Key stage 4 performance, 2020

Quality and methodology information

26 November 2020

Contents

Introduction

This quality and methodology document provides an overview of the key stage 4 attainment data used in the production of the 2019/20 key stage 4 statistical release. It provides information on the methodology used to calculate pupil attainment, as well as information on the data sources, their coverage and quality, and how the data is validated and processed.

This document is based on the Office for National Statistics' [guidelines for measuring statistical quality](#).

Changes from the 2018-19 release

COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures, the summer [exam series was cancelled in 2020](#). Pupils scheduled to sit GCSE and A/AS level exams in 2020 were awarded either a centre assessment grade submitted by their teachers or their calculated grade using a model developed by Ofqual - whichever was the higher of the two. For further information on this process and arrangement for vocational and technical qualifications, please visit the link provided in the footnote[1].

The [government also announced](#) that it would not publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020, nor would attainment data from 2020 be used by Department for Education (DfE) or others to hold schools and colleges to account.

The data used in this release has therefore been adapted as follows:

- The schools checking exercise was cancelled this year, which means that the usual publication schedule of 'provisional' and 'revised' data does not apply. This release includes all characteristics and geographical breakdowns that are usually published in January's 'revised' release. This data has not been checked or confirmed by schools.

- All results from Summer 2020 are governed by best entry discounting rules, rather than first entry rules. This means that if a pupil was entered for an English exam twice in Summer 2020, then their best result will count in key stage 4 attainment data. Previously, the first entry grade would count as this adhered to school accountability policy. Given that 2020 attainment data is not being used to hold schools and colleges to account, the decision was made to show a pupil's best result in 2020, which will be more reflective of pupils' achievement. Where pupils have already entered for an exam within the same subject in 2019, first entry rules will still be used. For more on previous years' discounting methodology, read the [Discounting and Early Entry Guidance](#).

Due to the cancellation of exam assessment and the shift in methodology and checking as outlined above, this year's data should not be compared to previous years' attainment data.

GCSE reform

Following a phased introduction since 2017, GCSE exams taken in 2020 are now all reformed GCSEs graded on a 9-1 scale. Only reformed GCSEs are included in secondary school performance measures as they are introduced for each subject. A full list of the reformed subjects is included in **Annex H** of the [secondary accountability measures guidance](#) and this [timetable](#) set out by Ofqual.

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[1] For further information: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020

Performance measures

Due to the cancellation of the 2020 performance tables, headline performance measures will not be available on the school performance tables website for 2019/20 attainment data. Additionally, the department decided it is not appropriate to publish progress 8 measures. These are normally calculated by comparing a pupil's actual results to a set of expected results produced by a model based on national averages. The difference between the estimated results and the actual results are described as pupils making more or less progress than expected. However, in 2020 the vast majority of grades awarded were those submitted by schools and colleges. The difference between a result submitted by the centre to a result estimated by a model would have very little meaning. It would not be appropriate to consider such a difference as a measure of the progress made by a pupil.

However, for consistency and transparency, the remaining headline measures will be reported in this publication at local authority and national level:

• percentage of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate (EBacc entry)

• percentage of pupils achieving a grade 5 or above in English and maths (Attainment in English and maths)

• attainment across the same 8 qualifications (Attainment 8)

• English Baccalaureate Average Point Score (EBacc APS)

Methodology

The measures covered in the key stage 4 statistical release include only qualifications that (ordinarily) count towards the secondary performance tables. Following reforms to the performance tables in 2014, only a pupil's first attempt at a qualification has counted however, as noted on page 3, changes have been made to the data in 2020 to count a pupil's best entry in grades awarded in Summer 2020.

In Autumn 2020, there has been an exception exam series for GCSE and A-Level, to provide another opportunity for pupils who are unhappy with the grade given to them in the summer, and for pupils who were not able to have a grade awarded. The results of the GCSE series will be published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) in February 2021. Depending on the impact of these exams on 2020 results the department will decide whether a further publication is required to update the attainment breakdowns included in this release.

