



Government response to Education Committee report “The forgotten: how White working-class pupils have been let down, and how to change it”

October 2021



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Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Education
by Command of Her Majesty

October 2021



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Government Response to the Education Committee Report: “The forgotten: how White working-class pupils have been let down, and how to change it”

1. The Education Committee published its report, ‘The forgotten: how White working-class pupils have been let down, and how to change it’ on 22 June 2021. This document sets out the Government’s response to the Committee’s report. The Committee report did not number its recommendations to set them apart from the Committee’s conclusions but they are identified by italic text in the report. The numbering of recommendations below is based on the order they appear in the report with the relevant paragraph number in the report outlined underneath in the response.

Introduction

2. The Government welcomes the Education Committee report on White working-class disadvantage following its inquiry which began on 17 April 2020. We have considered the findings and recommendations of the report carefully and have responded to all the Committee’s recommendations below.
3. All our education reforms since 2010 have been driven by the objective of ensuring high academic standards for all and closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged¹ pupils and their more advantaged peers. We published our Schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, six months after the 2010 General Election, which emphasized the crucial role that schools can play in raising pupil attainment, particularly for those from poorer families. It set out the Government’s plan for raising standards through improving teaching quality, introducing rigour to the National Curriculum, granting head teachers greater autonomy over how to run their schools, reforming the accountability system, and giving schools more money to support poorer pupils through the Pupil Premium.
4. Early literacy development and communication and language skills are vital to school readiness as well as outcomes in later life, and high-quality early education and childcare is linked to positive outcomes for children and their families. Over the past decade the Government has therefore introduced and increased access to free early education in England so that families are now eligible for 15 or 30 hours a week of free early education for their 3- and 4-year-old children. Families on universal credit and with an income under £15,400 a

¹ [Disadvantaged pupils](#) are those who are at least one of the following: eligible for Free School Meals in the last 6 years (eligibility on census day); looked after continuously for 1 day or more and aged 4-15; adopted from care. This excludes children looked after under an agreed series of short-term placements.

year after tax are also eligible for 15 hours a week of early education for their 2-year-old children.

5. The Government has also committed to championing Family Hubs as a place for parents to go with their children to access help that might otherwise be hard to find. In the long term, our ambition for Family Hubs is to improve a range of important family outcomes, such as family relationships and stability, educational attendance and attainment, health, and employment outcomes.
6. Since 2010 Government has been fundamentally reforming the post-16 education system to ensure that it can meet the needs of the labour market. This has included significant reforms to apprenticeships to improve their quality and put employers at the heart of the programme. We've introduced the apprenticeship levy to encourage sustained employer investment in high-quality apprenticeships training, and industry designed apprenticeship standards to support employers develop the skilled workforces they need. In 2016 following the independent panel recommendations on technical education led by Lord Sainsbury, we launched the Post 16 Skills Plan which set out our vision for our radical reforms to technical education through the introduction of T levels. In 2021 we launched the White Paper, *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth* which is focused on giving people the skills they need, in a way that suits them, so they can get great jobs in sectors the economy needs and boost productivity.
7. A decade on, we have made huge progress, as we set out in our written evidence to the Committee last year.
 - We have overhauled the National Curriculum, replacing it with one that makes sure children are taught the essential building blocks of knowledge. We introduced the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) performance measure, incentivising schools to teach a broad and balanced academic curriculum, and replaced public examinations that were devalued by grade inflation and no longer had public confidence. We have transformed the way in which children are taught reading and mathematics and changed primary assessments to reflect this.
 - We have reformed school accountability to move away from threshold measures and instead focus on the progress that pupils make, encouraging schools to focus on lower-attaining pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and allowing high-performing schools with a challenging intake to demonstrate that their pupils are making positive progress. Alongside this we reformed school inspections, removing the 'Satisfactory' judgement and making it clear that all children deserve a 'Good' school as a minimum.
 - We have driven improvements in the support we give our teachers throughout their careers by making sure teacher training and professional development is based on the best available evidence and delivered by high quality national

providers. This includes the introduction of the Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework, the Early Career Framework reforms and a reformed suite of National Professional Qualifications, including new specialist NPQs.

