



Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Underachievement in education of white working class children](#), HC 727

Wednesday 15 January 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Education Endowment Foundation \(EEF\) and the Sutton Trust \(WWC 011\)](#)
- [Written evidence from Professor Stephen Gorard \(WWC 020\)](#)
- [Written evidence from the Future Leaders Trust \(WWC 021\)](#)
- [Written evidence from Ofsted \(WWC 023\)](#)

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Members present: Mr Graham Stuart (Chair); Alex Cunningham; Bill Esterson; Pat Glass; Siobhain McDonagh; Ian Mearns; Mr Dominic Raab; Mr David Ward

Questions 86-184

Witnesses: **Dr Christopher Wood**, Her Majesty's Inspector, Ofsted, **David Hughes** Chief Executive, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, **Dr Kevan Collins**, Chief Executive, Education Endowment Foundation, and **Professor Stephen Gorard**, Professor of Education and Public Policy, Durham University, gave evidence.

Q86 Chair: Good morning, gentlemen, and welcome to this session of the Education Committee on the underachievement in education of white working class children. We are grateful that you have joined us today. I think all of you are pretty familiar with us, but what we do as a Committee and a cross-party group of MPs is conduct specific inquiries, for which we then write a report and make recommendations to Government. The most important single thing to say to you is: make sure any recommendations, either as to the good things in the system that must be retained or changes to the system, are as explicitly communicated to us as you can in the hope that they will then appear in our final report. Thank you for joining us. If I can warm you up with a broad question, is white working class underachievement driven primarily by weaknesses in our schools and education system? Is it because of broader social issues? To what extent is it due to the attitudes and understanding of parents in this group? Who would like to take that easy starting question?

David Hughes: I would argue quite strongly it is not just about what happens in schools, but you could probably make the argument that it is about what has happened in schools for many generations. We do a survey every year on adult participation in learning, and it is relevant because the biggest determinant of people's involvement in learning as adults is the socio-economic class of the family they were brought up in. If

you cut by class the people who have participated in learning in the last three years, it is about 50% for class A and B under the old classification; for Ds and Es, about 24% participate in learning. Therefore, what we see is a generational impact on people's propensity and likelihood of learning. I would also suggest that children spend probably 12% to 15% of their time in school.

Therefore, they spend the majority of their time not in school. Therefore, the culture of the environment they are in—their family and community, the role models they look up to—and their understanding of and attitude towards learning are incredibly important in terms of what they do when they are in school.

Q87 Chair: Is it more important than the social conditions in which they live? Some people might say poverty itself drives some of the problems. Is there evidence that that is true or is it more to do with the attitudes, understanding and assumptions of the parents regardless of their financial position?

David Hughes: There is a lot of evidence. It is more about the attitudes of parents and their understanding of their own learning than it is about poverty per se. The link is obviously there. The family learning projects that we work with, have seen and can highlight across the country prove that when parents are given opportunity to learn with their children, not only do the children improve in terms of their achievement, but the parents do as well. It is not about poverty per se; it is about an attitude and a culture, which can be overcome.

Q88 Chair: Has any research been done on that? For instance, we do worse than a number of other countries in terms of the gap between outcomes for rich and poor. Has anyone mapped attitude? Has anyone done research to try and identify the key attitudes, define them and then mapped that between countries to see if there is a correlation between a narrower gap in Finland, for example, between the rich and poor, and different attitudes among the social groups, to see whether in fact it is a change of attitudes that could be fundamental rather than an improvement in schools, for instance?

David Hughes: I am not aware of any research exactly like that. We have research findings in terms of family learning in some of the most deprived communities showing that there can be a significant improvement in things like literacy and numeracy achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2. Increasingly, we are seeing some evidence of that at Key Stages 3 and 4 as well.

Dr Collins: Notwithstanding what David said, what is interesting about the data on this country is that not only is the gap wide, but it is not consistent. We see many schools in all parts of the country actually where this does not hold true. If you take children who are eligible for free school meals, yes, they perform worse than other children; yes, white working class children perform lower than their peers; yet, across the country, you will find that, in one in seven secondary schools, the children on free school meals perform as well as the national average for all children. They are to be found right across the country in all types of schools. There are schools with 90% of the kids not EAL, so mainly white, and with very high FSM, so high levels of poverty, yet in that category you will also find schools who do better than the national average for all children. You will find those secondary schools in every region of England.

The point is, on average, you see this low performance, but we have these schools that are bucking the trend. What we do not have are the incentives whereby those schools work with other schools or where schools look to those schools for the solutions. We are not good at using that evidence of success. It gives you the hope that this can be broken. We have many schools that are breaking it: 30% of primary school children who have free school meals do better than all children; there are one in seven secondary schools where the free school meal children do better than all children in England. Yet we do not seem to be able to link those schools well in the families with schools that are similar to them.

Dr Wood: I agree with both of the speakers. At Ofsted, we are concerned with schools, but we are concerned with how the schools engage with the community and engage with families, and see that as an important part of the solution. This sense of there being schools bucking the trend is a really important one that we drew attention to in our report, “Unseen children”, and also in this year’s annual report. It is worth bearing in mind that when we look at schools that are performing exceptionally well for pupils on free school meals, a high proportion of those are in London and some of the other bigger cities, but there are successful schools around the country. As Kevan says, there are often similar schools in similar locations where, in one part of the town, the schools are doing very well for this group and in another part of the town, the city, the area, they are doing less well.

The other issue for us is drawing attention to where those groups of pupils are perhaps thinly spread amongst schools. We know that in schools with higher proportions of free-school-meal children and lower proportions, they tend to do best overall for the attainment of those schools. Where they are spread thinly, though, either in areas or in schools, they do less well because often their underachievement can be hidden. It is really important that there are more opportunities for schools to share their good practice. In recent fieldwork that we did looking at successful strategies, a common theme amongst those very successful schools was they had had very limited opportunity to work with other schools to disseminate the things that they were doing so well.

Q89 Chair: Is that bearing out Kevan’s point that there are insufficient incentives for co-operation?

Dr Wood: Yes, that is bearing out Kevan’s point. There are insufficient incentives for co-operation and taking the broader view of responsibility for the achievement of those children.

Dr Collins: When you group schools in this way, the best example would be the London Challenge, which created families of schools data. That gave you sightlines of schools that were similar to you, so you saw them as authentic, but were doing significantly better or not as well. It gave you an obvious location to go and offer support or to go and seek support.

Q90 Chair: Is the similar schools data that Government is now providing not as good?

Dr Collins: I do not think it is as accessible. At the moment, it is not understood as clearly, perhaps, as the London Challenge—perhaps the London schools have got to grips with it. It is early days for that, but I think that is the approach.

Q91 Ian Mearns: Coming back to what you said, Kevan, regarding those schools that are bucking the trend, is that bucking the trend against a set of measurement criteria or is it against the whole range of achievement? If you are saying that they are outperforming the national average in some cases, are they outperforming on five A to Cs including English and maths, or are they at every grade outperforming the national average, in other words the number of kids getting A*s, As, Bs, etc?

Dr Collins: Yes. The data I was giving you were taking the best eight GCSEs and capping at eight, and comparing that against other schools, so it was not at every grade.

Q92 Ian Mearns: Is that simply against the measurement of the number of youngsters getting eight A* to Cs, or is it looking at the number of kids getting the A*s, the As, the Bs and the Cs? Is it measuring it like-for-like?

Dr Collins: When you do the eight-capped, it is the points you award to each GCSE, so all the grades count; the high grades count.

Q93 Bill Esterson: You mentioned the evidence about where you have a whole school that is predominantly white working class; you mentioned the evidence about when you have individuals as part of the cohort in the school. Is there evidence where you have a whole area—if you take Knowsley, which is the next door borough to my constituency, and is predominantly white working class right across the borough—of the outcomes there compared with some of these other examples that you gave?

Dr Wood: If you look at the most successful local authorities for pupils eligible for free school meals, the majority of those are London local authorities. Within local authorities with higher proportions of white British children, there is also that variation, though. I do not have all of the data at hand, but in some areas of the country the performance in one local authority can be up to 24% higher than in another local authority in the same region. That variation between local authorities is also there.

Q94 Mr Ward: Could I just test this out with experience? It is not a pet theory. Is there clear evidence that anyone is speaking up for the white working class? I could get representatives and receive them from the Bangladeshi community complaining about “our children in our schools” or from the Pakistani community or the Kashmiri community. I find it difficult to think of a representative of the white working class who comes to me and says, “What about our children and our schools?” If they are, they are probably from the BNP, or would be accused of racism if they were to talk about the white working class. These are the practicalities that you face in places like Bradford anyway. Is there any evidence that the pressure on schools and on the system exists for the white working class? Is anybody speaking up for them?

Dr Collins: I do not have evidence about that.

Q95 Mr Ward: Do you recognise anything in what I was saying?

Dr Wood: Absolutely. From our point of view, the focus on the performance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium—so eligible for free school meals—has been strengthened over the last two years within our Ofsted framework. Now, there is a much

clearer focus on the performance of different groups of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, with white British being a clear focus group that we have identified through our reports and through this year's annual report. It is finding its way into our inspection activities, so schools are much more au fait with talking about those groups of pupils. I would argue that, in the past, that was not the case and it could very well be because of a certain discomfort towards talking about that group for the reasons you have suggested, with it being seen as an extreme view. That is changing, though, and we are certainly putting additional focus on that area.

Q96 Chair: Stephen, in terms of my initial question about the three possibilities.

Professor Gorard: I suppose I disagree slightly with some of the things that have been said so far. The attitudes and aspirations thing is currently a red herring. I do not think we have enough evidence that it cashes out into improvements in attainment. If we are only concerned with attainment, then I think attitudes and aspirations are not the way to go.

Q97 Chair: Sorry, you said we did not have evidence. Does that mean we have evidence to the contrary, so in other words it is a red herring because we have researched it and there is not that correlation?

Professor Gorard: There are a lot of different ways in which you would express expectations, motivations, self-concepts and self-esteem. There are lots of different ways you can look at attitudes. I would say, in about half of the field, we have evidence that they make no difference and in about half it has never ever been tested. What you have are high correlations. I suspect that the correlations will carry across generations, but the causal question is: does it make a difference to attainment? It does not seem that raising aspiration in itself makes a difference. You need to raise competence in order to make an actual difference to attainment, and if you raise the competence then the attitudes go with it. The attitudes by themselves do not make a difference.

Q98 Chair: If you think of some traditional families, there is very little interaction between parents and their children, but a very consistent, high expectation the children will do well, and the children under that expectation go and do well because they dare not do otherwise. Is there any truth in that or not?

Professor Gorard: There is a high correlation in natural variation between attitudes, expectations and so on, and attainment. The question that I was interested in answering was: if you then try to alter or increase people's attitudes or aspirations—for the purposes of this inquiry, let's say you have working class families that are deemed to be not aspirational enough; I am not sure they exist, but let's say they did—if you could change their aspirations, would it then cash out into improved attainment for their children? The evidence is that it does not. It is not sufficient by itself. What will happen is the attitudes will change with the attainment.

All I can say is that the other two, therefore, would be the strongest contributors. There are social issues outside of education and I agree with the panel members on that. Then, on the weaknesses in the schools, there are two levels and I am sure we will come onto them. One is to do with the structure of the schools, and I think there is a weakness

there. Then you have an issue of whether schools have a menu of interventions that they can use to remedy problems like the pupil premium gap. I think we are beginning to have evidence there, so it is slightly more promising, but the structure is an issue.