Following a phased introduction since 2017, all GCSEs included in performance measures are reformed GCSEs graded on a 9-1 scale. Once new reformed GCSEs (9 to 1) are introduced in a subject, unreformed GCSEs (A*to G), International GCSEs or level 1/level 2 certificates in the same subject no longer count in performance tables. This includes early entries in GCSEs that have been subsequently reformed.

A list of qualifications that count in the performance tables each year up to 2022 can be found here. Further information on methodology used in the performance tables can be found on the performance tables guidance page (Please note this has not been updated for 2020 due to the cancellation of school performance tables). A timeline of changes in key stage 4 attainment measures can be found in Annex A of the 2019 methodology document[2].

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2019-revised

For more information on coherence and comparability, see [section 7](#) of this document.

About the output

National and local authority (LA) information on pupil's attainment at the end of key stage 4 in 2019/20 for secondary school pupils in England is published in the following statistical release:

- Key stage 4 performance, 2020

GCSE and equivalent results for previous years can be found on the [Statistics: GCSEs (key stage 4)](#) section of gov.uk

School level information will not be published in 2020 but data for previous years can be found in the secondary school [performance tables](#).

Data sources

The key stage 4 datasets are compiled mainly using information matched together from three data sources:

i.   prior attainment records (key stage 2 results)

ii.   school census records

iii. qualification entries and results collected from awarding bodies

Attainment data for all pupils at the end of key stage 4 is collected from the awarding bodies by the department's contractor.

Relevance

This section describes the degree to which the statistics meet current and potential needs of the users.

The key strength of the data is that it is derived from an administrative data collection. This means that it can supply accurate data down to small geographical areas (such as school level, although in 2020, this level of breakdown will not be published). In addition, the data is merged with other administrative data held by the department (the school census) to provide detailed information on sub-groups of the school population.

Key users of this data remain as noted in the 2019 KS4 methodology document, although the reasons for using this data in 2020 will be different to previous years due to the lack of exams, accountability and the cancellation of school performance tables.

The changes made to the discounting process, to prioritise best entry over first, caters to the unique needs of users in 2020 by presenting actual pupil attainment in summer 2020 in most cases.

Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between the period to which the data refers and the publication of the estimates.

The timeline of the key stage 4 data cycle for 2020 is as follows:

May

Teachers submitted centre assessed grades to exam boards for pupils due to enter GCSE exams in 2020.

No June checking exercise took place in 2020.

August

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) collected this data from the awarding bodies. Prior to GCSE results week, it was decided that rather than Ofqual's proposed standardisation model alone, the higher of the modelled grade and the centre assessed grades submitted by teachers would be used.

Ofqual published GCSE results in the third week of August. Pupils received their results at the same time as previous years but delivery to the department's contractor was delayed due to the late changes in grading policy.

September

Due to the delay, the department's contractor received results from the awarding bodies in September, rather than August (data is collected throughout the year but the majority is collected in the summer).

No September checking exercise took place.

October

The department received matched and processed data from the contractor.

November

Statistical release containing national and local authority level data broken down by pupil characteristics is published.

Pupils who do not feel their final grade reflects their ability or who were not able to receive a grade in the summer, had the opportunity to sit an exam in November.

January

Release of GCSE English Language and Mathematics results to candidates from the autumn series of exams.

February

Release of all other GCSE results to candidates from the autumn series of exams.

The department's contractor receives these autumn results data.

Spring

Updated data for 2020, including the results from autumn exams, is provided to the department, who will consider whether a further statistical release, inclusive of changes made due to autumn results, is warranted.

Key stage 4 performance data has been routinely published and has followed an established process for years. The process for 2020 is unique in comparison following the unprecedented changes required due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on the 'usual' cycle, please see the KS4 methodology document for the 2019 release.[2]

Punctuality refers to the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication.

The proposed month of publication is announced on gov.uk at least twelve months in advance and precise dates are announced in the same place at least four weeks prior to publication. In 2020, pre-announced dates were changed, with parts of the publication cancelled. These were announced on gov.uk, alongside the reasons behind the change. Once a new schedule was established, new publication dates were available.

How the output is created

Data on pupils' attainment is collected from awarding bodies via the department's contractor. This information is linked with information on pupil characteristics taken from the school census and information on pupils' prior attainment.