- Through our academies programme, we have provided more autonomy to school leaders to respond better to local need and the needs of their pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Over two-thirds of our academies (72%) are converter academies, many of whom have become system leaders within academy trusts by helping other schools to improve. There are also over 2,500 sponsored academies, with the majority of these having been previously underperforming Local Authority (LA) maintained schools. Sponsored academies that have been open for longer have made substantial gains in performance. Some of the previously most challenging schools have been turned around, so that they have caught up with, and sometimes overtaken, otherwise similar LA schools.
 - Within the academies programme, the Free Schools programme was set up to raise school standards and increase the choice of good school places for parents. Recent waves have targeted the areas of the country with the greatest need for good school places.
 - We introduced the National Funding Formula (NFF) to ensure that funding is distributed on the basis of schools' and pupils' characteristics, and targeted to areas with the greatest numbers of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. We also introduced and increased access to free early education, including funding specifically targeted to benefit disadvantaged children. Furthermore, we created the Pupil Premium in 2011 to provide schools with additional funding to help them improve the academic attainment and wider outcomes of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, accompanied by accountability measures that help ensure schools use the funding to benefit this target group.
 - In post-16 education, we introduced T levels – a high-quality technical alternative to A levels for those young people who do not wish to follow the academic A level route. We are also expanding traineeships which are aimed at young people who are not quite ready for work or an apprenticeship, providing them with quality training to develop their skills and experience in order to enter the labour market. We are supporting disadvantaged students to access apprenticeships through additional payments for younger apprentices, the co-investment waiver for the smallest employers, our work with ASK in schools including in deprived areas, and our work to support progression from traineeships into apprenticeships.
8. We have started to see the impact of these reforms. The success of the approach taken by the Government has contributed to the proportion of schools rated Good or Outstanding rising to 86% from 68% in 2010. This means tens of thousands more children are receiving the education they deserve, and that most

disadvantaged pupils now attend Good or Outstanding schools, giving them better prospects for a successful adult life.

9. We have seen an increase in top grades for all students at GCSE and A level, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Since 2011, we have narrowed the attainment gap between this group and their peers – by 13% at age 11 and 9% at age 16 – up until the pandemic which regrettably set back our progress. The Government has therefore committed to an ambitious, long-term education recovery plan to help children and young people catch up on education lost during the pandemic. We have announced funding of over £3bn since June 2020 to support education recovery for children and young people in schools, colleges and early years settings, with much of this funding weighted towards schools with more disadvantaged pupils.
10. When schools were forced to close during lockdown, we invested over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. We supported schools to get set up on a digital platform, and partnered with leading mobile network operators to provide free data to disadvantaged families.
11. We are under no illusions, however, that we still have much to do. As the Committee's report set out, White pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to lag behind. There are many reasons for this, but we know that the best way to address this is to continue to strive to ensure that every child has access to a great education, and we remain committed to levelling the playing field to make sure every child gets a world-class education, whatever their background and wherever they live.
12. There are some who would suggest that the solution to tackling educational underachievement is to do something different for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as lowering our expectations on studying the core academic subjects or changing the curriculum to make it more 'relevant'. The Government rejects this wholeheartedly. A great education for wealthier pupils is a great education for disadvantaged pupils, of all races and ethnicities. Our approach is therefore to set the highest standards for all schools and to ensure they help all of their pupils to achieve their full potential, regardless of background.
13. We are confident in this approach because our reforms since 2010 have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve the highest standards for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools such as Dixons Trinity Academy in Bradford and Michaela Community School in Brent are achieving remarkable results with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils, due to their focus on a knowledge-rich curriculum, effective teaching, good pupil behaviour and high expectations.