Q99 Mr Raab: Can I just probe what you are saying about expectations? It is one thing to say that parental expectation is not a sufficient condition, but none the less are you saying that it is not a necessary one? That is my first question. The second is, I wondered whether we talk about fluffy parental expectation in the sense that some parents do not push their kids to reach for the skies. That is one thing, and maybe there are no causal links in the way you have described. There are also pockets of negative parental expectations. You used to have the old caricature that “I went down the pit, my grandfather went down the pit and I’ll do that.” I wondered whether negative expectations would actually show up on the evidence in a more salient way than you have described.

Professor Gorard: The whole educational structure, with family and the ways in which schools are organised, can create a negative learner identity, yes, but I am not sure how important that is in the causal chain leading to underachievement or to lower attainment. Most of the evidence comes from the US and not from this country, and it is that, if you try and tackle that, it is not making a difference.

Q100 Mr Raab: Is that because it is very difficult to make a difference with expectations or because expectations do not count?

Professor Gorard: We do not know, but if you imagine a typical intervention with parental involvement or parental engagement, it would be to try and encourage more parents to be involved. By definition, you are working with volunteers. All of the evidence we have is about volunteers. You cannot force parents.

Mr Raab: Involvement and expectation are not quite the same thing in the way the Chair described.

Q101 Chair: They say everyone has high aspirations, it turns out, when they do the analysis, but it does not seem to convert into a strong work ethic being expected of the children—for instance, that they will do their homework every single time without exception. Some people will have that as an expectation regardless of aspiration, because it is just an ethic that they have and they imbue in their children. There is a separate issue as to whether we can intervene, once we have identified an important quality, to make it so, but we do first of all need to try to unpick what there is in attitude, understanding and ethics that will make a difference.

Professor Gorard: We have high correlations between a lot of things we observe and attainment. We know that obviously social class, ethnic origin, where people live and the kind of schools they go to are all related. I thought your initial general question was trying to understand what is actually causing that. If there is a correlation between parental expectation or parental involvement and attainment, the question then becomes: is that a causal factor or is it simply another symptom?

Q102 Chair: If you unpick it, you might have high aspirations: “Yes, I’d like my child to go to university. I’d quite like them to be a doctor or a lawyer, but I don’t expect them to sit there doing excessive amounts of homework every night of the week”, whereas others would and, funnily enough, the children get to be doctors and lawyers.

David Hughes: It is not about expectation or aspiration. Every parent we talk to from all sorts of class backgrounds will say they want their children to do well, but look at the statistics for parental achievement on very fundamental basic skills like literacy and numeracy. One quarter of the adult population has very poor literacy; probably as much as half of the adult population has poor numeracy. They cannot help their children in the way that probably most of the people in this room do. What we do know is that parental involvement in helping their children read, helping their children do their homework, being able to sit down with them and go through it together, does make a difference. Therefore, there has to be an issue about parent skills to be able to support children, and that is why family learning works, where you are trying to help the parent as well as the child to achieve a step change in their attainment.

Q103 Chair: Are there not some illiterate parents with a strong work ethic who imbue that in their children and the children, without any technical skills on the part of the parent, do their homework every night? Funnily enough, they keep working at something that is difficult, they master it and then they are a successful student.

David Hughes: Of course. That proves what Kevan and Chris were saying that schools can help to overcome some of those barriers. All I am saying is that, where you can engage the parents as well in their own learning to help support their children, that helps as well, on top of what the school can do.

Q104 Mr Raab: Ofsted’s 2008 report on good practice in supporting white boys from low income backgrounds says, “Strategies that are most successful in raising achievement for one ethnic group tend to be effective for others”. I open this up to all the panel: are there any interventions that are particularly well-suited to raising attainment of white working class children, particularly white working class boys, from those low-income backgrounds?

Dr Collins: This moves us very helpfully into the thing that makes the biggest difference in terms of the attainment for these children, which is the quality of teaching they experience. This is why, in similar communities with very similar groups of parents and background, you see different performance. That is what we have to understand. What is different for most of those children is that they get a much better quality of teaching. In terms of the strategies, we are beginning to understand more and more from the synthesis of research that people like us, the EEF, and others are doing to say to schools and teachers, “These are the things you do that make the biggest difference to learning in children”. The quote is right to say that generally good teaching is good teaching, and it will help all children, but there do seem to be aspects of teaching that are particularly relevant to children who might come, for example, from a family where their parents have not had experience of a long, successful education themselves.

For example, conclusively, across the world, the evidence says the most important thing that teachers can do is give high quality feedback to children about their learning. It is the conversations about what you are going to learn, how well you are doing and what

you are going to do next. These are the kinds of conversations that many children have in their homes as well, but they turn out to be particularly important to children whose families might not have those sorts of learning conversations. We can begin to experiment and research on what happens when you equip parents with that kind of language, and we are doing that kind of work. The other things that matter in terms of the teaching strategies where you have emphasis for these children rather than different strategies are aspects of building more collaborative, peer-to-peer learning, and structure and rigour on early reading and phonics when they are very young. I do not think it is different teaching. It is about the evidence that shows us where the emphasis makes more of a difference for these children.

Professor Gorard: I agree with what Kevan has said, particularly with things like feedback, which looks very promising. I suppose you have three possibilities. One is you introduce interventions or improvements that would differentially impact on the white working class. That does not seem very likely, even with something like feedback. Compensatory is a horrible word, but the other alternative is you target specifically the groups you feel are in danger of underachievement and they get something additional. That seems a perfectly appropriate thing, and obviously the pupil premium would be intended to address just that. The third approach is at a higher level, and it goes back to the thing about school structure. You would want to make sure that working white class kids, and in fact all children in the country, have access to equivalent quality schools wherever they live and whatever school they go to. Currently they do not, and the system is currently making it harder for them to achieve that.

Dr Wood: The fieldwork we did recently bears out that the things we said in that 2008 report still pretty much hold true. Essentially, when we talk to the most successful schools, they are absolutely clear that they ensure that those groups of pupils get their best teachers. One of the things that concerns us at Ofsted is where we see schools where children who need the very best teaching get poor teaching or the teaching that perhaps requires improvement in that school. It is making sure that the best teachers are with those groups, because they are the teachers who are going to be able to give the best feedback; they are the teachers who are going to best be able to match the types of activities they do to the needs of those students.

One of the things that also has a real impact is regular evaluation of those strategies that they use and not being afraid to change them, and to ditch and to get rid of strategies that are not working. One of the things we find in schools where it is not as effective is there are a whole range of interventions. You cannot claim they are not trying to do things, but it is very much an ad hoc approach. If it comes down to whether there is a silver bullet for the white working class as opposed to the Chinese working class or the Bangladeshi working class, I do not think there is.

Q105 Mr Raab: Taking that silver bullet analogy, I do not think we are looking for a silver bullet. What we are looking for are general policies that have a disproportionate impact. You raised one, which is the nature of the feedback. Does anyone in the group have a positive example of other areas of policy where there is evidence, whether it is good generally, that actually it is having a disproportionately positive impact on white working

class, underachieving boys? Are there any specific ones where you think, “Actually, we know that that one is particularly salient and works particularly well”?

Dr Wood: The most successful schools make sure that the curriculum is really well-suited to those individuals. What does that mean in practice? What it means in practice is it is built around their needs and their interests, but it is underpinned by a really good grounding in literacy and numeracy, particularly in terms of early reading. Unless those pupils are getting those skills early on, they are so far behind the game by the time they get to secondary school that the catch up is almost impossible. What I would say is that clearly white working class boys are the lowest achieving of the groups, but it is really important that we bear it in mind that girls of that do equally bad. There is a certain tension there in focusing perhaps on boys as opposed to girls.

Q106 Mr Raab: Even if we just limited it to white working class underperforming children, we have had feedback and numeracy and literacy early on. Does anyone else have examples of specific interventions that the evidence shows have a disproportionate impact on that group?

Dr Collins: One way of organising the response might be to say there are essentially three ways of teaching. There is what you do as a whole-class teacher, and we have good evidence there of what makes a difference for these kids. There is what you do with groups of children and how you can pick up some of the kids who are falling behind. There is then what you do if you have to, at the extreme, with one-to-one. The reason I think there is a slight hesitation is because the evidence we are talking about largely is not from this country. There has not been a tradition of finding out answers to the questions you have asked. It might be reassuring to know that currently there are 68 studies involving over 400,000 children underway, with one in twelve schools in England involved, that are going to reveal the effect for this group of children as against the overall effect.

Q107 Mr Raab: Is there anyone else with any particular interventions they think work?

David Hughes: It is difficult to say particularly for white working class, because some of the things we are talking about will affect other groups or change them as well.

Q108 Mr Raab: We are not saying “only”. We are saying “disproportionately positive impact”.

David Hughes: We are working with Sheffield local authority, which is targeting the most disadvantaged young people in schools and doing family learning with those pupils and their families. They have shown a 15% improvement at Key Stage 2, so we think that is really good evidence. It is not a randomised control trial and, therefore, it is difficult to prove, and there are some correlation issues around it, but that kind of targeted intervention with families we think helps support the other things that Kevan was talking about.

Professor Gorard: One of the studies Kevan referred to, which is just about to be published, involves an adaptation of Reading Recovery, which was tested in the United States. It is a catch-up intervention, so it is for those children who are struggling with

literacy at the transition phase. Obviously, it would in certain areas be disproportionately applied to white working class children, but it would not be specific for them. It appears to be effective, though. It will be the first of many, I suspect. There will be many that we find evidence do not work, but there will presumably be a rolling programme of stuff and they come out. As they come out, teachers, head teachers and leads will be able to begin to make decisions about where to put their resources. That is quite encouraging.

Q109 Mr Raab: Yes, absolutely. Kevan, there is one final one to you from me. I just wondered, in relation to the EEF Toolkit, whether there were any specific interventions that could be added to the Ofsted report's list of good practice. Is there anything specific from that?

Dr Collins: There is something we are going to be able to say quite soon around the training and deployment of teaching assistants to get effect. One of the big stand outs from the Toolkit was the overall finding that teaching assistants were making no difference on average. We have been conducting a number of studies, and Stephen started to refer to some, where we have been focusing directly on what happens when you deploy and train these people well, because they are one in four of the teaching workforce. It turns out that, when you do the right things with them, you can get powerful effects for this group of children.

It is worth remembering that the pupil premium has to be in this bit of the conversation. 5,000 schools in England now get more than £100,000 a year through the pupil premium; it is on average 80 grand a year per school. That resource needs to be deployed against the evidence and, unfortunately, what we know and the things we have started talking about have not been that accessible to teachers. What we know has not been built around the experience of English children, particularly this group of children. To the heart of your point, getting evidence to teachers seems to be absolutely essential if we are going to crack this problem.

Q110 Mr Ward: To recap, in effect, you cannot beat good staff—not legally, anyway. By good staff, we mean staff who are doing certain things that we know have an impact. What you are also saying is that those things would have an impact on any other low-attaining groups.

Professor Gorard: Except that there is some evidence that, in areas where you would have a predominance of white working class, you often get high teacher turnover; you get less experienced teachers and so on. A lot of the areas that Teach First is predominant in would also correlate with this. Then you have issues like differences in age range. Where schools are 11 to 16 at the secondary age, it is much harder for them to have specialist teachers in individual science subjects, because they are not going to be offering A-levels. Where you have 11 to 18 and 11 to 16 schools nearby, historically the 11 to 16 schools have taken more white working class kids, often in the north-east. The staff they attract—through no fault of their own, but because they do not have a sixth form—will differ from the 11 to 18, which might be only two miles away.

Q111 Mr Ward: So there may be a correlation between schools serving white working class communities and fewer good teachers.

Dr Collins: We have that data. For example, if you look at it, Ofsted judges 60% of teaching in schools with high levels of deprivation to be “good” or “better”, whereas overall it is 83% in more advantaged areas. Our best teaching, in Ofsted’s judgment, is serving our more affluent children. That is the current picture. We do not necessarily have incentive to encourage our very best teachers or our best teaching to be supporting the children who are hardest to teach or have the most to learn.

