

Written evidence submitted by Philip Davies MP

Education Committee Research: Educational Attainment of White Working-Class Boys

Recommendations

- Allow pupils from the age of 14 to be able to leave school on a part-time basis to take on an apprenticeship, take a vocational/non-academic course; complete work experience; take part in other training etc whilst attending school to continue core subjects - e.g. maths and English.
- Encourage as many apprenticeships/internships as possible in workplaces
- Introduce entrepreneurship into school curriculums to teach pupils about business opportunities and business management. Encourage pupils to engage with local successful business owners and consider mentoring of pupils with an interest in business. Seek sponsorship for investors to provide seed corn funding for business ideas
- Work to improve educational attainment at GCSE and A-level as this is an obvious barrier to higher education for working-class white boys. Consider summer schools/mentoring schemes/one on one tuition through external online providers e.g. mytutor.co.uk to achieve this.
- Encourage wider participation in vocational/non-academic further education and higher education to ensure better job prospects.
- Encourage **Enterprise Zones** to get involved with education opportunities - e.g. free schools/university technical colleges
- Share information on successful strategies from around the country to inspire and inform schools to improve the strategic models they are using to combat educational under-attainment. Consider setting up a forum for this purpose.
- Promote activities that foster a sense of community, meaning and purpose in the lives of some white working-class boys who might benefit from this: e.g. army/police cadets, scouting and other similar organisations.
- Settle a working definition of “white working-class” to create consistency between research and policy
- Create outreach programmes for both Universities and local authorities to promote and explain the benefits of University education to pupils at primary age and beyond
- Provide extra and specialised support for this group as they progress through the University admissions process as their unfamiliarity with the culture and format of interviews and personal statements is often a crucial barrier to entering University education
- Make comprehensive career guidance a compulsory element of the school curriculum from KS1
- Involve role models from the local community or the same socio-economic background in career advice education to expose pupils to successful people from similar backgrounds to themselves

Research

Library

Ref: Author: Paul Bolton at the House of Commons library; Date Published: 29 September 2020; Research collated at the request of Philip Davies MP and presented here with his permission

Findings:

- In 2018/2019 **14%** of white boys and **21%** of white girls formerly eligible for FSM had started higher education by age 19.
- These rates were less than half the average for all pupils (**43%**) and below the average for all FSM pupils (**26%**)
- Entry rates for FSM pupils in other ethnic groups were well above the average for all FSM pupils
- **Entry rates among Asian and Black FSM pupils into higher education were around three times higher**

- The proportion of white 'working class boys' going to higher education has generally increased overtime, from around **9.5%** in 2009/10. However, **the gap with the overall average has increased in absolute terms from around 24 percentage points in 2009/10 to 29 points in 2018/19.** (Source: [Widening participation in higher education: 2020, DfE](#)).

GCSE Attainment of FSM pupils

Boys eligible for FSM broken down by ethnicity				
State-funded schools, England, 2018/19				
	% achieving a "standard pass"	% achieving a "strong pass"	Average Attainment 8 score	Average Progress 8 score
White	32.2	15.9	29.3	-1.0
Mixed	39.7	21.3	33.5	-0.7
Asian	54.4	35.1	40.9	-0.1
Black	43.8	24.1	35.6	-0.4
Chinese	76.6	62.5	53.2	0.5
All boys eligible for FSM	37.3	20.0	32.0	-0.8

GCSE attainment of white pupils eligible for FSM broken down by gender				
State-funded schools, England, 2018/19				
	White boys eligible for FSM	White girls eligible for FSM	All pupils eligible for FSM	All state-funded pupils
% of pupils achieving a "standard pass"	32.2	40.5	41.4	64.6
% of pupils achieving a "strong pass"	15.9	20.5	22.5	43.2
Average Attainment 8 score	29.3	34.9	34.9	46.7
Average Progress 8 score	-0.98	-0.51	-0.53	-0.03

National Curriculum Assessments Attainment Data (Key Stage 2)

- On average, male pupils recorded as eligible for FSM had lower Key Stage 2 attainment compared to girls eligible for FSM in England. In 2019, **42%** of boys eligible for FSM achieved the expected standard in reading, writing, and maths, compared to **53%** of girls that were eligible.
- The national state-funded average was **65%**. (Source: Key Stage 2: 2019, DfE (National Local Authority and Regional Tables) (Key Stage 2: 2019, DfE (National Local Authority and Regional).