14. Our challenge is to make sure that our education reforms continue to spread and level up across all parts of the country. We must double down and continue to push for equal access to an education of the highest standard for all pupils. This includes helping more schools to become academies as part of strong families of schools in trusts with strong leadership, supporting schools to ensure the Pupil Premium has maximum impact to specifically help those from disadvantaged backgrounds and delivering our tutoring revolution to boost educational recovery, aimed at those who need it most.
15. And this year we launched our White Paper: *Skills for Jobs*, which is focused on giving people the skills they need, in a way that suits them, so they can get great jobs in sectors the economy needs and boost productivity.

Response to the Committee's recommendations

1. Disadvantage is a gradient, not an 'either-or' of FSM-eligible or 'advantaged'. To support disadvantaged White pupils the Government must refine its key measures of disadvantage and widen public access to its statistics. This should be done in a way that protects pupil anonymity as a priority, for example by redacting figures where they reflect very small groups of pupils. Particularly importantly, the Department must consistently publish statistics that are as locally targeted as possible, at least at local authority or constituency level. These statistics must underpin the targeting of all interventions to those communities that most need them. In the short term, the Department should learn from the former Children's Commissioner's approach to capturing disadvantage by including statistics on the length of time children are FSM-eligible, and how other forms of disadvantage (for example, SEND, care experience, and local levels of deprivation) interact with this status. In the long term, the Department should work with other parts of Government to build a more sophisticated measure of how poverty affects children. This could draw on initial work by the Social Metrics Commission to develop a metric of poverty that provides a better understanding of the nature of poverty by drawing on lived experience and identifying those least able to make ends meet.

(Response to recommendation 1, paragraph 19)

16. We recognise that eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) is an imperfect measure of disadvantage. We are continuously looking at our FSM data and are working closely with DWP to see where improvements can be made.
17. The FSM Universal Credit protections remain in place, meaning that anyone claiming FSM during the period in which Universal Credit continues to roll out will retain their eligibility and access to free meals, even if their circumstances change and their income rises. These protections also apply to Pupil Premium and deprivation funding, meaning access to these funding elements is also retained.
18. FSM statistics are published at national, regional, and local authority level. FSM is also published as a 'characteristic' in other releases, including attainment statistics. While we endeavour to publish as much data as possible to meet user needs, FSM is often not split by ethnicity. We have also published the disadvantage gap index at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4, which is a useful way of comparing over time the gap between disadvantaged children, using the same definition as Pupil Premium eligibility, and all other children.
19. Further, we have introduced the Explore Education Statistics dissemination platform, which provides users with easier access to underlying data.
20. The statistics that are published are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet the needs of users. The statistics producers work closely with policy analysis and policy teams to ensure the statistics are aligned with policy developments. We will of course look to build any changes in policy into our suite of official statistics, and at that point we will look at how far our statistics break down disadvantage and whether we could go further, as well as considering whether to commission new research around more sophisticated poverty measures.

2. Schools should consider whether the promotion of politically controversial terminology, including White Privilege, is consistent with their duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Department should take steps to ensure that young people are not inadvertently being inducted into political movements when what is required is balanced, age-appropriate discussion and a curriculum that equips young people to thrive in diverse and multi-cultural communities throughout their lives and work. The Department should issue clear guidance for schools and other Department-affiliated organisations receiving grants from the Department on how to deliver teaching on these complex issues in a balanced, impartial and age-appropriate way.

(Response to recommendation 2, paragraph 29)

21. Schools play a crucial role in helping pupils understand the world around them and their place within it, and in teaching about respect for other people and for difference. Schools must not promote partisan political views and should take steps to ensure the balanced treatment of political issues. Schools should not teach contested theories and opinions as fact, and this includes contested views about 'white privilege'. Political issues relating to racial and social justice can be taught about in a balanced and factual manner, just as pupils are often taught about a range of different views on other topics.
22. These are important principles to uphold, and we have already begun working with the sector to develop guidance which will help schools understand and meet their duties in this area. This guidance will support schools to teach about complex political issues, in line with their legal duties on political impartiality, covering factors including age-appropriateness and the use of external agencies.
23. It is important that teachers can teach about sensitive and complex issues with confidence that they are doing so in line with schools' legal duties. Schools continue to play an important role in supporting pupils to understand the society in which they are growing up, promoting tolerance and respect for other people and for difference.