Mr Ward: I will bring back class politics. I am determined to do that.

Q112 Chair: Before you do that, I will just follow up. We cannot go too long into this issue, but do you have any thoughts on what an accountability system would look like that better incentivises the teachers to be deployed where they are most needed, rather than them being incentivised to go elsewhere?

Dr Collins: In some countries, for example, spending some of your career in a very challenging circumstance is not only recognised as something that prepares you for general headship, but is recognised as a contribution you have made to the education system. It seems unfortunate we do not have that kind of culture here. In fact, if you were just qualified from your PGCE in England—still the vast majority of people who teach come through that route—the very best people who come through that route go to schools that have low levels of disadvantage. We could create mechanisms around, dare I say, student loans, incentives or all sorts of things that have been tested in America, for instance.

Q113 Chair: What about Ofsted’s role? We have a situation at the moment that, if you serve a leafy, more prosperous area, the likelihood of your being found wanting and branded a failure as a head after 25 years in education is far less than it is if you go to a tough area. At this point, you would say we have a playing field, driven by Ofsted and Government accountability systems, which directly incentivises people to go where they are least needed while the Government of whichever colour opines how it wants to close the gap.

Dr Wood: Just because a school is in a disadvantaged area and is dealing with some of the trickiest communities to work with does not mean that they cannot be good and outstanding schools.

Q114 Chair: That was not my point. My point is, if you are a super hero head and you have every talent going, then you can go anywhere, but the truth is most people will be sitting in the middle of a bell curve. That same person in a leafy suburb can end their career with laurels around their neck and be greeted as a hero, and if they go to a tough school they are more likely to be found wanting, more likely to be fired and more likely to be humiliated for being a failure. Is that true or false?

Dr Wood: I would argue that that is not the case, because those high quality leaders in schools, who are leading schools in challenging circumstances, are wholly recognised through the inspection framework.

Q115 Pat Glass: Chris, my son took a school that had failed three times out of failure and into “good with outstanding features”. He did it with the same staff because he said it was not about those teachers; it was about leadership. He has told me he would not do it now. He has a mortgage; he has three kids. Why would he do it to himself? That is happening right across the piece and to deny it is naive in the extreme.

Dr Wood: Your son is a prime example of having done that with one school.

Pat Glass: He would not do it again.

Dr Wood: There need to be incentives within the system. Ofsted cannot say, “We will give you a grace period” unless that was something that was built into the statutory framework.

Q116 Chair: Do you get the point? You are denying that it is the case, Chris, which is interesting because I have never heard anyone do that before. If you look at where the national leaders in education are, as your boss has said, they are not where they are most needed. The percentage of people who are in schools put in special measures, where the head is effectively thrown out for being inadequate, is much higher in more challenging areas than it is in more prosperous ones. That could be because the incentives are such that all the good people, apart from the most idealistic and driven, tend to go to the easiest schools anyway. It could be it is an accurate reflection of the quality of the head, but would the message not seem to be that, unless they are a super hero or incredibly idealistic, they do not want to be in one of these schools where you can come along 18 months after their appointment and say, “Failing the kids”?

Dr Wood: What I was not denying was that working in a challenging school is more challenging than working in a school that is less challenging. I was saying that at Ofsted we have plenty of examples of excellent heads who have gone into schools that were failing and have turned them around. I would argue that the inspection system has within it sufficient flexibility to recognise that. It is actually about the life chances and achievements of the children in those schools. We absolutely agree. We want to see greater incentives for the very best leaders to move to those schools.

Chair: I was trying to find out what those incentives needed to be.

Professor Gorard: There is a more direct solution. I was going to say I agree with Chris to some extent, but we were talking about in aggregate. What you are saying is that overall there may be exceptions to the rule. You could have something where, as Kevan was suggesting, teaching was more like a national profession and that teachers could be deployed more by their employers than they are now, rather than working as individuals. That is trying to solve the problem, but the problem actually lies in the fact that you have these disparities between the schools in the first place. Surely, the first task of Government would be to reduce those.

You talk about the leafy suburban schools, and we all know what you are talking about, but it is possible to make the intake to schools more mixed, particularly in more populous areas. It is possible to eliminate the distinction between 11 to 16 and 11 to 18 schools, so you do not have those distinctions in the first place, in order for the teachers to be incentivised or not by it. You might still have to do some work with deploying teachers to the most deprived areas for the present, but we could do a lot more in making the

divergence between schools more palatable for all teachers. That seems to be an absolute priority and yet we seem to be going in the opposite direction, I would have thought.

Q117 Mr Ward: You could also re-introduce bussing in, but I think I am the only politician that promotes that.

Professor Gorard: As a short-term measure, it might work.

Q118 Mr Ward: I am not going to be re-elected, though. This is the old question about whether school age is too late. Is the die cast? What are your views on what can be done pre-school? Is it too late by the time they are into schools? Is it all set?

Dr Collins: It is absolutely not too late, but the synthesis of all the research indicates the value of high quality early years education, particularly for disadvantaged children. How do we create the right kind of provision and support that means that children are ready to learn as they start school? This is not in my role at EEF, but in running a big authority like Tower Hamlets, for too long there has been an arid debate about the nature of early years provision, forgetting that essentially what we are trying to do is help these children bounce into school and not start behind. We should do a lot more to structure early years provision about the amount of time and the way we provide it that is built on the research, to give these children a much better start at school, and not start so far behind and stay behind.

What we know from the evidence is they do start behind and they just go further and further behind. It is not too late, but we do need to get early years aligned to the needs, particularly, of this group of children, rather than to a slightly halcyon view of what early years education should be like.

Q119 Chair: Stephen, do you have evidence on whether our focus should primarily be pre-school?

Professor Gorard: I do not see the two as mutually exclusive. Obviously, it is, in a way, cost-effective to wait and see who needs catch-up interventions and apply those later. That is a perfectly proper thing to do, maybe for the short term. Again, I agree with Kevan; the evidence is, the earlier you start, the better, if you want to make a difference. In the studies on working with families, where you have pre-school age children, the evidence suggests that just tutoring parents to behave differently or raising their aspirations is not working. The few bits of gold that are out there, particularly from the United States, suggest you need to bring the parents in at some kind of institutional level. It is not taking the children in to an institution—i.e. a nursery or an early years classroom—nor just dealing with the parents separately. It is bringing both of them together and working with them as a unit before school starts that has the greatest promise. There are some examples in California, Chicago and so on where that has happened. They have followed these families through 18, 20 or 30 years in some cases, and it does appear to have made a difference.

David Hughes: I would go back to what I was saying earlier, that if the parents have literacy and numeracy problems, the children will have those challenges as well. It is not universal, but more generally that will happen. If they do not read to their kids as

babies, if they do not join the library and if they do not get engaged with their learning, it will be much tougher. You certainly can have remedial work to bring them back in line, but there is a big group of people, based around class, who are going to be more disadvantaged in that way.

Q120 Mr Ward: You are obviously the experts on the 20%, but can we just have some thoughts about the 80% bit? That is the social policy side that is required to hopefully make the 20% bigger. Are there any social policy changes that you believe are necessary to support young people or children in the 20%, apart from eradicating world poverty?

Dr Collins: Putting that one aside for now, I think there are. There are certainly experiences we had in London around the way you organise events like the youth provision, the way you provide services beyond school where you make use of the assets for learning for families and children beyond the school day. There is the work we are doing now on Youth Social Action, which is: what is the benefit of being involved in things like the Scouts or the Guides, or Woodcraft Folk, or whatever it might be? What is the link between that and attainment? It is very important we find these things out, because these may well be important contributors that are not in the school.

Just going back to the early years, there is an interesting question about the appetite we have or not to really get to grips with the issue of some of these harder-to-reach parents in that support for early years. We are doing a piece of work with a range of partners that is about incentivising parents directly to be involved in some of that early years provision to give their children that best start. This might sound a bit facetious, but you can lay the road or the path into the parent class with rose petals, but that does not mean you are going to get the hardest-to-teach parents or the hardest-to-reach parents in. Are we ready to be quite direct on incentives and encouragement to get those parents in? It does make the difference. That evidence is overwhelming. The challenge is how we can get parents in.

Q121 Chair: Do you mean incentives or disincentives? Are we talking penalties? Are we talking carrots or sticks?

Dr Collins: In the study we are running, in Middlesbrough and in a part of London, it is going to use some cash incentives for parents to be involved. That was found to be incredibly successful in parts of the States.

David Hughes: There is another big area of work that we have not talked about, which is supplementary schools. If you look at that, there are a lot of ethnic minority groups who will pool together their resources and do Saturday classes and so on. It is quite interesting that that does not happen so much in white working class neighbourhoods. That might be something we should bring into play here, because that is where parents' aspirations for their children can really come to bear. That might be something that could be easily supported by schools to bring in some of the parents who are hardest to reach.

Q122 Chair: You have talked about Guides and Scouts, but what about the extra-curricular within the school? We tend to focus on the quality of teaching, the academic approaches and the engagement. Is there evidence that a broader extra-curricular level of

activity in a school engages the white working class children more effectively in their academic studies?

Professor Gorard: No, there is not. It is not evidence that it does not; we just do not have the evidence.

Dr Collins: Just to reassure people, we are gathering that evidence. We are doing some work on that. There is a knee-jerk reaction to dosage, which is, in some schools, if you are falling behind in your results or if you have these children: “Let’s just give them more”; “Let’s just increase the school day”; “Let’s make them come at weekends”. Again, we are testing that rigorously because there is a strong hypothesis that might be successful, but equally it might be a disincentive. It might lose their motivation; it might take away something brilliant they were doing on Saturday morning you did not know about, as they went swimming with their mum and dad or whatever.

Q123 Bill Esterson: What is the evidence from America about this? There are American schools that have gone for these very long school days and very long school years compared with the standard in America.

Dr Collins: Summer loss, which is obviously the learning gains that you lose during your long summer holidays, has been very well-documented in America. Summer loss is greater for children who are disadvantaged in the way we have been talking about. There is a question whether we might want to think about summer schools and how they work. Again, we have done a study; we are about to report on a study on summer schools in this country to help mitigate summer loss and help those children not lose the learning they have had. The points of transition—primary, secondary—turn out to be particularly important for these children.

Professor Gorard: Just in general, I think the answer, “If school is not working, just have more school” does not do the job.

Dr Wood: That is really important: the length of the school day. If it is more of the same and the same is not very good in the first place, then that is likely to have a negative effect rather than a positive effect.

Q124 Mr Ward: I think it has now finished, but there used to be other initiatives like Playing for Success, which was through football clubs, cricket clubs and rugby clubs, which were engaging and using those as hooks and then providing additional educational support. Do you have any evidence at all from that?

Professor Gorard: Our review did not find anything that was convincing from that. It does not mean that it does not work. It is really that it is not there or it is too small scale. Could I just go back to your previous question about the wider social issues? One of the advantages that London has and does not always realise is the high population density. It means that the distinction between the intakes of schools is lower in London than it is anywhere else in the country. One of the things that can be done in policy outside education and outside London particularly would be to try and ensure that the housing mix is more mixed than it has been. If you draw a ring around the large planned areas of social housing from the 1960s and 1970s, and say, “Right, all of you go to the local school” then you are defining what the school intake is like. In Central London, because you have rich and poor living cheek by jowl, when you draw a line around an area and

say, “That’s the catchment area of that school”, it works out okay or better than it would in many other areas of England.

Q125 Chair: We have a particular problem. Ofsted suggested the nature of rural and coastal schools, and rural and coastal communities, is they have exactly that mix. They have a genuine social mix. I am thinking of my own constituency. Normally, in a school that serves a rural or a coastal area, you are going to have every social class of person in the catchment.