The schools checking exercise was cancelled in 2020 which means the output is not created with approved school amendments from the checking exercise and therefore, there is no requirement to publish 'provisional' and 'revised' data.

Data added from other sources

Information on pupil characteristics is taken mainly from the school census. More detail can be found in the Pupil characteristics definitions and historical changes section in this document.

Accuracy

Accuracy describes the closeness between an estimated result and the (unknown) true value.

Data coverage

The target population for the key stage 4 statistical collection is all pupils at schools or other education providers in England who are at the end of key stage 4, typically those pupils starting the academic year aged 15.

In 2019, the schools checking exercise ran in June and September, allowing schools to make amendment requests to numbers on roll (in June for state-funded schools only, in September for independent and FE colleges) and results (in September). The schools checking exercise was cancelled this year which means that any amendment requests to number on roll have not been made by schools. In 2019, schools had over 6,000 amendments accepted during the June and September checking exercise.

Some external candidates were not awarded a grade in Summer 2020 because they were unable to provide sufficient evidence to their exam centre that would enable them to receive a centre assessed grade. Candidates in this position will need to sit exams to get their grades, either in the autumn or in summer 2021. Therefore, this cohort are not included in the data published in this statistical release.

Measurement error

Measurement error is the difference between the actual value of a quantity and the value obtained by a measurement. Repeating the measurement will reduce the random error caused by the accuracy of the measuring instrument but not any systemic error caused by incorrect calibration of the measuring instrument.

KS4 examinations in 2020 were not sat by pupils or marked by examiners. For further information on how grades were awarded in 2020, including how vocational and technical awards were dealt with can be found on gov.uk.[3]

Validation and quality assurance of source data

Key stage 4 results are made available to schools on results day: in 2020 this was 20 August. This data is then passed from the awarding bodies to the department's contractor who carries out checks on the data (for example checking the validity of Qualification Numbers). Depending on the volume and nature of discrepancies, the contractor reports these back to awarding organisations for review. Once these checks are completed the data is uploaded onto the contractor's main database and further checks are carried out.

After the contractor has finished processing the data, it is then passed onto the department for use in the statistical release.

The schools checking exercise process helps to minimise data errors by giving schools the opportunity to correct any inconsistencies such as matching problems or missing results. The lack of schools checking exercise in 2020 may therefore lead to a small reduction in accuracy of results.

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[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020#awarding-grades-in-2020

Data processing

Key stage 4 exam data received from awarding bodies is combined with pupil characteristics from the school census and prior attainment by the department's contractor. Records are matched, using identifiers such as surname, forename, date of birth, UPN (Unique Pupil Number), gender and postcode. This successfully matches around 98 per cent of results.

At every stage in the data cycle, the department checks all calculations used in the production of the figures. The department carries out checks on the data to ensure that the files produced by the contractor comply with the specified format and contain the correct information. All indicators at school level, local authority level and national level are re-derived to ensure the contractor's systems are programmed correctly.

The entire process is subject to a 'dry run' during the summer. This involves producing a dummy dataset, from the previous year's dataset, which conforms to how the current year's data will be supplied (for example if new qualifications have been introduced, then dummy data would be added to last year's data to simulate these). This dummy dataset is used to test the contractor's systems and the departments' checking processes. This allows potential problems to be resolved prior to the receipt of the live data.

Statistics production

All data files in the statistical release are produced by one person and quality assured by another. Any discrepancies in the data produced are discussed and resolved prior to publication. Examples of quality assurance are provided in the box below.

Examples of further quality assurance

Comparisons with previous year's figures to identify any large, unexpected changes

Check totals are consistent across tables

Check patterns in the data (for example expected differences between subjects, high or low performing local authorities)

Check figures against those produced for the performance tables[4]

Reliability

The extent to which a figure changes over different versions of the same data.