The extent of the achievement gap for disadvantaged White pupils

3. The Government must develop a more rounded view of what children need and what positive outcomes for children are as we recover from the pandemic. Specifically, with regard to mental health, we believe that the Department must fast-track its commitments under the 2018 Green Paper, particularly with regard to ensuring all schools have a designated mental health lead or counsellor. All catch-up plans, including enrichment activities and longer school days, must include a specific role for activities that focus on mental health and wellbeing. These plans must also be targeted to those areas of the country where the disadvantage gap is currently greatest, particularly outside London.

(Response to recommendation 3, paragraph 45)

24. The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people remains a priority for the Government, both in responding to the current pressures felt by the pandemic and in the longer term.

25. The Government remains committed to our green paper delivery programme, which includes introducing new Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) linked to schools and colleges, incentivising all schools and colleges to identify and train a senior mental health lead, and testing approaches to faster access to specialist NHS mental health support.
26. MHSTs are intended to provide early intervention on mild to moderate issues, as well as helping staff within a school or college setting to provide a 'whole school approach' to mental health and wellbeing. There are now over 280 MHSTs set up or in training, which will deliver the NHS Long Term Plan commitment to reach 20 – 25% of pupils in England a year early in 2022. In March 2021, we announced a £79million to boost children and young people's mental health support, which will increase the number of MHSTs in schools and colleges to cover around 35% of pupils in England by 2023.
27. We have also announced £9.5 million funding for the 2021/22 academic year, for up to 7,800 schools and colleges in England to train a senior mental health lead, as part of our commitment to offer this to all state schools and colleges by 2025. The training will equip senior mental health leads with the knowledge and skills to introduce or develop their setting's approach to mental health and wellbeing and to implement effective processes for ensuring pupils and students with mental health problems receive appropriate support.
28. Pupils will have been affected by the pandemic in different ways, and will require specific pastoral support approaches to stay engaged in education and to stop problems from escalating. Public Health England's 'COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing surveillance' report sets out that during the pandemic, some disadvantaged young people and children, such as children in care or those who are disadvantaged financially, have reported poorer mental health and wellbeing including anxiety and loneliness. Parents/carers from households with lower annual incomes reported their children having higher levels of symptoms of behavioural, emotional and attentional difficulties than those with higher annual income throughout the pandemic.
29. Evidence from across the pandemic also indicates that boys and girls have had different mental health and wellbeing challenges. Parents/carers of school aged children have reported higher symptoms of behavioural and attentional difficulties for boys, whilst girls had higher levels of emotional difficulties. It is important, however, to note these gender differences were fairly typical pre-pandemic.
30. Pupils will also have missed out on seeing their friends and opportunities to take part in enrichment activities. These can play a key part not only in supporting pupil wellbeing, but in preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life through developing resilience, team-work and independence. It is critical that barriers to participation in enrichment activities

are minimised so that all pupils are able to access them, including the school's most disadvantaged pupils. With this in mind, we have:

- increased efforts to improve access to extra-curricular activities, which we know contribute to the wellbeing of pupils. This includes investing up to £220m in our Holiday Activities and Food programme, which provides children the opportunity to engage in activities aimed at supporting resilience, character, and wellbeing. This holiday club provision is for children and young people who receive benefits-related free school meals;
- made £200m available to schools to run summer schools, giving secondary pupils access to enrichment activities that they have missed out on over the pandemic, such as games, music, drama, and sports;
- announced a one-off recovery premium for the 2021/22 academic year worth over £300m that will build on the Pupil Premium to support the most disadvantaged pupils. Like the Pupil Premium, schools can spend the recovery premium on a wider cohort of pupils than those who attract the funding and can use it to tackle non-academic barriers to success in school, such as attendance, behaviour and social and emotional support;
- extended our commitment to the £320m primary PE and Sport Premium into the 2021/22 academic year;
- announced that we will be extending access to the Duke of Edinburgh Award for 291 schools in areas of high disadvantage.