Professor Gorard: That should not be a problem.

Chair: But it is, which is why I was raising it.

Q126 Pat Glass: Just briefly, can I bring us back to the issue of parental engagement? I know there is not a silver bullet. We have had lots of evidence to this Committee saying, “This is really crucial”. Is there any evidence that says that adult learning—helping parents to get a better grasp of literacy and numeracy so they can work with their children—gets better outcomes than family learning, children and parents learning together?

David Hughes: The Institute of Education did a research review for us on family learning last year. The evidence is not strong, and some of it does come from the US. We are trying to get some funding for some research now. There is evidence that, where parents and their children learn together—particularly literacy and numeracy—they do both benefit from that. You do see achievement gains and attainment gains for children at different stages of their education, as well as the parents. What is difficult is making that randomised, because it could be relational rather than causal, but there are all sorts of projects up and down the country doing that and showing that it works.

Q127 Pat Glass: The Committee has also heard evidence that this is hugely important and yet there has been a 10.4% decrease in participation in family English, maths and language courses, and a 3.4% drop in participation in wider family learning provision. Are we just not getting this right? We are saying it is hugely important, but at the same time there have been huge cuts in these areas.

David Hughes: The funding overall for adult learning has reduced by more than 25% in cash terms in the last three years. Some of that is related to the overall cash reductions; some of it is because there was dedicated family learning funding from DfE in previous years and that was stopped. The funding has become more difficult, and as funding gets reduced people start to make tough choices.

Q128 Pat Glass: We are putting pupil premium in at one end and taking it out at the other.

David Hughes: We are. The inquiry we reported in October suggested that pupil premium might be one way that family learning could be supported by schools.

Dr Collins: One of the things about the evidence is that it is very strongly weighted to the early years, so it could be different as children get older because we know family involvement drops off as they get older. At the beginning, at the early years, the evidence

indicates that what you want parents to do is be involved and engaged, and carry the message that what you are doing at school is really important. I support family learning, but we do not want to send the message that, if you are not involved in it, you cannot help your child.

To the Chair's point earlier, what we found in some of the communities where there are high levels of illiteracy in, say, parts of London that I know really well, the parental involvement made a big difference because the schools got aligned to the values and issues that the parents were trying to bring, and gave them a role in their child's learning. As children get older, there is desperate need for more research on how parents support their children in teenage and that transition to secondary to carry on that work on demonstrating the importance of schools. We are doing some work on texting parents; we are doing some work with Oxford on the language as your child leaves school and comes home: the things you might say that make the biggest difference. There are quite a few areas of promise there, but it has to be that it is the engagement of a family in the learning rather than knowing how to do a quadratic equation that matters.

David Hughes: They are both important. Parental engagement is clearly very important. I think family learning is also very important. They are different things and they work in different ways.

Dr Wood: Yes. It is getting the right families and the right parents involved in whatever those activities are. If we work on the basis that a school has done its analysis, knows the needs of its parents and its families, it is then making sure that it is proactive in getting the right people to be involved with those activities. Quite often, schools will talk about, "We ran a workshop on..." and either, "We were disappointed in the turnout" or "It was the people that didn't really need it that turned up". The very best schools are the ones where they have the tenacious leaders, whether it is the head teacher or the person who is in charge of that family learning, who go out into the community to get the right people in. Anything around that is going to be really important.

Professor Gorard: I support what David said. I will just add one other thing. NIACE has pushed this for some time. As funding decreases, there is often more and more pressure on any courses or any provision to be certificated. With the drive towards certification, it is often people who are least likely to participate who least want to have certificates. They do not want it for peer-schooling. You can have family learning without necessarily any qualification at the end. If it is the activity and the participation that matters, then the certification does not matter or it slips in as a side issue. Funnily enough, it can actually be a barrier to participation for this group.

Q129 Pat Glass: I am not sure if this is the right panel, but can I just explore a little bit about these white working class children or white poor children? How important are things like the style of teaching and the curriculum? Some of the best lessons I have ever seen with disaffected, challenging white working class boys, for instance, have been around where there is active learning rather than passive learning, and where the curriculum is relevant and negotiated. How important is that? Are we going to get nowhere if we just continue to drip feed the national curriculum instead of actually giving these kids what they need? I will give you an example. I can remember a negotiation with a very challenging young man about maths and he said, "I'm not learning any of that algebra or trigonometry."

It's rubbish. My dad's a plasterer; I'm going to be a plasterer". We negotiated with him: "I can show you how trigonometry is going to help you as a plaster. It's going to make it cheaper for you, you're going to get the right products and the right amounts" etc, and he said, "Find, I'll learn trigonometry, but I'm not having any of that algebra rubbish".

Chair: Let's hear from the panel.

Pat Glass: How important is that? If we continue with a national curriculum that is not relevant to these kids, in my view, we are going to get nowhere. Discuss.

Dr Wood: Curriculum is important. Whether it is the national curriculum or not, curriculum is important. We talked about the 2008 report and our recent fieldwork. The best curriculums are that. They are relevant; they build on the interests of those pupils. They also must underpin those essential skills that those children, those pupils, those students will need to take them on to the next stage. My dad is a plasterer, so I know the importance of education and taking things forward. You are absolutely right. The myth is that Ofsted promotes a particular style of teaching. It does not. It is looking at teaching that is effective.

Yes, ideally teaching is interactive and it is engaging, but one of the things we found in our study, particularly for white British boys, is that very structured approaches leading into really meaningful independent work was something that was particularly successful. That is not because structured or independent work is the silver bullet. It was because those teachers were the teachers who knew what the students needed at that particular point. The style of teaching is possibly a red herring, but a curriculum that builds on the interests, is partially negotiated, but also has that underpinning in basic skills is really important.

David Hughes: I was just going to pick up that a lot of these white working class children go into the army, and they go into the army with very poor basic skills. The Army does deliver a curriculum that is relevant to those young people. We work closely with the Army and the achievement in literacy and numeracy of some of the most disadvantaged kids, who have done really badly at school, is startling. It is all about relevance; it is all about purpose and it is all about motivation. There is a lot to learn from the way you can engage at 16, 17 or 18 kids who have not been engaged in school for many years. It comes back to that relevance thing: "Why do I need to learn maths?" Actually, we had a kid who joined the Army and he was going as a caterer to Afghanistan. He knew why he needed to understand maths because he needed to know how much to order so that the whole troop got their food. As a 17-18 year old, it suddenly clicked and he achieved fantastically.

Q130 Pat Glass: I just want to ask Ofsted particularly, does Ofsted take enough account of learning as well as teaching? I have obviously seen some fabulous lessons reasonably delivered and nobody learnt a thing. Do you take enough account of learning?

Dr Wood: All I can say, certainly since Sir Michael Wilshaw has been Chief Inspector, is that the push has been that it is about teaching and learning. It is about the impact of that teaching. There was huge debate about this year's annual report. There are examples in there of outstanding teaching and all of the effort was around making sure there was a wide variety of examples in the annual report that do not say, "It's got to be wingy-dingy fireworks".

Q131 Pat Glass: When inspectors watch a lesson, do they collect the books in later and see if anybody has learnt anything?

Dr Wood: Absolutely. It is common practice for inspectors to meet the children whom they have observed being taught, to ask them to bring along their books and to talk to them about their work.

Pat Glass: Good.

Q132 Ian Mearns: It is coming up to six years since Ofsted published its report on good practice for schools in tackling the underachievement of white working class boys. Is this good practice guide being used or has it proved, six years on, to a certain extent outdated? Is it being used as an improvement tool?

Dr Wood: I am not aware that the actual report is being used as an improvement tool per se, but the strategies that were identified in that report very closely match what we found when we did fieldwork last year as part of “Unseen children” on schools that were successful with white British, low-income pupils. It is still relevant; the strategies are the same and the very best schools are using those. I do not think any of those strategies are surprising and they would not be surprising to any of the panel here. We are going right back to the start of the conversation. The key issue is how well schools are able to share what they know works and what they know works well.

Q133 Ian Mearns: I have just a quick question, Chris. Is Ofsted planning to update that work or renew it?

Dr Wood: There is no plan to do a part B of that, but the focus on low-income, white British is clear.

Q134 Ian Mearns: We have heard there is a huge amount of research currently under way and surely that could help in terms of upgrading that guidance.

Dr Wood: That is certainly something I can take back to Ofsted.

Q135 Siobhain McDonagh: The EEF Toolkit provides schools with evidence on the effectiveness of interventions to inform their use of the pupil premium, which we touched on earlier. Professor Gorard’s written evidence criticises the quality of the evaluations of such interventions. Why should schools be provided with research evidence if the quality of the evidence is “shoddy”, in his words? How are teachers expected to interpret research evidence of varying quality?

Dr Collins: I am sat next to him. That is handy.

Chair: No fisticuffs.

Dr Collins: There might be a difference here in the interpretation. The evidence behind the Toolkit is not evidence that I think Professor Gorard or anyone else would regard as shoddy. It is all high quality evidence that has been synthesised. There are about 7,500 research papers underpinning that Toolkit and they are all research that meets a standard. There absolutely has been too much shoddy research. It has not been experimental; it has not had the right controls; it has lacked a qualitative research base.

With the Toolkit, we are trying to gather what we know from high quality studies and present that to teachers—and it is great to report that thousands of schools a week now are going to that Toolkit to use and help and inform their decision making—but it is largely from around the world, because the research done in Britain has not been of the right quality to put into the Toolkit. We are conducting 68 studies at the moment, and we will be doing many more over the next few years, that are high quality and are powered to reveal the effect, particularly for this group of children. That picture is changing and the Toolkit does offer great support to schools.

I would just say, on the last answer on the evidence, that pedagogy trumps curriculum every time. It is very clear that the way you teach and how you teach is always more powerful than just changing the curriculum. That is just to back up your point that pedagogy is the key thing.

Q136 Siobhain McDonagh: “Shoddy”?

Professor Gorard: I do not remember using that word. I was just flicking through what I have written. It sounds like me, but I do not think I used that word in the evidence there. I was focusing particularly on the attitude and aspiration, parental involvement-type stuff. I was talking about the absence of evidence. It is a scandal internationally how little educational process, policy, interventions and so on have been evaluated rigorously. That is why I support exactly what Kevan is doing and trying to get done with the EEF, so to put us in tension is a slightly mischievous thing to do.

The point is, whatever area you look at and do a review, it is actually quite appalling how much there is and how little of it you would want teachers to use. What you need is something like the Pupil Premium Toolkit, which I support, that tries to filter out that which you might be prepared to bet on working and see if you could work it here. It is something that has worked in the past or in another context, or in another phase or country. It will be an evolving body of evidence and the problem is when it starts it will be based primarily on meta-analysis of passive evidence, correlational-type studies. In a sense, if that is all you have, as long as there are enough health warnings on it, then as more and more studies become available, it will evolve into something that is really useful. It is not going to tell people what to do, but it will give them a menu of options for how they might want to spend the money they have. I hope that makes sense. For me, the shock is, every time I look at an area, how bad the studies are and how much money appears to be wasted by funders on research that does not give the kinds of answers that you quite rightly demand. That is not to do with the people on this panel here.

Can I just very quickly go back to the question about the curriculum? Having a national curriculum is part of the structure of ensuring equity in the system. It is a way of making sure it does not matter who goes to which school and where they live. That does not mean it has to be the national curriculum, but a national curriculum is a good idea. I agree with what the others have said that the style of teaching can be a really important factor, but it is not something that is targeted specifically at white working class, underachieving kids. Lessons should be enjoyable; the approaches should be mixed. Yes, there should be autonomy for learners. It should be relevant, but that is true for all learners of every kind, not just particularly this group.

Q137 Siobhain McDonagh: I do not know if I am speaking for other members of the Committee, but as a layperson I am shocked how little UK-based evidence there actually is.