As noted in the methodology document for 2019, the data can change very slightly between the usual 'provisional' and 'revised' schedule due to:

- outcomes of the appeals process where schools ask for reviews for one or more of their pupils in the belief that a clerical error has been made or the mark scheme has not been correctly applied
- late results and re-marks – where results were received after the data was provided in August to the contractor by awarding organisations
- changes resulting from requests from schools to remove pupils who have recently arrived from overseas, have been admitted following a permanent exclusion for another school, if the pupil is not

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[4] Although performance tables data is not published in 2020, it still provides good quality assurance and comparison checks for data in this statistical release.

at the end of key stage 4, if the pupil has permanently left England, the pupil has left the school before exams or the pupil is deceased

The national figures usually change by no more than plus or minus one percentage point or one decimal point between provisional, revised and final data. Changes in the local authority and school level figures can be slightly larger. Figures do not typically change at a national level between revised and final data and changes in local authority and school level data are small.

These changes will not be reflected in this release due to the cancellation of the checking exercise and the lack of an appeals process due to exams marking. Figures reported in this release do not include external candidates, or the final grades of those who wish to sit exams in Autumn.

Disclosure Control

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality. We assess our statistics with reference to the National Statistician's Guidance on Confidentiality of Official Statistics and guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to establish the risk of disclosure and its associated impact and suppress the data accordingly.

For the 2020 statistical release, it has been assessed and determined that suppression should take place only where an aggregation covers only one school. Where a geographical area contains only one school (for example in the Isles of Scilly local authority) the statistics for that area, and by extension the individual school, have been suppressed. This is in line with the announcement that school level data would not be published using the summer 2020 exam grades awarded. Where there are combinations of pupil characteristics (e.g. girls by ethnic group Chinese) that result in only one pupil being in the data for that geographical area, this information has not been suppressed.

Pupil characteristics definitions and historical changes

The pupil characteristics reported in the statistical release are:

- gender
- free school meal (FSM) eligibility
- disadvantaged pupils
- ethnicity
- first language
- special educational needs (SEN)

Gender

The gender of the pupil is recorded as male or female on the school census. In exceptional circumstances a school may be unsure as to which gender should be recorded for a particular pupil. The advice from the department is to record the gender according to the wishes of the pupil and/or parent.

Free school meals

Free school meals (**FSM)** is a binary indicator variable that states whether a pupil's family have claimed eligibility for free school meals as reported at the time of the annual spring school census. Parents are able to claim free school meals if they receive a qualifying benefit.

The FSM variable does not relate to pupils who actually received free school meals but those who are eligible to receive free school meals. Pupils not eligible for free school meals or unclassified pupils are described as 'All other pupils' in the statistical release.

The list of qualifying benefits has changed over time, but it is currently:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

In 2015, FSM information was not available for pupils at the end of key stage 4 who attended further education colleges with provision for 14 to 16 year olds. This is because FE colleges are not required to return the school census. These pupils were therefore omitted from FSM breakdowns and classed as unclassified. From 2016, FSM data for further education colleges have been obtained from Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data, using variables that identify learner's free school meal eligibility.

Free school meals are available to pupils who attend sixth forms attached to a maintained school, as long as the course of study began before the pupil reached age 18. Free school meal eligibility relates to those who meet the eligibility criteria and make a claim.

From September 2009 to July 2011, three local authorities participated in a pilot to provide free school meals to maintained primary school children. Durham and Newham provided universal free school meals to all primary pupils, and Wolverhampton extended the current eligibility criteria to include all families in receipt of Working Tax Credit, for primary and secondary pupils.

For the pilot authorities mentioned above, care should be taken when comparing January 2010 and 2011 free school meal data with previous years' data and subsequent data. It appears that in 2012, Newham continued providing universal free school meals to all their primary pupils.

In the academic year 2011/12, due to local area free school meal initiatives, there was both an under and an over recording of free school meal eligibility in some local authorities. In total, the results from 77 schools were affected by this issue, including 70 from Southwark, 4 from Bromley and 1 each from Walsall, Bradford and North Somerset. FSM status has since been corrected for Southwark and therefore final 2012 data reported in this release will differ to provisional 2012 figures. The impact on national figures as a result of these mis-recordings in 2012 is considered negligible. This issue was also apparent in data back to 2008 but the impact on national and local figures for these years is considered negligible and no revisions to FSM status have been made.

