

Briefing on ethnicity and educational attainment, June 2012

Ethnicity in schools

- In state-funded primary schools **27.6 per cent of pupils** (of compulsory school age and above) were classified as being of minority ethnic origin, an increase from 26.5 per cent in 2011.
- In state-funded secondary schools **23.2 per cent of pupils** (of compulsory school age and above) were classified as being of minority ethnic origin, an increase from 22.2 per cent in 2011.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/statistics/a00209478/dfc-schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2012>

School Attainment statistics

Attainment – GCSES (5 A*-C grades including Maths and English)

Attainment by ethnicity has improved since 2006/7, and achievement gaps between some ethnic groups and the national level have disappeared. Other ethnic groups, such as Chinese students, have far higher levels of attainment compared to the national level. It is worth highlighting however that **Pakistani and Black Caribbean young people still have lower attainment levels** than the national level. The data for 2010/11 is as follows:

- The national level, and the percentage of **White British pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades including Maths and English, is 58%**. This compares to around 45% in 2006/07.
- **Chinese students** are the highest attaining group, with 78.5% achieving 5 A*-C grades including Maths and English. This compares to 70% in 2006/07.
- **Indian students** are the second highest attaining group, with 74.4% achieving 5 A*-C grades including Maths and English. This compares to around 62% in 2006/07.
- **Bangladeshi pupils** now have a slightly higher attainment rate than White pupils, with 59.7% 5 A*-C grades including Maths and English. This is a massive improvement given that only around 40% achieved this 2006/07, which was 5% less than White pupils and the National Level.
- There has also been an improvement for **Black African pupils**, with 57.9% achieving 5 A*-C grades including Maths and English, compared to just over 40% achieving this in 2006/07. A similar level of improvement can be seen for mixed White and Black African pupils.
- However, **Pakistani and Black Caribbean** young people still have lower attainment levels compared to the national level, with 52.6% and 48.6% respectively achieving 5 A*-C grades including Maths and English. This has, however, improved from around 35% for Pakistani and 34% for Black Caribbean pupils in 2006/07.
- **Travellers, Gypsies and Roma** are still the lowest achieving groups, with 17.5% of Irish Travellers and 10.8% of those from Gypsy or Roma backgrounds achieving 5 A*-C grades including Maths and English. This has improved from 2006/07 when only 5% of these groups combined achieved the required grades.

Taken from: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001057/index.shtml>

English Baccalaureate attainment

Inequalities are more pronounced when looking at those who achieved the English Baccalaureate measure of attainment. This requires 5 A* - C grades in GCSE maths; English; two science subjects; a foreign language; and either history or geography. The 2010/11 data is as follows:

- 34.6% of Chinese students and 25.8% of Indian students achieve the English Baccalaureate
- 15.4% of White students achieve the measurement
- 11.2% of Black African and 11.1% of Pakistani pupils achieve the English Baccalaureate
- The rate is 9.9% for Bangladeshi pupils and 7.6% for Black Caribbean pupils
- Traveller and Roma/Gypsy pupils have the lowest attainment, with 2.2% and 0.5% respectively achieving the measurement

Taken from: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001057/sfr03-2012.xls>

Specific issues

Success of previous policies

It could be argued that some of the improvement in the educational attainment of ethnic minorities was due to overall investment in education by the last government, and also due to the previous government introducing specific policies to boost attainment of specific groups, such as:

- The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (details below)
- The Aiming High programme for Black pupils: In participating schools this resulted in high increases in attainment at aged 14
- Education Action Zones: Set up in 1998 to improve attainment in inner city areas
- The Training and Development Agency (TDA) had targets for recruiting ethnic minority teachers, and also developed the excellent Multiverse website providing culturally diverse resources for teachers and trainees. Multiverse and the TDA have now been scrapped by the current government.
- Citizenship Education, made compulsory in 2002, has played an important role in encouraging pupils to participate positively and effectively in an ethnically diverse society

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant

- The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) was set up to narrow achievement gaps for pupils from the minority ethnic groups who are at risk of underachieving, and to meet the needs of bilingual pupils. In April 2011, EMAG was abolished in its current form. It has been mainstreamed into the 'dedicated schools grant', removing its ring-fenced status. This means that schools will now have the power to reduce the level of specialist provision to minority ethnic children at their discretion. The risk is that schools will use the already limited funds targeted at raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils and spend them on other areas.

Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils

Overall, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils have traditionally had lower attainment than Indian students, which can largely be explained by poverty, social background, and the fact that English is a second language for many.

However, the overall **attainment of Bangladeshi pupils has been improving at a faster rate than Pakistani pupils** and now a higher percentage of Bangladeshi pupils achieve 5 A*- C grades, including Maths and English, at GCSE than White pupils. Despite this, when looking at English Baccalaureate attainment a smaller proportion of Bangladeshis achieve this than Pakistani pupils.

It is difficult to determine exactly the reasons behind these variations. However, the difference between Bangladeshi and Pakistani attainment could be partly explained by the high concentration of Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, where educational attainment of this group has risen particularly rapidly in the area. Given the size of the Bangladeshi population in the borough, this could skew the overall averages. A Harvard study into educational differences between Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in London also recognised the impact success in Tower Hamlets has had on overall averages, particularly citing the borough's success in recruiting teachers from Bangladeshi backgrounds, arguing that this improves understanding of language and other needs.