Professor Gorard: It is not just a problem for the UK.

Q138 Siobhain McDonagh: Does initial teacher training and CPD provide teachers with an understanding of how to address the performance of particular ethnic and deprived groups?

Dr Collins: Not sufficiently, in my view. I do not think that, in their initial teacher training preparing them for the kinds of schools and the children that we are talking about, or in continuing their profession, teachers have had the right level of access to the evidence of what makes the biggest difference. It is not their obligation to use it, but their right to access it. That just has not been made available to teachers in England. There is an issue there in both training and continuing practice. CPD, quite frankly, is a bit of a mess. The level of professional developments that are available to you, where you are as a teacher, is almost a bit of a lottery. We have been doing some work to try and align the evidence in our toolkit with training opportunities if you want to go and do some training on better feedback or making your lessons more engaging. There just is not necessarily access in every part of the country to that training. Disproportionately, the opportunities are in places like London, where the issues are not the ones we are talking about. That match between training obligations and opportunities, and the evidence, is not well-aligned. Local authorities, of course, are withering in all of this, and it is not clear who is going to step into the breach and make the training provision comprehensive, well-informed and available to all teachers. That seems to me something they have a right to, but also an obligation to attend. The market is broken.

Q139 Chair: Are teaching schools getting the greater ownership of the whole development of teachers before they begin practice and afterwards? Are there any signs that they may contribute to improvement on this issue?

Dr Collins: I am sure that that is a positive thing, and it will be interesting to see when we evaluate the impact of that. Going to one of your earlier points, remember that to be a teaching school you have to be outstanding and, at the moment, if you put a circle around them, teaching schools are disproportionately serving more affluent communities.

Q140 Bill Esterson: What a number of head teachers in my area have told me is that they are concerned about the new performance measures in schools—the dashboard approach—and that it favours academic performance against vocational. Do you agree with that and do you think that performance and accountability measures in schools help or hinder when we are dealing with issues of underachievement in particular ethnic groups?

David Hughes: I will have a go at that. I am absolutely certain, going back to the issue about relevance, that for many working class kids, they want to do something more vocational. Therefore, if that is not measured as part of the overall performance of the school, it is not going to be put in as many schools as it should be. It will not be valued as much; the best teachers will not be put in to teach it. Therefore, there will be a lack of that type of provision for this group of people. We have not talked much about that kind of

careers education and trying to make learning relevant to young people, to make them think about their future career. For many, the academic route is not the right route. A vocational part of the curriculum, particularly perhaps 14 to 19, is really important. If it is not measured in the same way as the academic part, many schools just will not do it in the same way with the same vigour.

Dr Collins: This is a really important dimension of the conversation. In the Toolkit we have an entry that there is quite a lot of evidence behind the relationship between the social and emotional development for a child and attainment. There is a relationship between the two. We do not quite understand that relationship, but only focusing on attainment, without working with the broader child, its character, resilience and all those sorts of things, seems to me to miss the point of what education is about.

Q141 Bill Esterson: So the point is about performance measures as a whole, whether they are academic or vocational.

Dr Collins: What we do not have are ways of measuring that development. In some countries, that is part of the assessment of a child—in Canada, for example, in the final diploma; in America, there is work to try and pull that in to the common core, if they can. If it is important, and the evidence seems to think it is, we have this challenge of only valuing things that are in the accountability framework, yet we need to find a way of bringing the character of children into how we judge the effectiveness of the provision in the school that is around them. In itself, it is important for someone's development, but it also has a relationship to the attainment they will get as well. Finding a way of capturing the value and measuring that is a challenge for the next few years.

Chair: Bill, I am afraid I will need to cut you off, and others. Thank you so much. It has been a fascinating and useful discussion this morning. We are grateful for you coming along. We had a couple of questions we did not get to because of the weakness of the chairmanship, so, if we were able to write to you and perhaps if you had any comments to add, we would be grateful for that. We are very grateful for you turning up this morning. Thank you very much.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Vic Goddard**, Principal, Passmores Academy, Essex, **John Stephens**, Deputy Director, Teaching Schools, National College of Teaching and Leadership, **Heath Monk**, Chief Executive, Future Leaders Trust, and **David Jones**, Federation Head, Holybrook Primary School and Parkland Primary School, Bradford, gave evidence.

Q142 Chair: Good morning, gentlemen. Welcome to the Committee. It is men all the way today.

Ian Mearns: It is about boys.

Chair: It is not just about boys; it is about girls as well.

Pat Glass: It almost always is all men.

Chair: My colleague says it nearly is always men who are here. We will have to work harder at our witness diversity. Thank you for joining us today. Ofsted's report was called "Unseen children". Are these children invisible in your schools?

Vic Goddard: We are all going to say no, obviously. It is the obvious answer to that. There are lots of reasons why; you can talk about moral purpose and why we are doing the job and, obviously, every child being important. However, accountability frameworks and such do sharpen the focus somewhat too.

Q143 Chair: At a current secondary school, a lot of children who are underperforming are highly unlikely to contribute to the five A to C GCSE count. At which point, is it true that you effectively use your best, most stimulating and inspiring teachers to get children up to that C grade, and you do not put them in the classes of the children who you think are unlikely to contribute?

David Jones: Speaking as a primary head, it touches on something that David said in the first panel. Sometimes, where white working class children find themselves in a small minority, that may be the case. Those children are our children, almost in their totality. Therefore, they are our raw material and that is what we work with. I think, perhaps, where there are successes, that is often because these children are the very children that must achieve to the national average standards. Therefore, perhaps children in those schools do better.

Vic Goddard: I always have to highlight that not achieving five A*s to Cs including English and maths does not mean that you have underachieved. It may be you have achieved fully to the level of which you are capable.

Q144 Chair: If you are a head teacher in a school with a difficult intake and you are struggling to meet the minimum requirement threshold, why would you put your most inspiring teachers into the classes of the children who are least likely to help you achieve your A to C percentage?

Heath Monk: I think because that is what the job is. It has to be both/and. There is a recognition, as with the head teachers that I work with at my organisation, that you have to do something to improve the school. That is about establishing your credibility and, in many cases, saving your job. There is a short term "I have to get the results up", but if that is, year-on-year, the only thing that you are doing, you are not fulfilling what it is that you are there to do, which is about looking at the pathway of children, whether it is primary at year one or secondary at year seven, and say, "What does it take to get not just 40% to meet the national threshold, but 80%/90% to get to a standard where they have doors opened and life chances?"

Vic Goddard: The other issue is where a school is in its cycle of Ofsted inspections will have a massive impact on the bravery of the head teacher to do that, because we are pragmatic; we have to be pragmatic, but ideally pragmatic, I guess. If you have Ofsted due and you are around the floor target, and as a head you not only have to educate those children, but you have to protect people's livelihoods etc, the pressure on you as a head to maybe flirt around the C/D borderline to get those students over that, and maybe ignore where the greater need is, is huge. You are responsible for people paying their mortgage. The moral purpose of educating children is always going to be at the forefront of what we

do, but there is also a pragmatic element that I have to look my cleaner in the face when I have to make him redundant.

Q145 Chair: That is why it is so important for policymakers to ensure they create a framework that aligns the survival instinct and interest of the head with the interests of the children, not least the poorest children. John, do you have any reflections on that from the National College point of view?

Dr Stephens: Yes, first of all to say that, in policy terms, it is exactly as you said at the start, Chair. The focus that Ofsted has, as we heard in the previous panel, in terms of precisely looking at the offer that is made to those youngsters who most need it is actually in itself an incentive in the story that is told around that progress, not just the absolute outcomes. That is now enshrined in the accountability framework. There is also the change, of course, to things like the published performance tables, so that there is the spotlight shone on the achievements of those children, rightly so. They are clear additional incentives not to follow the behaviours that you have described.

Q146 Chair: Stepping back from the individual institution to the system as a whole, I do not want to mischaracterise what Chris from Ofsted told us, but he was slightly denying that—no, let's not go there. How do we ensure that we have incentives in the system to make it more likely that talented teachers will stay and talented leaders will stay and be attracted to the most challenging schools? Is it true that we would like to have a system in which, if anything, the playing field was the other way: they were more incentivised to be in the tough school than they were to be in the leafy suburb with high prior achievement.

Dr Stephens: Just to say that teaching is a challenging job. It is a challenging job wherever you do it, so I would not like to unnecessarily characterise it as one or the other. I do recognise exactly what you were saying before in terms of your son's experience. We all recognise that. There are a couple of things to say in policy terms. The panel may remember that in the autumn, the Deputy Prime Minister made an announcement about plans to look specifically at incentives to help incentivise the move of leaders precisely to the areas that were most needed. A good deal of work is being done by officials at the moment to try and progress that work. That is the first thing to say.

Q147 Pat Glass: Can I just ask if tuition fees are involved in those discussions? We heard earlier a suggestion that if you said, "We will reduce your tuition fee debt by whatever percentage each year that you spend in really challenging schools", challenging schools will then get the pick of the best teachers. Is that in the thinking at all?

Dr Stephens: That has not yet been in the thinking—

Pat Glass: Should it be?

Dr Stephens: —although, of course, the whole business of moving to a much more school-led approach to ITT—for example, School Direct, which actually places, in partnership with a provider, the candidates very directly in schools—can bring them very much into the arena of experiencing some of these things. In some of the schools that provide that—I can think of a particular school in Greater Manchester, for example—all

their trainees, as part of the school-led ITT offer, get an opportunity to work in a different set of contexts. For example, they can go and work in a specialist provision where behaviour is an issue, so they can experience that as part of their ITT. Through the partnership of schools that deliver this, they can go and work in a special school and see the particular challenges of that; they can work in a particularly urban setting or otherwise. Because of that school-led approach, there are some solutions to some of the things.

Q148 Chair: What about incentives? That sounds like an experiential thing—

Pat Glass: It is kind of a nudge.

Chair: —which is a good thing, but it might open up and someone might find that a tiny rural school, which otherwise might be struggling to get a good teacher, is their kind of environment. That is a good thing, but it does not change the incentives. In our system of football, Manchester United and Liverpool get to pick first, whereas in NFL whoever comes top last season has the last pick of this year's recruits. They deliberately try to ensure that there is greater equality. We have a system that reinforces strength, does it not?

Dr Stephens: Just to go back to what I was saying, there is some work going on in policy terms to try to address that and look specifically at some of those incentives as we speak. The other thing to say in policy terms picks up the point you made earlier. What we are now seeing through, particularly, the expectation that our best schools that have converted to become academies also seek to sponsor other schools, is that some of those schools, set in—to use your phrase—the leafy suburbs, are actually taking responsibility for schools in much more challenging circumstances. They are taking direct executive responsibility, not that first stage of school-to-school support, but actually taking them on as part of their family. Again, that is a policy opportunity that means some of that great leadership gets spread.

Q149 Chair: When are we going to get some results? You have hinted at the work going on, but you have not really told us what any of these incentive changes might be, which is very politic of you. When might we be told what these are?

Dr Stephens: We are expecting an announcement very soon around that.

David Jones: I would make the point that my dear old mum used to say: “The finest folk are fashioned in the fiercest flames”. When I said to our staff at our schools, “What would incentivise teachers?” and “What would lead to the best teachers working in the most difficult schools”, someone said, “That presupposes they don’t already”. I would say that it’s been my experience that many of the best teachers do work in our schools. At one of the schools that I am at, there are six head teachers now serving in Bradford schools that came through our school. They see it as a proving ground. One of the essential ingredients in being a good teacher is to be an idealist and to look for a better tomorrow. The teachers and the colleagues that I work with in our schools I find are those people. I feel energised by them, even though I am presumably supposed to be their leader. I feel energised by them because of their commitment to the young people that they serve.