Disadvantaged pupils

The **disadvantaged pupil** breakdowns presented for years 2012 to 2014 are defined as pupils known to be eligible for FSM in the previous six years[5] as indicated in any termly or annual school census, pupil referral unit (PRU) or alternative provision (AP) census or are looked after children for more than 6 months during the year.

From 2015, in addition to the above, they include children who were looked after for at least one day during the year, or who have ceased to be looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because of adoption, a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order.

Information on children looked after (CLA) is collected in the web-based SSDA903 return by local authorities in England. Information in the CLA database is collected at individual level and since 2005-06 includes the Unique Pupil Number (UPN) field. This data is collected annually between April and June for the previous financial year. Once the data has been collected and checked, an extract is produced which is sent to our matching contractors for linking to the performance tables. The UPN is the main field used for matching purposes but other information about the child is also used such as date of birth, gender, ethnicity and responsible local authority.

Local authorities are required to update the database every year, including making amendments to previous years' records where there have been changes.

Further information on looked after children and the data items collected in the SSDA903 return can be found in the [looked after children statistical release series](#).

In 2011, the pupil premium was introduced for the first time and the definition for disadvantaged pupils was any pupil known to be eligible for FSM on census date or were looked after children for more than 6 months.

In 2015, disadvantaged information was not available for pupils at the end of key stage 4 who attended further education colleges with provision for 14 to 16-year olds. This is because FE colleges are not required to return the school census. These pupils were therefore omitted from disadvantage breakdowns and classed as unclassified. From 2016, disadvantage data for further education colleges have been obtained from Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data, using variables that identify learner's free school meal eligibility, and pupil premium funding eligibility (which gives the Adopted from Care element of disadvantage). Information on children looked after for pupils in FE colleges comes from the same return as that for other pupils (SSDA903).

Ethnic group

Ethnicity is broken down into two main variables: a minor grouping variable and a major grouping variable. Those pupils who have been classified according to their ethnic group and are other than white British are defined as minority ethnic.

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[5] Up to and including the Spring census 2019

This census data item is provided for all pupils aged five and over as at the previous 31 August. Where the information has not yet been collected then this is recorded as not yet obtained. If a pupil or parent has refused to give the information, then 'refused' is recorded and returned.

Ethnicity is a personal awareness of a common cultural identity. Ethnicity relates to how a person feels and not necessarily how they are perceived by others. It is a subjective decision as to which category a person places themselves in and therefore cannot be used to infer any other characteristics such as religion, country of origin etc. Ethnicity monitoring advice is available from the department's website. Table 1 below outlines the main ethnicity categories and descriptions used:

Table 1: Ethnicity categories and descriptions

Main category	Code	Description
White	WBRI	White – British
White	WIRI	White – Irish
White	WIRT	Traveller of Irish Heritage
White	WOTH	Any Other White Background
White	WROM	Gypsy / Roma
Mixed	MWBC	White and Black Caribbean
Mixed	MWBA	White and Black African
Mixed	MWAS	White and Asian
Mixed	MOTH	Any Other Mixed Background
Asian or Asian British	AIND	Indian
Asian or Asian British	APKN	Pakistani
Asian or Asian British	ABAN	Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British	AOTH	Any Other Asian Background
Black or Black British	BCRB	Black Caribbean
Black or Black British	BAFR	Black – African
Black or Black British	BOTH	Any Other Black Background
Chinese	CHNE	Chinese
Other Ethnic Groups	OOTH	Any Other Ethnic Group
Refused	REFU	Refused
Information Not Yet Obtained	NOBT	Information Not Yet Obtained

English as a first language

"**First Language**" is the language to which a child was initially exposed during early development and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or in the community. It does not mean that pupils are necessarily fluent in a language other than English or cannot speak English.

This is a compulsory data item for all pupils. The school must not ascribe a specific language to the pupil. This information must come from the parent / guardian or pupil.

Codes ENB (not known but believed to be English) and OTB (not known but believed to be other than English) are used only where all the following conditions apply:

- pupil's first language is not known with absolute certainty

- parents have not responded to enquiries

- school can judge with a high degree of confidence whether the pupil's language is English or not

Where a parent / guardian or pupil declines to provide a first language, it is recorded as 'REF' (refused).