31. The Government has also committed to an ambitious, long-term education recovery plan and the next stage will include a review of the evidence on time spent in school and 16-19 education and the impact this could have on helping children and young people to catch up. The findings of the review will inform the Spending Review later in the year.
32. We will continue to work with government departments, schools and colleges to determine what more we can do to support access to enrichment activities for disadvantaged pupils within the context of this review.
33. We will also look to build on this focus on increasing access to good quality extra-curricular activity in the longer term. The Department for Education's Character Benchmarks advice already includes a non-exhaustive list of organisations which support personal development in children and young people. We will continue to work with school leaders and teachers, and across government departments, including DCMS and CLG, to understand what more the Department can do to support schools to take an evidence-led approach to the provision of high-quality extra-curricular activities.

The influence of place

4. The Department for Education must make itself central to levelling-up, and ensure that a focus on improving outcomes for children of all ages is a key part of any Government initiative to equalise opportunity and productivity across the country. Publishing all data on attainment measures on as localised a basis as possible, including by neighbourhood, will be the beginning of demonstrating a commitment to levelling-up education by identifying specific communities that are struggling. The Department must co-ordinate its efforts with wider Government in a comprehensive strategy to tackle the root causes of underachievement.

(Response to recommendation 4, paragraph 58)

34. Many of our attainment measures are broken down by region, local authority and local authority district and parliamentary constituency in the National Statistics. Institution level data is also available on the Compare School and College Performance website for Key stages 2 to 5, except for 2020 and 2021 due to the assurances given to schools about accountability for results achieved during these years affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We will commit to investigating where further regional breakdowns can feasibly be added and endeavour to publish as much detail as possible. This will require discussions to understand the user needs.
35. We need to understand these user needs in more detail and also what is possible, balancing the usefulness of highly detailed data against the risk of disclosing details of individuals. In general, the more detailed the breakdowns that are provided, the greater the risk of disclosure and the more data that needs to be suppressed, limiting its utility. A further challenge will be considering whether statistics should be based on school location or pupil residency, and the feasibility of doing so at the different key stages.
36. As described in the response to recommendation 1, the statistics that are published are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet the needs of users. The statistics producers work closely with policy analysis and policy teams to ensure the statistics are aligned with policy developments. Further, we have introduced the Explore Education Statistics dissemination platform, which provides users with easier access to underlying data. We will look at how far our statistics break down by region and whether we could go further, for example what is the best proxy for neighbourhood.

37. The Department is fully committed to coordinating efforts with wider government and is inputting into the cross-government White Paper on levelling up.

5. We were disappointed that the Department is investing another £18 million in a policy which is reaching limited numbers of pupils and seems to be generating little return on investment. We urge the Department to set out a clear methodology to define what the programme's success criteria are. These should emphasise that the funding is not to be spent on "conveniens" and discussion, but should go to frontline services, using statistics to micro-target struggling communities, with explicit targets for:

- i) Improving support for families, through targeting Family Hubs to deprived communities and closing the early years attainment gap**
- ii) Focussing resource to schools that most need it, through a better measure of disadvantage and funding that is micro-targeted to areas of need**
- iii) Channelling funding to schools that struggle to recruit and retain the best staff, through more local teacher training initiatives**
- iv) Ensuring all pupils get the best careers advice, particularly in areas where varied career options are less visible.**

(Response to recommendation 5, paragraph 66)

38. The Opportunity Areas (OAs) are already funding frontline interventions to support the aims that the committee is recommending, to improve outcomes for children of all ages. The OAs are working to close the early years attainment gap; improve poorly-performing schools; recruit and retain teachers; and provide targeted careers advice. Early years work and school improvement interventions (including improving teaching) account for around 60% of the OAs' total expenditure.

