be housed by local authorities in the short to medium term.

This research also suggests a series of measures which include developing strategies to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, a legacy of low aspiration and a disinterest in learning that prevents pupils from fulfilling their potential across a range of areas. Key to raising achievement is to have the highest expectations of pupils and the community. The question of social class and poverty has remained in the background, a hidden barrier which is not discussed. National policy makers often seem to overlook the particular difficulties faced by white working class children.

'Division by social class in Britain is real and cannot be ignored.' (NUT, 2009 page 5)
'The government seldom talks about class in general and white working class in particular, preferring terms such as 'hardworking families' and 'social inclusion' as part of a strategy to attract middle class voters. This has alienated and affected the white working class.' (Runnymede Trust (2009b). It is important this issue is addressed through additional funding. At present entitlement to free school meals is used to direct resources to schools. Many children in receipt of these meals are white from disadvantaged backgrounds. FSM eligibility is a significant factor in funding to schools and there are also a number of programmes aimed particularly at schools in areas of generally high economic disadvantage including the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant (EMAG). We would argue EMAG is well targeted in supporting underachieving ethnic minorities groups & EAL pupils who are not fluent in English. However, it needs to be recognised that funding through entitlement to free schools meals is not enough to tackle the huge challenge facing white working class pupils. There is now a need for additional funding to support targeted initiatives to raise aspiration and achievement of white working class pupils. What is needed from policy makers is to commit new ring-fenced additional funding to support this group similar to EMAG funding which will help in promoting educational opportunity.

Recommendations

1. The Government needs to recognise that the underachievement of White British working class pupils is not only a problem facing educational services but a daunting and profoundly serious challenge
2. This research suggests a series of strategies which need to be developed by the Government to break the cycle of disadvantage and poverty, a legacy of low aspiration and disinterest in learning that prevents white working class pupils and parents from fulfilling their potential
3. There is a need for ring-fenced additional funding to support targeted initiatives to raise aspiration and achievement of white working class pupils. However, this should not result in taking away EMAG funding to support white working class pupils. We would argue EMAG is well targeted in supporting underachieving ethnic minorities groups and EAL pupils who are not fluent in English
4. There is an urgent need to collect social class data in the school census to monitor the underachievement of the white working class
5. There is a need to study successful practice in raising achievement of white working class pupils to share between schools. Headteachers suggested strategies that they felt might support the achievement of some White British pupils. They see the value of integrated service approaches, e.g. Family Support Workers, who provide a 'listening ear' to parents as well as other strategies such as; parenting courses; adopting EAL strategies for the teaching of all pupils, using 'Children's Voice' to influence what is taught in the curriculum; identifying the concept of 'Britishness' and the way it can be included in the curriculum; using learning mentors to follow up on attendance and punctuality issues; targeting specific children with peer mediators and the recruitment of staff from the local community. All are seen as vital to parental confidence and their identification with the school.

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- Appendices. For appendix 1 – 7 see: <http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/rsu>

Glossary – A guide to acronyms

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAHMS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CATs	Cognitive Ability Tests
CVA	Contextual Value Added
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as Additional Language
ECAR	Every Child A Reader
ECM	Every Child Matters
EMA	Ethnic Minority Achievement
EMAG	Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant
EMAS	Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
ESL	English as a Second Language
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FFT	Fischer Family Trust
FSM	Free School Meals
FSP	Foundation Stage Profile
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
GCSE	General Certificate for Secondary Education
KS1	Key Stage 1
KS2	Key Stage 2
KS3	Key Stage 3
KS4	Key Stage 4
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Child
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
SEN	Special Education Needs
QCA	Qualification and Curriculum Authority
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMT	Senior Management Team
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
TA	Teaching Assistant
YR	Year Reception
Y1	Year 1

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