Heath Monk: In our experience at Future Leaders that is a really important point. The moral purpose is the thing that drives teachers. Financial incentives can get the wrong people to go. There is something about prestige—

Q150 Chair: Have you any evidence for that?

Heath Monk: No, I do not—

Chair: Nobody wants to denigrate those teachers and we are lucky because of the moral purpose we have so many in so many tough circumstances. None the less, the data is absolutely clear. That is that, if you have a PhD and you are a teacher, you are more likely to be in an independent school than you are in a state school. You are more likely to be in a leafy suburb state school than you are in another school. All the data all the way suggests that all the incentives have taken and do drive people, and as they get older, however idealistic they start, they have to pay a mortgage. It tempts them away from where they are most needed. It is dangerous, but you are here to give your opinion.

Heath Monk: What has done that is less money and more about career progression, support and development.

Q151 Chair: Would both not be helpful?

Heath Monk: Both would be helpful.

Q152 Chair: In what way would paying more money to people who go into a very tough school be unhelpful?

Heath Monk: I do not think it is unhelpful, but you have to think about what it is that is going to make somebody go to an area that is traditionally seen as very difficult. The key things, rather than money, are the support that they are offered, the prestige and the opportunities for career development. It is to see that as, “Actually, if I want to progress, if I want to be successful, then rather than going to the leafy suburb school where I am safe, it is better to go to the more difficult, challenging area”.

Chair: What would that look like? That is what we are trying to tease out. How do we change the system so it is nuanced? It is not a crude “We are just going to pay you to go there” because it ignores what they are really interested in, but how do we get the right balance of incentives so that it changes it?

Pat Glass: What about some breathing space? A good head with a good track record: “Yes, you are going into this challenging school and Ofsted will not come in in 18 months and give you a good kicking. We accept that you have this background and history, so we will give you some breathing space to make a difference”. What about that?

David Jones: The practical solution is what Chris from Ofsted was saying. I sometimes say now it is almost the rules of the football manager without the salary of the football manager that people are judged, know they will be judged and they will go home in a taxi that day. That is not helpful. Colleagues can find themselves in difficult situations without enough time to get the school beyond that. There is no doubt that that impacts. Teachers in difficult schools are not asking to be cut so much slack that they can be not effective, but we must take into account the context of the school or we will end up not being able to recruit good teachers and good leaders in schools that are in jeopardy.

Q153 Mr Ward: As you raised football, they always used to say back in the 1960s and 1970s that Burnley could never really stay at the top, because it used to breed really good players who then left and went elsewhere. You have six there who have then gone on. The big question is: what keeps those six in that sort of school that you are responsible for, as opposed to going off to Burley, Menston, Addingham or wherever it may be, because it is just easier?

David Jones: They have not. They have gone to schools similar to ours in many cases. I would rather have a committed teacher working four or five years and then have the opportunity to freshen the team again, to use that football analogy. We do not get large numbers of applicants for jobs, but we get some really good quality. If our recruitment and selection process is effective, then we actually freshen it up with those very idealistic teachers who hopefully in five years will be the heads of the future.

Vic Goddard: I have to speak up on behalf of my colleagues in the leafy suburbs. There are also challenges in those schools. Having worked in the independent sector, when you give a child an A and their parent complains it is not an A*, that is pressure too. I just think that needs to be raised.

Pat Glass: It is not likely to get you sacked, though.

Vic Goddard: It is a very different type of pressure, but it is still pressure nevertheless, which some teachers like and some teachers do not. On the incentivising of people to work in the environments we are talking about, the current system or the system that has changed with Schools Direct has not worked for us. I look at the old system of the graduate trainee programme, which obviously was around pre-tuition fees being an issue, but Schools Direct is focused at shortage subjects. There is a shortage because there are not many teachers who wish to teach them, and then just saying you are going to get training in school does not make them want to teach them. I will be honest: we have gone from having four or five trainees in my school—and I look at my middle leaders and senior middle leaders: they are all home-grown; they have all started with us as NQTs—and we are not getting the applicants. We had 26 places across our region and we filled 10 last year. It is very much linked to the tuition fee issue. There is an issue around that, and that de-incentivises people to even go into the profession. When you are an ICT professional who can go and earn much more in the City, why would you wish to pay to train in the first place when you have a degree behind you?

The issue we are not looking at is the wider societal view of working class children and working class environments. We would not accept the derogatory comments around ethnicity or gender that we accept around class. That absolutely boils me. When you see on the front of certain national newspapers “the hoodie generation” or whatever it may be, that is very much linked to class. It negatively affects the children I serve, because they are white and they are working class. When they are given a carte blanche “you are worthless” or there is over-emphasis on how many students go to university, not how many people are employed, and good citizens in the community, that does not help any of us. It is actually not just about education; it is about all of us not accepting the type of coverage that working class families and people get.

I am a free-school-meals child. It did not limit my aspirations, because I had a family that supported that, but it did affect my view on life when I had to stand in the other

line with the poor children who had free school meals while the ones who did not have free school meals got a different line. Schools have moved such a long way away from that in the last 20 years, but there is a wider societal issue about the over-emphasis on academic success rather than worthwhile academic success—not just the normal, “How many of you can get to university?” We are not going to tackle the wider, long-term issues unless we accept the fact that we have to also tackle the biased view of working class children that we ignore on a daily basis. The fact that certain newspapers have the circulation they have means that lots of people buy into that too. We are never going to change the self-worth of our children unless we tackle that too.

Q154 Ian Mearns: In terms of the self-worth, though, Vic, do we not have to get into the game for some of the youngsters at the very hard end, but we are trying to adapt things so that they get success in something? Success in something is better than failure in everything, isn't it?

Vic Goddard: Absolutely. That is where you go back to the accountability framework and the assessment framework, what counts in the league table and does not count in the league table. If you look at what has been removed from league table measures, who is it most affecting? Which class of society is it most affecting? Which type of child is it most affecting? The message coming out from central Government about that is very clear and is very damning to the students that I serve.

Q155 Mr Raab: Just to David and Vic specifically, I wanted to probe based on your personal experience as head teachers. We have this inquiry on whether there is a scale of a problem with white working class children underachieving in education. Do you think there is this problem? Do you think we are targeting a specific issue that your personal experience bears out?

Vic Goddard: You can look at raw data and that often can tell lies, but actually in this instance it is a very stark truth. It does come back to what we value in their education and what we do not. I know Kevan and a few of the others were speaking before about the more holistic value that we give to education rather than a very narrow one. My children are empathetic, good citizens when they leave us and that is important to me, but nobody thanks us for that apart from the community that they go and live in for the rest of their lives. That is something that is not measured in those league tables. Certainly, for all but my little stint in the independent sector, having worked in this environment, there is a lack of aspiration sometimes that is not necessarily matched by the children, but is in their parents. That is the biggest issue for me, going back to the wider societal issue. Rather than keeping throwing money at the child, are we actually tackling the parenting that is going on the future?

David Jones: The link between aspiration and teacher expectation is massively enormous. We tend to have mantras around school. When you walk down the corridor it says above our corridor, “Down this corridor walked the future leaders of our world” and we believe it. If we act shabbily and we have less than high expectations of our children when we make grandiose statements like that, then that is rank hypocrisy. Our staff do actually believe that they can make a difference to those children, and it is that which affects their aspiration. I know that every person in this room could name a teacher who

first convinced them that they could do it, because I could. That person made a massive difference to my life, as well as having parents who, as traditional working class parents from a mining and textile background, had high expectations for us kids because it was our way out.

Vic touched on what we are sometimes talking about with this view of yob Britain, Jeremy Kyle writ large, *Benefits Street*, which has been on over the last couple of weeks, depicting the white working class in a way that, if other groups were depicted in that way, people would probably find themselves in a court of law. It is important that communicating high expectations to our children is what works. Then when they see that they can achieve, that is when you begin to get the multiplier effect. I think you are right when you say that success in some things brings success in other things. When our school opened 12 years ago, we began by being good at sport because we knew that it would take a long time for certain things like English and maths to play through, but we could be good at sport. We have a full trophy cabinet. More importantly, we have children who enjoy representing their school and showing it in a positive light in their community.

Q156 Mr Raab: Can I just stop you there? On the specific issue of low expectations, Sir Michael Wilshaw said that he thought that poor white children risked being written off by a culture of low expectations. We took evidence from the previous group and there was some scepticism about whether there was causation as opposed to just a correlation about this. I wondered what your view was on it. You both have made very strong comments about it. To what extent does this low expectation, which you are both nodding and seem to be agreeing with, come from underperforming schools and to what extent does it come from parental attitudes and extra-curricular attitudes? You made your point about the media, but I am thinking closer to home.

Vic Goddard: It is a combination of both. I remember as clear as anything my very first day at my current school. I started as assistant head, in charge of data and target-setting, and I stood in front of the staff and said, “Right, national expectation targets. This is what we are doing.” “These children come from Harlow; we can’t expect them to perform at that level.” That is the first and last time I ever had that said to me in my school. They may say it when I cannot hear, but I hope they do not—

Siobhain McDonagh: You ought to come to Mitcham; they say it all the time.

Vic Goddard: There is an expectation of staff to say that, no matter which background they come from—there is a phrase called “unconditional positive regard”—every young person can be a success if you give them the right environment. Failure is part of that success on the way, but you have to accept that.

Q157 Mr Raab: You have given an example from inside a school. Obviously, the way you have expressed it is very honest. Do you think that you are seeing quite a lot of this in schools? I am just trying to get a sense of the balance between schools and parental responsibility for it.

David Jones: I do not think the lack of expectation comes from schools. Sir Alec Clegg, who was a great educationist in Yorkshire in the 1970s, was asked by a teacher, “What can you expect from children like this?” and he answered, “The moon and

the stars". When I tell that story to our staff, they do nod and they do buy into that, so I do not think the low expectation comes from schools.

Q158 Mr Raab: Maybe not yours, but there are clearly examples from Vic where it is happening.

Vic Goddard: Again, you will come back to where that school is in its journey and the strength of that leadership around that to say that is not there. I am talking 12 years ago, and I think the schools or the staff with that attitude have shifted hugely in that time. Students spend 18% to 19% of their adolescence in schools. If you want to ask where the biggest influence can come on their aspirations and their expectations in life, that is the answer. They spend four times as long at home or outside of school as they do in school. From that point of view, where are you going to make the biggest impact quickest? It is great if you could tackle parenting quicker, but obviously that is not an easy fix, whereas throwing money at schools and making me responsible for it is.

Q159 Mr Raab: Your empirical experience, based on real life, is that parental expectation is hugely important.

David Jones: Yes, absolutely.

Q160 Mr Raab: Expectation is distinct from engagement. We know engagement is important, but just the attitude.

David Jones: It is a positive belief that, if it is not borne out in experience, which for some of our parents it has not been, then it is re-engaging them that it can be different for their children.

Heath Monk: I heard the last session talking about aspiration on the one hand, and parents have high aspirations on the whole. Then there is the day-to-day reality of fulfilling those aspirations, which is about what David said about consistent staff values that are upheld all of the time, not just most of the time and not just mouthed, but genuinely believed by staff. That parental engagement is a long-term project, because it takes very little, if children have a low academic self-concept and self-worth, for that to be damaged significantly. It is not that parents and children lack aspiration. They do not know the means to get there, and they need a huge amount of support, from schools that have very consistent ways of thinking, to do that.

Q161 Mr Raab: Just on this issue of diagnosing the problem, there seems to be agreement there is an issue around poor white children. Do you think there is a gender-specific issue around boys in that group?

Vic Goddard: I have to say, in my school, there is a difference between boys' and girls' achievement, but I would not say it is stark because of their gender as much as it is their socialisation within what is acceptable for a girl and the perceptions of them in the school, and what it is for the boys. There is a societal thing around that. When you go back to parents, you have to look at when the current generation of parents were in school and what experience they had. We are talking 1980s parents; we are talking about people who were in school in the 1980s.