Definitions

A standard pass is achieving at least 9-4 grades (roughly equivalent to A*-C under the previous letter grade system) in English and Maths GCSE

A strong pass is achieving at least 9-5 grades in English and Maths GCSE

Race and Ethnic Disparities 2020

Ref: Commons Library Briefing; Number CBP 8960; Author: Doug Pyper; Date published: 25 September 2020; available at: <http://researchbriefingsintranet.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8960#fullreport>

Findings:

§2.2 Education:

Schools

Attainment at GCSE

The latest data on access to higher education is from the admissions service UCAS:

At the end of KS4 there are some key differences in headline measures of attainment across ethnic groups.

- In 2018/19, 64% of White state-funded school pupils attained a standard pass in both English and maths GCSEs (grades 9 to 4, broadly equivalent to the old A* to C grading). The ethnic group with the highest attainment were Chinese pupils, with 89% achieving this measure. Black pupils showed the lowest attainment, with 59% attaining a standard pass in English and maths (**this does not account for socio-economic disparities within racial categories**).
- Progress 8, which measures the progress a school makes with its students between the end of KS2 and KS4, shows that white pupils make the least progress of any major ethnic group.

Higher Education

- Just over two-thirds of Chinese 18-year olds started higher education in 2019 as did half of Asian 18-year olds.
- The entry rate for 18-year olds from Black and 'other' ethnic groups were also above average. Fewer than one in three 18-year olds from White backgrounds started higher education in 2019. This broad pattern has been in place for the last decade.
- The largest increase in entry rates over this period was among Black 18-year olds, the smallest among White 18 year olds.

Education and Attainment of White Working-Class Boys

Ref: Westminster Hall Debate Volume 671; Date published: 12 February 2020; available at: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-02-12/debates/7649792B-6CB3-48A9-872A-6CB6F2B9DCE8/EducationAndAttainmentOfWhiteWorking-ClassBoys>

- By age five, white boys from disadvantaged backgrounds are already **13%** behind disadvantaged black boys and **23%** behind disadvantaged Asian girls in their phonics
- Only around **a third of white working-class boys pass their maths and English GCSEs**; disadvantaged white working-class boys are **40% less likely to go into higher education** than disadvantaged black boys; and according to UCAS, **only 9% of these boys will go to university**

The Underrepresentation of White-Working Class Boys in Higher Education: The role of widening participation

Ref: Authors: Sam Baars, Ellie Mulcahy and Eleanor Bernardes; Date published: 2016; available at: <https://www.cfey.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/The-underrepresentation-of-white-working-class-boys-in-higher-education-baars-et-al-2016.pdf>;

Possible causes of the under-presentation of white-working class boys in HE:

- For white working-class boys, the fear that a university degree is a poor form of investment is a greater barrier than the upfront cost of studying
- White working-class families are less familiar with the realities and benefits of higher education, and tend not to see it as a likely option for their children, even if they do aspire for them to achieve it
- White working-class boys, whilst being well-represented in FE level apprenticeships, rarely use these as a springboard to a Higher Apprenticeship or university-based HE
- Widening participation is less well established in non-university HE which makes it harder for white working-class boys to access degree-level apprenticeships and competitive school leaver programmes
- Only 10% of the most disadvantaged white British males progress to higher education (HE). Not only is this significantly less than the most advantaged white males, it is also significantly less than the progression to HE of disadvantaged males from other ethnic backgrounds (Hillman and Robinson 2016).
- A wide array of proxies for 'working class' are used in research and practice, including free school meal eligibility, parental occupation, household income, parental uptake of state benefits, area-level deprivation, receipt of Education Maintenance Allowance and attendance at a low progression school
- When children are born 97% of all parents want them to go to university, but when these children reach 14, 53% of low-income parents and 81% of high-income parents believe the child will go to university (Education Committee Report, 2013), suggesting that 'low parental expectations' rather than 'low aspirations' may be a barrier to HE participation