Where a pupil's first language is other than English - that is: where the pupil has been exposed to a language other than English during early development and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or in the community - schools may record specific languages from the extended language codes or continue to use the codes used in their software[6].

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The **SEN** variable indicates whether a pupil has learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age.

From 2015, pupils with SEN were categorised as follows:

SEN support - Extra or different help is given from that provided as part of the school's usual curriculum. The class teacher and SEN coordinator (SENCO) may receive advice or support from outside specialists. This category replaces the former 'school action' and 'school action plus' categories.

Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan - A pupil has an EHC plan when a formal assessment has been made. Prior to 2019, this included instances where pupil had a statement of SEN however this was discontinued, and statements were transferred to EHC plans.

Pre-2015, the tables contain SEN data as per the definition below:

Pupils with special educational needs comprise those at school action, school action plus or with statements of SEN:

School Action – where extra or different help is given, from that provided as part of the school's usual curriculum.

School Action Plus – where the class teacher and the SENCO receive advice or support from outside specialists (the specialist teacher, an educational psychologist, a speech and language therapist or other health professionals).

Statement – a pupil has a statement of SEN when a formal assessment has been made. A document setting out the child's needs and the extra help they should receive is in place.

Pupil SEN provision

This data item is collected in the census collections for all pupils on roll on census day. Pupil SEN provision types and their codes are outlined in table 5.

Table 2: Valid provision types under the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25

Code	Description

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[6] Language codes can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/find-a-school-census-code#language

N	No Special Educational Need
A	School action
P	School action plus
S E (from 2015) K (from 2015)	Statement (discontinued 2019) Education, health and care (EHC) plan SEN support

Pupil SEN type

The pupil SEN type field records the nature of a pupil's special educational need. The primary need and, if appropriate, their secondary need should be recorded. In 2015, a new code entitled 'SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need' was introduced which was aimed at those transferring from school action to SEN support but were yet to be formally assessed for their type of need. The previous 'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties' (BESD) has been replaced with 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health' (SEMH) those with BESD in 2014 are not all expected to have transferred to SEMH from 2015. These changes are outlined in table 6.

Table 3: Pupil SEN type

Code	Description
SPLD	Specific learning difficulty
MLD	Moderate learning difficulty
SLD	Severe learning difficulty
PMLD	Profound & multiple learning difficulty
SLCN	Speech, language and communication needs
HI	Hearing impairment
VI	Visual impairment
MSI	Multi-Sensory impairment
PD	Physical disability
ASD	Autistic spectrum disorder
OTH SEMH (from 2015) NSA (from 2015)	Other difficulty / disability Social, emotional and mental health SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need

Pupil SEN type ranking indicates the rank order of a pupil's special educational need, recorded in Pupil SEN type. The most significant, or primary need, is ranked as 1 and the secondary as 2. Only two rankings are collected in the school census and no two needs are given the same ranking. The statistical release and school performance tables report only the primary need.

Until 2014, this data item was collected in the spring census only for all pupils on roll on census day with an SEN Provision of P (School Action Plus or Early Years Action Plus) or S (Statement). From 2015, this coverage was extended to collect type of need for all pupils with a statement, an education, health and care plan, on school action plus or on SEN support. SEN support replaces school action and school action plus. It is anticipated that a history of provision should be recorded within a school's management information system (MIS).

Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)

IDACI is provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The index is based on Lower-Layer Super Output Areas in England defined by 2011 census data. The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area).

IDACI is a subset of the Income Deprivation Domain of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Each LSOA is given a score showing the percentage of pupils aged under 16 that live in families that are income deprived, this means they are in receipt of certain benefits and their equivalised income is below 60% of median before housing costs. Further information about IDACI can be found at English indices of deprivation 2015.

The IDACI bands used in this publication are based on 2015 IDACI scores. IDACI band breakdowns for 2011 to 2014 are based on 2010 IDACI scores, breakdowns for 2008, 2009 and 2010 are based on 2007 IDACI scores and IDACI tables for 2007 and earlier are based on 2004 IDACI scores, so care should be taken when using IDACI scores from earlier years.