39. Funding is also already tightly focused on areas that need it the most. Measures of deprivation, and an assessment of the ability of schools in an area to improve, were central to the choosing of the 12 areas at the outset. Within them, many of the interventions are further targeted towards the young people, families and schools in those areas that are most in need.

40. Every OA set clear, published targets at the outset, many of which are related to the issues that the committee highlighted. A key feature, however, of the OA programme has been its ability to adjust to tackle the biggest needs in each area, in the process securing both better value for money and local buy-in to the necessary changes. That means that targets were chosen locally to address

specific identified needs, and interventions have been co-designed and delivered by local leaders. The aim in each area is not just to run a successful set of one-off initiatives but to strengthen the local system's capacity to sustain and improve itself in the longer term, embedding the projects that are having the greatest impact. The highly centralised approach the committee recommends would not be sensitive to local needs in this way.

41. While the evaluation of the programme is on-going, the early direction of travel in many of the indicators is very positive. For example:

- phonics results for all pupils improved in 10 of the 12 OAs;
- early years outcomes for disadvantaged pupils improved in 9 of the 12 OAs;
- Key Stage 2 results improved by more than the national rate in 10 of the 12 OAs.

42. The committee's recommendations for the Opportunity Areas programme unfortunately came too late to influence our plans for September 2021, which were finalised in April (delivering effective interventions and securing full value for money obviously requires many months of detailed planning). However, we will give the recommendations due consideration for any future extension or iteration of the programme.

6. The Department must take a more proactive role in directing the evolution of free schools. It is not enough to suppose that disadvantaged White communities in left-behind areas will have the same resources as inner-city areas to create their own outstanding schools. All future free schools must be established in areas where they will bring a specific benefit to the local community, and the Department should ensure there is a clear focus on targeting disadvantaged areas and should proactively encourage free schools in areas such as 'challenged white communities'.

(Response to recommendation 6, paragraph 70)

43. The Government's Free Schools programme was set up to raise school standards and increase the choice of good school place for parents. It has delivered over 600 schools so far, providing thousands of good school places across the country, and over 200 further projects are being developed. The programme has developed over time with more recent waves targeting the areas

of the country with the greatest need for good school places. Nearly 40% of Free Schools are open in the 30% most deprived areas in the country.²

44. Encouraging strong trusts into areas of disadvantage either through the Free School programme or through the sponsorship of poorly performing schools, is essential to raise standards. There are already a number of strong sponsor trusts that are turning around these schools, delivering high quality education and improving the aspirations and life chances of children in areas of disadvantage, including Star Academies Trust and Outwood Grange Academies Trust.
45. Future Free School approvals will be considered as part of the Spending Review, but we are committed to levelling up opportunity across the country. A new school run by a strong trust can be transformative in driving up standards in areas of entrenched underperformance. Building on the direction of recent waves, we will ensure that a future Free School programme specifically targets new schools towards the areas of the country with the greatest need for high quality school places.

Supporting White working-class children and families: from cradle to career

7. The Government's announcement of continued supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools is welcome, but the underlying issues of short-termism and insufficiency remain and are more acute as a result of the pandemic. It is not enough for the Government to continually push a decision on the long-term future of maintained nursery schools back to the next spending review - the Government must decide how to guarantee their long-term future as soon as possible. The Government must also acknowledge the "threadbare" state of the early years system previous to the pandemic, and outline a long-term plan for the early years accompanied by a funding settlement for at least the next three years.