Personally, I know I had a very good experience at school and I was very fortunate. My dad was the chair of governors and that might have helped. I look at others who did not have the sort of experience I had at school who are now parents who do not engage and, therefore, even though they say, "I want my child to be the best they can be", they probably do not have the skills educationally to support that. We send children home with homework every day that is socially divisive. Some of my students go home to homes that have internet access, parents that have a level of literacy and numeracy that means they can support, and others that have not. I set students up to fail on a daily basis when I send them home with homework, where somebody is going to be more supported than another. Artificially separating them is almost impossible.

Q162 Mr Raab: On the gender-specific issue, is white working class boys a bespoke problem as distinct from white working class kids generally?

Heath Monk: White working class boys are the lowest achieving group, but white working class girls are not doing well. They are not far behind.

Vic Goddard: They are both underachieving. It is like saying "how bottom is bottom?" That is where it is. They are both underachieving.

Q163 Mr Raab: Just in terms of this phenomenon that we are talking about, there have obviously been changes in recent years. Has this problem got worse? Has it always been there? Has it got worse relative to other groups or has it got worse subjectively? What has happened in recent years that suddenly it has become so salient and such an issue that we are looking at it in the way that we are?

David Jones: It has always been. Tawney in 1912 was talking about it in the House. I was talking to staff the other day about 1964 and JWB Douglas' *The Home and the School*, and I was made to read this huge tome as a student. It is not a new phenomenon.

Q164 Mr Raab: Do you think it has been accentuated or magnified because, with the changing demography in this country, you have quite positive examples of ethnic minority groups that are working class but actually doing rather well?

Vic Goddard: Yes. Simplistically, there is also data now available that were not ever available in the past. I never spoke about it. In the first 10 years of my teaching career, I did not speak about data. I did not speak about data at all. Now, I know everything I possibly can about every child and I expect all my staff to know the same. Therefore, that data are readily available, so the difference is very stark now. We are able to analyse that, thank goodness, and to see where the underachievement is and focus our attentions on it.

David Jones: The impact of educational failure was probably that you were condemned to a life of mass employment in whatever regional industry there was. Within that, you could be a fine, upstanding citizen and probably enjoy some of the cultural benefits of being in a brass band, working in textiles and all the other positive things that that working class life brought with it. Now, sometimes, it is to be condemned to the forgotten pile, and to have a life that has multiple deprivation and turbulence. Perhaps that is why we concentrate on it.

Heath Monk: It was a couple of years ago when the performance of EAL students outstripped the performance of native British.

Mr Raab: Sorry, did you say EAL?

Heath Monk: English as an additional language. Kids for whom English is their second language do better. That was a big shift. Five years ago, heads would talk about the number of nationalities and the number of languages spoken as a problem, whereas now it is probably seen as a benefit.

Q165 Mr Raab: Do schools routinely examine the data and, in particular, the combination of data on ethnicity and disadvantage to try to tailor and assess their priorities in terms of decision making, policy, funding and the like?

Vic Goddard: It feels like all we do sometimes. You cannot be a successful school leader at a senior level without having the ability to understand and analyse that. That is a shoo-in, and we are now under so much pressure for every teacher in every classroom to have that information at their fingertips, and quite rightly so, so that they can meet the need. That is a ship that has very well sailed, and everybody is on board with that.

Q166 Mr Raab: The final question from me before we move on is, again, to Vic and David. Sorry for neglecting the other two, but it is based on concrete things in schools. We have discussed with the earlier panel the nature of parental engagement that is effective, and you have both touched on this. Can you give me any tangible, concrete examples of parental engagement that you think have added disproportionate value to this group that we are talking about, the white working class underachieving boys?

David Jones: Sometimes it is knowing the ways in which you can advantage your child. I went to a very illuminating lecture by Professor Charles Desforages and he said that, basically, having analysed all available research, the way in which homes advantage their children is by speaking to them. That is what it is about.

Q167 Mr Raab: What do you do?

David Jones: What do we do to do that? For example, a very practical example is we found that, when we asked parents to come in to examine how they could help their children with reading, perhaps by showing them the type of phonics approaches that we use, we got a reasonable turnout. When we asked them to come and engage in a creative arts activity with their children, they all came. We invested some money in making little art packs, the sort of thing your mum would have in her top drawer if you were brought up in a positive household. We call them TTT packs, and we said, “It’s time to talk”. The important thing is that you sit face-to-face with your children and do these things, and that you speak with them. We found that that engaged the parents and that they then came to the phonics classes. It was a very small step, but a practical approach, and we found that it paid some dividends.

Vic Goddard: Certainly, from our point of view, we moved away from a year group-focused school into a house-focused school. All our tutor groups are mixed-age, so if you can imagine five students from year 7, five from year 8, five from year 9, five from year 10 and five from year 11, they have different pressure points at different times of the

year. The member of staff who is their pastoral care can focus on particular year groups at particular times when the pressure is on—options for year nine, for instance, in the next few weeks.

Alongside that, we are moving away from traditional open parents evenings where, if I were the parent of a young person who was doing well at school, I would go and sit and listen to 13 other adults tell me how good a parent I was because my child is doing very well. If I were the parent of a young person who maybe was challenging the school, I would sit and listen to 13 adults tell me that I am a bad parent because my child does not do well at school. Guess what happened to those parents by years 7 and 8? They do not come. We had 52% turnout at parents evenings. Now, we have moved away from that, and they just meet the tutor. They meet the tutor for an hour, and they have an in-depth conversation about how well that child is doing holistically. If there are specific, subject-based questions that are there, then we would make sure that the subject teacher contacts the parents at their convenience. We now have a 99% turnout at those meetings, which means we actually have an active dialogue with parents around learning.

Q168 Mr Raab: Without soft-soaping.

Vic Goddard: Without soft-soaping. That small change, for us, was very helpful. However, again, we can afford to route that system and say to a parent, “Tell us when you’ll come, and we’ll cover that lesson if you can only come in at 10.00 in the morning”, because of how we have been funded and the freedoms we have as an academy. All those sorts of things have helped us along the way. We take whatever is offered. They were talking about sponsorship earlier. We are an academy, and an academy sponsor of two of our failing primary schools in the town. Do I have capacity to do that on a daily basis? Sometimes no, but we have to take responsibility holistically. Engaging parents from the age of five all the way through in my school will mean that hopefully they come on the journey.

It is just shifting little things where a parent’s experience of a conversation with a teacher can be positive rather than negative. Positive contact weeks: once every six weeks we phone every young person in a year group. A member of staff will phone up and say something positive about that child to that parent. For most of our parents, they see “School” in their little display on their phone and they go, “Ugh”. We try to break that cycle of contact from school being a negative. It is chipping away. There is no magic bullet, otherwise we would all be doing it. It is the small things that match your context that can get you closer to where you want to be.

Q169 Pat Glass: Can I just very quickly go back to the issue about gender? Although white working class girls are doing slightly better than boys, that is right across the piece. Chinese girls do better than Chinese boys; Sikh girls do better than Sikh boys. Is it to do with what is acceptable for how girls behave and learn, or is it to do with the way in which we teach? Are girls better at sitting in classrooms being lectured to?

Vic Goddard: I would love our staff to be the most influential people in these young people’s lives, but unfortunately for lots of them it is their friends. There is a peer pressure on what is cool, to be good at school or not. I look at my son, who is only 10, and there are certain aspects of engaging in certain subjects at school where he would say,

“You know, it’s not right, Dad, is it, you know?” There are pressures, but I do not think those pressures are any different to what they were before.

Q170 Pat Glass: Are those pressures not on girls?

Vic Goddard: There is an acceptance that girls can be good at things.

Pat Glass: I remember friends saying to me, “Are you revising?” and me saying, “No, I’m not”; I had been revising for six months. Are there not just the same pressures on girls?

Vic Goddard: There are people who have a natural personality that they need to achieve. What they do is they accept failure as part of that journey of success. Paula Radcliffe is the obvious case of that if you look at a public figure: fourth, fourth, fourth, best in the world, but she persevered through that journey. I am certain that, if you looked at the personalities that are nurtured in our society, boys need to avoid failure much more than girls do. The quickest way to avoid failure is by not trying. I do a role-play in front of my year 11s with their mock results every year, because we make them collect their mock results in a formal way. They get the brown envelope like they would in the summer, and I do a role-play where I go, “Oh no, I did really badly. I did no revision. It’s easy, isn’t it?” because actually you build in your excuse for failure. I think there is an acceptance about that with boys more than there is with girls. I do not know how we change it either. I try really hard every day to do that, but I do not know how we change it. Probably having some more male role models in schools would help.

Q171 Pat Glass: Given the huge impact on children’s learning from outside rather than in school—and I am guessing that you would not be here if you were not optimistic about the difference that the school can make—we are about recommendations, so what could we recommend on changing education policy to help tackle the issue of attainment of white working class children? What is it that could make a real difference?

David Jones: I would say that the pupil premium is doing a lot of good and it is very much to be applauded. Like my old English teacher used to write on my work, though, “David, strawberries, strawberries” and he meant strawberries are very good, but you could always use more of them. If we target resources more to where they are needed and we target the most needed schools, there is a good deal of work that we could do with pupil premium. We use pupil premium for a variety of things. One of the things that we do is to use it to enrich the experiences of our young people. It hit me like a sledgehammer one year when I saw a question on the SATs English paper that said, “Design an advertising leaflet for a sea-life centre”. I knew that my pupils would immediately be disadvantaged because of the experiences that they had never had—

Pat Glass: They are in-land.

David Jones: —going to a sea-life centre. Rather than cursing that particular curricular darkness, we decided to light a few candles. We use the pupil premium to enrich the lives of our children so that they get some of these experiences. Once we did that, we found that the engagement of the children increased enormously and our SATs results went up enormously, particularly in writing, which had plateaued out for a long time and we had hit it with everything we had with not a lot of success, but we have now.

We invested in a couple of minibuses, so we do not have those transport costs and we can be fairly spontaneous in going out and learning outside the classroom. We built an outside classroom, because our children are practical and creative, and they can access that. All these things have impacted positively and enabled us to do them. What we could do with, since we are here, is, if we targeted the money more carefully, what we find we need is more bespoke help for those children who suffer from multiple turbulence. For instance, quick access—

Q172 Pat Glass: Does that not come through your school budget, though?

David Jones: It does, but more of it—strawberries, strawberries.

Q173 Chair: Is this a complex way of asking for more money?

David Jones: It is, really, because we do not often get a chance.

Q174 Pat Glass: Is it about more money or more money within the school budget targeted on turbulence?

David Jones: More money targeted within the school budget on turbulence.

Q175 Pat Glass: That would not make a difference in the north-east. We have the most stable populations, yet we have turbulence in the system. It would not make a difference to our white working class kids.

David Jones: We are in danger of presuming that the working class are a homogenous group, and they are not. The Victorians used to talk about the working classes, and perhaps, in that respect, they were a bit nearer to it. The point is that, for our most disfranchised youngsters, they are routing to the kind of services that they need. I think of a young man last year who was bereaved in very tragic circumstances, and it took us months to get any bereavement counselling, not because of lack of resources, but because of lack of availability. That was just one example that springs to mind.

At one point across our federation, we were able to employ a speech therapist, and we found that that had enormous benefits because the process to be referred to those services is a fairly protracted one. It is those things that we can immediately impact. Also, we have a behaviour support centre for young people who sometimes, because of some trigger outside of our control, spiral into a little bit of behavioural issues. If there can be quick intervention to address what those issues are about, and sometimes work with the home, we can get them back on track more quickly.