Issues regarding Black students

a) Gender gap

- As stated above, Black Caribbean students have the lowest attainment levels out of all ethnic groups except Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. This becomes even more pronounced when looking at Black Caribbean boys. Whilst there are attainment gaps between boys and girls amongst all ethnic groups, the gender gap is even greater between Black Caribbean girls and boys, being 12.5% compared to the national gender gap of 7.3%
<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001057/sfr03-2012.pdf>.

b) Behaviour and exclusions

- Black Caribbean boys in particular are twice as likely to be characterised as having behavioural, emotional or social difficulty compared to White British boys (Stephen J. Ball, 2008)
- In addition, Black Caribbean boys are far more likely to be excluded from school - the Office of the Children's Commissioner found that they are **37 times** more likely to be excluded than girls of Indian origin. Also, in 2009-10, if you were a Black African-Caribbean boy with special needs and eligible for free school meals you were **168 times** more likely to be permanently excluded from a state-funded school than a White girl without special needs from a middle class family.
- **Being excluded from school has a massive impact on a pupil's attainment levels.** For example, research by David Gillborn and David Drew found that excluded pupils are 4 times more likely to finish their education without having gained academic qualifications. Subsequent access to higher education and employment is therefore limited. Furthermore, if a child has lower academic achievement they are more likely to become involved in criminal activity (2010).

Racism and unconscious bias

A reason for educational attainment differences could be unconscious bias from teachers, leading them to assume that children of certain ethnic groups are more (or less) likely to misbehave or work hard. There has been concern from a sizeable number of newly trained teachers that their training does not well prepare them for teaching pupils of different ethnicities. Improved teacher training on this issue may improve outcomes.

a) Setting

There has been a range of evidence suggesting that school decision making and selection processes about access to course and qualification routes in schools work against the interest of Black students. For example, evidence suggests that Black pupils are more likely to be entered for lower tier exams, meaning that these students are only able to achieve a maximum grade of a C or D, and other evidence has found that Black Caribbean and African students are less likely to be identified for gifted and talented programmes (Stephen J. Ball, 2008).

Evidence also suggests that Chinese and Indian students are more likely to be entered into higher sets. Setting can be problematic given that a pupil's set is decided at a young age, and evidence suggests that teacher assumptions that Black students will achieve poorly and Chinese/Indian students highly may result in children being put in an inappropriate set, and thus effectively pre-determine how high a grade it is possible for them to achieve.

b) Exclusions and discipline

Research by the former Department for Education and Skills (*Getting it, Getting it Right* 2006) suggest a number of reasons as to why Black pupils are disproportionately excluded, including institutional racism. The report argues that Black pupils encounter both **conscious and unconscious prejudice from teachers** – for example, research has found that throughout their education black pupils are disciplined more (both in terms of frequency and severity) and often for milder offences than those leading to their White peers being punished. The report recommended that to help decrease exclusions of Black pupils there should be consistent and continued monitoring of pupil progress to identify problems early on, more teacher training on matters of race equality, involving pupils in designing and setting rules, and providing support from academic mentors.

Post-school achievement

It is important to take into account, that whilst attainment gaps are decreasing among minority ethnic groups, **they still experience unequal outcomes at university and in the workplace post school**. The picture is extremely striking for Indian students who, overall, do far better than White students at school yet are more likely to attend less prestigious universities, and are more likely to be unemployed.

Types of university attended

- The proportion of university places taken by BME students has increased from 13% of students in 1994/95 to 23% in 2008/09, a figure broadly proportionate to their size in the young population (EHRC Triennial Review, 2010)
- However, at least **44% of all Black, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian graduates attended post-1992 universities**, or former polytechnics compared

- to 34% of other ethnic groups. This is despite the fact that Indian students are second highest achieving ethnic group (National Equality Panel, 2009)
- All minority ethnic groups, with the exception of students from Chinese backgrounds, are more likely to be at 'new' institutions (Runnymede, 2007) There are more students of Black Caribbean origin at London Metropolitan University than at all the Russell Group universities put together (Runnymede, 2007)
 - In 2009 only one Black Caribbean individual was accepted to study on a course at Oxford University (University of Oxford, 2010)

Attainment at university

- 66.4% of White students studying first degrees received a first class or second class honours qualification, compared to 48.1% of BME students overall and only 37.7% of Black students (Equality Challenge Unit, 2009)
- A higher proportion of lower second class degrees were awarded to Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi graduates than upper seconds (National Equality Panel, 2010)
- Black British students, Asian British Pakistani students and 'other' British Asian students are significantly more likely to drop out of higher education. (N. Powdthavee and A. Vignoles, 2007)

After university

- Chinese boys are among the highest performing groups in our schools. After university, however, they can expect to earn **25% less** than White graduates (EHRC).
- Despite being the second highest achieving ethnic group, Indian young people looking for work are **more likely to be unemployed** compared to White British young people (24.2% compared to 20%, ONS 2012).
- 44.4% of young Black people and 33.3% of young Pakistani/Bangladeshi people looking for work are unemployed (ONS 2012)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Re-introduce the ring-fenced Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant
- Ensure the new curriculum is inclusive and promotes diversity. We would also recommend retaining Citizenship as a subject at all levels, not just in secondary schools
- Teacher training needs to be improved to equip all teachers to be able to teach a diverse range of students. This training should also explore issues around unconscious bias.
- There has been little research into effective independent careers advice and guidance that young people from BME communities need in order to access a wider range of universities or the labour market on graduation. Work to explore whether careers advice is resulting in some ethnic groups (such as Indian students) choosing less prestigious universities or low paid/over-competitive careers, is needed.
- Reintroduce targets to recruit ethnic minority teachers (previously organised by the TDA)
- Reduce the number of exclusions of Black Caribbean boys, and restore powers to exclusions appeals panels to reinstate those pupils who have won their appeal in their school (see more in our response to the Education Bill: <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/RTresponsetoEducationBill.pdf>)