In the past, the DfE has used figures for children who reside in the 30 per cent most deprived lower super output areas in England (IDACI deciles 0-10, 10-20 and 20-30) as a marker for deprivation. This target was introduced following the 2004 Spending Review and was a recognised way of identifying deprived wards. These figures are no longer used to measure progress against Government Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets and have not been since 2008.

Geography

Geographic data, which is matched to the department's data collections and used in all official statistics, is provided by ONS Geography, a business unit of ONS that provides the geographic data and services that support the production of high quality statistics.

The ONS's presentation guidance for administrative areas sets out the recommended standard for presenting and publishing statistics at regional and sub-regional levels in the UK ONS guidance: presenting statistics for administrative areas.

The geography structures and codes used in the production of pupil characteristic statistical releases can be downloaded from the ONS geography portal.

Local authority

Local authority (LA) data show the LA that maintains the school which returned a pupil's attainment record for the relevant key stage. This data is collected as part of the key stage collection.

The current local government structure has 150 'upper tier' authorities, which all have the function of local education authority.

City of London does not have any state funded secondary schools, therefore there is no attainment data provided for this local authority in this release.

Changes to the new merged unitary of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Dorset have all been operative from 1 April 2019. Data for these local authorities from 2019 onwards is not comparable to previous years.

School location and pupil residency

Data showing attainment by either school location or pupil residency are created by matching the relevant school or pupil postcode to a cut of the National Statistics Postcode Lookup (NSPL), an ONS product available on the ONS open geography portal. Since 2012 the February cut of the NSPL has been used annually to match on geography fields. Prior to 2012 the May version of the NSPL was used.

The local authority district is an example of a geographic field matched from the National Statistics Postcode Lookup (NSPL). Tables are included in the pupil characteristic statistical releases showing the LAD based on either the pupil's postcode or the school's postcode (key stage 2 and key stage 4 only).

The term 'local authority district (LAD)' refers to the lower tier of local government. This includes non-metropolitan districts, metropolitan districts, unitary authorities and London boroughs. Structural changes to local government in England were effected on 1 April 2009, whereby a number of new unitary authorities were created in parts of the country that previously operated a 'two-tier' system of counties and districts. The current structure consists of 326 'lower tier' authorities (LADs).

Further changes to the LADs of St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield have been operative from 1 April 2012. Changes to the unitary authority of Northumberland, the metropolitan district of Gateshead and the non-metropolitan districts of East Hertfordshire and Stevenage, have all been operative from 1 April 2013.

Codes are shown in the tables as those relevant to the district at the start of the academic year reported.

Further information on local government restructuring can be found here.

Rurality

The rural-urban classification of postcodes for 2020 is based on the 2011 classification of output areas released in August 2013. Census output areas forming settlements with populations of over 10,000 are defined as urban, which can be further sub-divided into three broad morphological types based on the predominant settlement component. The remainder are defined as one of three rural types.

Further information can be found at 2011 rural urban classification.

Coherence and comparability

Coherence is the degree to which the statistical processes, by which two or more outputs are generated, use the same concepts and harmonised methods. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time, region or other domain.

We use the same methodology to produce the data within our statistical releases and the school performance tables. We also use a dataset produced at the same time for the performance tables and the statistical release. As a result, the national and local authority figures included in the statistical releases and the performance tables will match when comparing measures with the same definition. Data used to produce performance tables was not published this year but it was still used to validate the statistical release data and provide an extra consistency check.

The majority of attainment data in this release is based on teacher assessment and should not be compared to previous years' data which was produced from grades awarded as a result of pupils' sitting exams. Other issues noted previously in this document including changes to discounting practices, exclusion of external candidates and cancellation of the checking exercise mean that 2020 attainment data is unique and direct comparisons to other years are not possible.

There have been a number of other changes to key stage 4 data which make comparisons over time difficult. These, and further information on the extent to which school type groupings can be compared over time, can be found in the 2019 KS4 methodology document[2].

Got a query? Like to give feedback?

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