Q176 Pat Glass: Can I just check? Is it about the money, or is it also about the fact that a spotlight is on these kids and Ofsted are now looking at these kids? Is it a combination of the two?

David Jones: Yes, probably so, but it is mainly that these children, until they have those needs met, will lie fallow for a while. What we have learnt is that our children just about get there. If we have a period within their education that we can track of a few months where they were not being catered for, that is when our children struggle and fall below that bar.

Q177 Ian Mearns: Just quickly, David and Vic, it is all very well having money through the pupil premium, but if there are not enough ed psychs, if there are not enough speech and language therapists or if there are not enough education and social workers and those things are rationed, the impact you can have on those kids is delayed.

Chair: Discuss.

Vic Goddard: Certainly, an ed psych is absolute gold dust. When certain ways of accessing support for young people through statements of special educational needs rely on having an ed psych referral that is successful and done, and you cannot get an ed psych—we get maybe one day a half term—all of a sudden we are crowbarring children in 20 minute shifts through this professional. It is unfair on them to make an assessment, but without that assessment we cannot unlock further support for that young person. That will obviously come about with the lessening of the local authority and its role, which is going to have an impact on how many more—

Q178 Chair: Will the pupil premium money help engender greater availability? If the money is there to pay them, there will be more ed psychs.

Vic Goddard: Not if they do not exist in the first place.

Pat Glass: You will just end up paying more for the same thing.

David Jones: I do not think we can affect the supply side, but for instance, one of the things we look at is the provision for school nurses. Many of our families do not enjoy the rudest of rude health, for a variety of reasons, and we share school nurses. A dedicated school nurse attached to the school would be a huge benefit.

Vic Goddard: From a secondary point of view, there are differences around what you can do. I am not asking for more money, which I am sure my colleagues will raise their eyebrows at. For me, it is about lessening the competition for those students. That will help allow us to be successful in the league tables or accountability structure. You have to stop tinkering with the assessment framework, stop disfranchising certain students who want to go down certain vocational routes. That needs to just stop. Let them settle. Let schools understand how to be a success. We are put in league tables around certain thresholds. I know for a fact, as a young head teacher, I stood up at parents evening when year 6 parents were choosing their school and I spent a disproportionate amount of time talking about my able, gifted and talented programme. Why did I do that? Because the more of those students I got, the more likely I was to be further up the league table, etc. Unfortunately, we are encouraged to behave like that by the accountability framework that is currently in place. Unless you remove that arbitrary “A* to C is all that matters”—

Chair: We are.

Vic Goddard: —and start to talk about how many students meet their potential, then it will be different. Actually, the changes coming in 2015 potentially could do that. Obviously, the proof is in the pudding, etc.

Q179 Alex Cunningham: Assuming that the services are there for you to buy, the money is very important. My own experience is that some of the schools in my area are losing out on pupil premium because there are working class people who do not register for free school meals. I wondered what your experience was to try and encourage them. I am sure there are schools that are missing out on tens of thousands of pounds, simply because they cannot persuade parents to register for what they are entitled to, and prefer to send probably an expensive, poor packed lunch instead.

Vic Goddard: This is working class students' underachievement. "Working class" is in the title of the focus of this, and working class means "working" as well. It does not necessarily mean they get access to free school meals or pupil premium funding. Actually, if we could somehow separate, using IDACI deprivation measures or whatever, those who are just above getting that funding and how they achieve compared with those that do get the funding, I would say there is actually your lowest achieving group in the country. It is not the ones receiving it.

Q180 Alex Cunningham: You have to draw a line somewhere in funding.

Vic Goddard: Of course you have. The funding is not the issue for me.

Q181 Alex Cunningham: Funding is available if people would fill in the necessary bit of paper.

Vic Goddard: Without a shadow of a doubt.

Alex Cunningham: I wanted to know: what is your experience of trying to persuade people to help you to support their children?

Vic Goddard: Ever 6 has helped. Certainly, the change about how funding is done has helped quite significantly across lots of schools in our environment. You have already done an element towards that, but it is still an issue for us and always will be because of working class snobbery: I am a working class lad; I ask for nothing. If you send me to a souk to haggle, I am the worst person in the world because I do not need your charity. I think there is an element of that still across proud working class families who do not want a state handout.

Q182 Mr Ward: I would like your views on where, in terms of the subject we are looking at as opposed to other things, free schools and academies may or may not make a positive or negative contribution. Do you have any views on that?

Dr Stephens: Certainly, the data suggest that those sponsored academies that have been running for some time are making a greater difference in terms of closing the gap. There is a whole host of reasons, potentially, why that might be the case. I also draw attention to the answer I gave before, and which Vic gave from his own experience, of where we now have converter academies—some great schools that have converted to become academies—that are using the freedoms and flexibilities within that policy to then work with other schools. I have to say, in a number of examples, they are working with those schools most in need. To the point that was put before about this idea of schools, for example in leafy suburbs, pulling up the drawbridge and sitting back and enjoying it, some of them are deliberately going out and seeking opportunities to work with those very challenging schools and are having an impact. That policy is having a positive impact, in

terms both of the data that we see, particularly from those early-sponsored academies, so there is a time factor there, and also the freedom and flexibility that the policy area allows, and the expectation of sponsorship.

Heath Monk: Certainly, where you get groups of academies working together, there are flexibilities in terms of how staff can be moved around and are encouraged to move around and developed. The idea of people being able to go to a more challenging area, but with the support of the group rather than just the individual school, can mitigate some of those risks around career suicide that we spoke about earlier.

David Jones: Within local authority schools, there are examples of collaboration as well. We are a federation of two local authority schools from two similar communities. Where I wonder how effective things can be is that our schools are very similar and they serve very similar communities. I wonder about the more leafy-lane schools' experience befitting them to come in and support a school like ours. I suppose that is where my question around that would be. In terms of free schools, I feel there is something of a diversionary debate going on. Certainly, in our city of Bradford, there have been a couple of interesting examples of free schools very recently. Sometimes, at the chalk face, it just feels like a little bit of a diversion away from the real business of providing a good education for the children of our city.

Q183 Mr Ward: Some of the freedom is curricular or to admissions. In the first session, we were talking about a more balanced intake. There are some suggestions that academies and free schools are using it to manipulate the intake, but earlier we were talking about manipulating it in a positive way to those from a white working class background. Do they offer opportunities?

Vic Goddard: The curricular freedom is a bit of a fallacy when you have a league table that focuses on certain subjects. There is a massive overplaying of that amongst people maybe not at the chalk face, and certainly not head teachers who are having to make curricular decisions. I very much enjoyed being head of an academy. It shifted my mindset. However, I could have had that mindset when I was at a local authority school, but I did not have it. That is the frustration. I sit next to colleagues like David, who are doing that within the system, and I wish I had been brave enough or even had the foresight to do that in the first place.

Certainly, from my experience locally, the lack of control over where free schools are going is working contrary to some of the schools that are trying to serve the populations that we are serving. On the edges of maybe white working class areas and towns, free schools are going up because on the edge of that there is a leafier suburb or maybe a housing development. Therefore, there is a drive from parents that then draws the students that maybe are more able within that working class environment away from the schools that are trying very hard to do that. You do end up with a sort of selective process, whether you mean to have that or not. My fear is, unless free schools are planned where they are going, and not just taken on public will, you could end up with a worsened situation in certain towns rather than better. Certainly, from an academy point of view, I could have behaved like an academy head when I was not an academy head. I did not, but now it has empowered me to do that and I think it will empower other heads around the country as well. I have to say, it is a positive for me, rather than a negative.

Heath Monk: On balanced intake, it is important that the accountability lines up with that. The evidence is that the worst place to be a free-school-meal boy is in a school that has a minority of poor children. Where you have accountability that measures the threshold at school-level, that is where those children have been most forgotten. I think the Ofsted report said that, if you are FSM in West Berkshire, those are the lowest performing free-school-meal children in the country. Maybe it is a myth that balance is going to improve the lot of those children, unless there is also a spotlight on their performance as individuals.

Dr Stephens: I was going to make a very similar point. It kind of picked up David's point about targeting. One of the reasons that the pupil premium is, if I can use this rather loose phrase, a universal offer is precisely because of the issue of those children that potentially can go unseen. As Sir Michael Wilshaw says in the report, they are everywhere, and he lists some of those things. Chair, you made the point about the coastal and rural environment where you have that mix. The risk, therefore, is that they are missed unless there is that focus. The pupil premium brings both that resource, but importantly also that absolute focus.

Q184 Pat Glass: I was interested in Vic's comments earlier about the way in which we do not value working-classness. We almost put working class children through middle class schools with middle class teachers and try to turn them into middle class children. How are programmes like the national leaders programme and the local leaders programme trying to tackle that issue? What are you doing in school to try and get teachers to value the working-classness of working class children?

Dr Stephens: We had a piece of research that was conducted in April 2013 and one of the people leading that research was John Dunford, who of course is the pupil premium champion. One of the things that was highlighted in terms of the success of that school to do with support, and colleagues here will be engaged in it, was about not making assumptions and understanding context. For example, it is not making the assumption that you are going into a deficit and that somehow this is going to be something where there is something wrong that needs to be fixed. Instead, it is saying, "What is already there that can be built upon?" You made the point earlier about what your son did in working with existing staff. That is also a lesson learnt from the London Challenge about investing heavily in what is there. Only by doing that and taking that asset model—what does this community bring and what can we do more with it, and sharpen it?—is the necessary trust built up that enables the NLE and LLE relationship in school-to-school support actually to work effectively. That is very clearly documented in that piece of research.

Vic Goddard: The best thing I did to make my staff realise how lucky they are to work for the community we work with was to become an NLE myself. Then we became a national support school and my staff do go out into other settings that are more affluent than ours and less affluent than ours. They value the type of children. Our local MP said, "What I love about your school, Vic, is the quality of the character of the children in it". That is really important and our staff value that. By being outward-looking and engaging with other schools, my staff value the environment they work in more—the supportive nature of it, the absolute connection they have with the children we serve. It is all that sort of thing, so actually not being inward-looking and being more outward-looking is probably the best piece of advice I could give for any head in my sort of school: go out

and learn from the best. There is not one idea in my school that I have not stolen from somebody who had it much earlier than I ever had it. That is going to be the way to keep staff in my school. It is to allow them to experience other schools while being with me.

David Jones: I would also say that our parents whiff insincerity a mile away. If we do not respect our community, then they know that. We work with our community and we use figures from the working class and we talk about what it is, and those values that we sometimes underestimate. Recently, with it being 100 years since the First World War, and Mr Gove has been talking about how it might be taught and through which prisms it may be filtered, we looked at William Hackett, who was a miner in the First World War, a tunneller out in the Somme, and was given the VC for staying with a colleague for three days and eventually dying alongside that colleague. We talk to children about that type of experience because it is not about a white underclass; it is about proud working class traditions. If we believe that in our hearts, then we will show genuinely that we actually want to work with our communities.

Heath Monk: Talking to some of our participants at Future Leaders in relation to this inquiry, we asked them about what they do. On their first day we give them a big presentation with lots of data about underperformance of working class children and about the impact of that. I was really surprised how many of them had used that presentation and used that data with parents to say, “This is the importance of education. You may not have those same middle class aspirations about university, but here is actually what the situation looks like on a national picture”. They said that that has started dialogue with parents and between parents and children about what it is they do want to do, and not to not value, as Vic said, those people who just want a job and want to be a positive part of their community. It is for that to be a process of debate and dialogue between the school and the parents, and parents and children.

Chair: Thank you all very much indeed for giving evidence to us today. If, reflecting on today, you have any further thoughts, particularly around recommendations—they might be fairly small touches on the tiller—or ways, David, of tricking more money out of the system to spend in appropriate ways, or whatever it is, then please do be in touch and let us know. Thank you very much indeed.