Possible solutions to the under-presentation of white-working class boys in HE :

- Parents and carers play a critical role in supporting white working-class boys' decisions to enter HE. However, they are less likely than middle class parents to have knowledge and experience of HE. WP must therefore ensure that parents and carers are informed about all aspects of HE – from the benefits of academic study to the costs and conditions of student living.
- Early intervention is crucial to ensure that white working-class boys are prepared for, and open to the idea of, entering HE.
- Given the appeal but limited scale of work-based learning, universities should redouble their efforts to communicate the practical and vocational relevance of academic study, and to ensure that white working class boys are aware of the part-time and distance learning routes through which higher education can be completed
- ✓ The single most significant barrier to tackling the underrepresentation of white working-class boys in HE is the lack of an agreed definition of this target group, backed up by robust data

The Sutton Trust Class Differences: Ethnicity and Disadvantage

Ref: Authors: Dr Philip Kirby and Carl Cullinane 2016; Available at: https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Class-differences-report_References-available-online.pdf; Date published: November 2016

- White British FSM boys achieve the lowest grades at GCSE of any main ethnic group with just 24% achieving 5 A* - C grades at GCSE incl. English and Maths. White British FSM girls are also the lowest performing main female ethnic group with 32% achieving the same measure.
- 45% of white British pupils attend university after leaving school, the lowest rate of all ethnicities, excluding Gypsy/Roma.
- The attainment gap between non-FSM and FSM boys is 46 percentage points for white FSM British boys.
- The attainment gap (between FSM and non-FSM pupils) is also instructive for both genders. This shows that Irish pupils, both male and female, have the largest attainment gap – for Irish boys, this is 46 percentage points, far higher than the attainment gap for all pupils (33 percentage points). The smallest attainment gap for both genders is for Chinese pupils, with FSM and non-FSM pupils performing almost identically, although the number of Chinese pupils entitled to FSM is very small.

The largest attainment gaps for disadvantaged Irish and white British pupils suggest that there exists particular socio-economic segregation in these communities.

- Figures for 2015 show how FSM-eligible white British pupils have been left behind by FSM-eligible Asian pupils in the capital. Across London as a whole, 63.1% of Bangladeshi FSM pupils achieve five good GCSEs, compared to 58.6% of Indian and 55.5% of Pakistani. However, the average achieved by white British FSM pupils in London is just 32.9% on the same measure.

Possible causes:

- The popularity of private tutors amongst ethnic groups and the latter's concentration in urban areas such as London
- Within schools, improved outcomes for some groups has been linked to the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grants, which were introduced in 1999 and have now been subsumed into the Direct Schools Grant

Press Reports

The Telegraph:

Why are white working-class boys falling so far behind in our schools? Ref: 7 March 2019; Rosa Silverman; <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/family/schooling/white-working-class-boys-falling-far-behind-peers/>

- Girls outperform boys across the board, from primary school to GCSEs and A-levels. In 2017, 57 per cent of women went to university compared to 43 per cent of men, a gap that has grown in the past decade.

BBC Article:

University entrance: The “taboo” about who doesn’t go (ref: 27 September 2020; Sean Coughlan; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-54278727>)

- Graeme Atherton, director of the National Education Opportunities Network, produced research last year revealing that more than half of England's universities had fewer than 5% of poor white students in their intakes
- Only 2% of white low-income males get places in the top group of universities
- He has carried out research, so far unpublished, which will show that the numbers of universities with targets for disadvantaged white students are going down rather than up - from 27 institutions to four

Politics.co.uk:

What’s the problem with white working-class boys? (ref: date published: January 2018; Ally Fogg; <https://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2018/01/09/what-s-the-problem-with-white-working-class-boys>)

- Emphasising issues around race and women’s agendas has led to a gulf in information and understanding of the issues of white working boys
- Educational attainment is not a zero-sum game, quite the opposite

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