(Response to recommendation 7, paragraph 80)

46. High quality early education and childcare is linked to positive outcomes for children and their families. Over the past decade the Government has introduced and increased access to free early education in England. Families in England are

² 39% of the 557 Free Schools open in November 2020 are in the most deprived 30% of areas in England. "[Mainstream free school applications: assessment of need and deprivation \(wave 14 update\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)"

now eligible for 15 or 30 hours a week of free early education for their 3- and 4-year-old children. Families on universal credit and with an income under £15,400 a year after tax are also eligible for 15 hours a week of early education for their 2-year-old children.

47. The funding of the early years system will be considered at the forthcoming Spending Review. The Government recognises that maintained nursery schools are an important part of the early years sector and provide valuable services to disadvantaged children. The Government's commitment to the long-term funding of maintained nursery schools is unchanged.
48. More broadly, the Government does not recognise the early years system as being in a "threadbare" state. Despite the reduction in the number of children in age range for early years associated with decreases to the birth rate in England since 2012, the number of childcare places on Ofsted's early years register has remained broadly stable since August 2015, at around 1.3m places.
49. Ofsted also has regard to the EYFS framework in carrying out its inspections and reporting on the quality and standards of early years provision and, overall, quality in this sector has been very high with 96% of all childcare providers on Ofsted's early years register judged either Good or Outstanding at their most recent inspection.

8. The Government must explain how the National Centre for Family Hubs will support the development of Family Hubs and should set out bold targets for every town to have a Family Hub using existing community assets where appropriate.

(Response to recommendation 8, paragraph 89)

50. The Government has committed to championing family hubs, investing £34m to do so, and Ministers have been clear about their ambition to expand hubs across the country. We know that some local authorities already operate family hubs and have used existing funding streams to move their local services towards a family hub model. However, we want to ensure these innovations are recognised and shared, and successful approaches can spread.
51. The Government's initial £14m investment includes a new National Centre for Family Hubs, run by the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families. Its purpose is to provide expert advice, guidance and advocacy and to work with local authorities, local commissioners, academies and schools to champion the family hub approach, including opportunities to share experience and explore ideas for introducing family hub models through national and targeted events.

The Centre will also host a comprehensive resource library as well as develop a series of implementation resources that will form a toolkit of support for family hubs providers. This work will be supported by disseminating a regular newsletter, running a series of learning events, and creating a community of practice.

52. More information on the National Centre for Family Hubs can be found at the following link: www.annafreud.org/mental-health-professionals/national-centre-for-family-hubs/
53. The £14 million investment also includes an evaluation innovation fund to build the evidence base; and data and digital products that will support the practical implementation of family hubs by helping local early years professionals to provide joined up planning and support for families.
54. We recently announced an additional £20m investment in Family Hubs, awarded from HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund. This includes £10m for a new 'Transformation Fund' which will support at least ten local authorities to open Family Hubs; and £10m to expand the '[Family Hubs-Growing Up Well](#)' digital project and work with more local authority partners.

9. All Family Hubs must have a clear strategy for the early years, with the aim of bringing services, including health visitors and early years educators, together into one place to make it easier for disadvantaged White families to navigate the system, particularly with regard to taking full advantage of their free entitlements. The Government must implement the recommendations put forward by the Early Years Healthy Development Review, particularly around exploring the idea of a “key contact” for families and supporting local authorities to identify how best to introduce families to their local hub. The Government should also follow the example of the Manchester system, where consistent and frequent contact with families enables early intervention. This will create a joined-up, universal early years support system that works for all parents, and most particularly those disadvantaged White parents whose children are falling off the ladder of opportunity from the very first rung.

(Response to recommendation 9, paragraph 90)

55. Family Hubs generally provide services for 0 to 19 years old (up to 25 for those with SEND) and we expect local authorities to include early years services as part of their offer. Family Hubs are a way of joining up locally to improve access to services, the connections between families, professionals, services providers,

and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Hub buildings are supported by virtual offers, with services for families with children of all ages. How services are delivered varies from place to place, but these principles are key to the family hub model. By bringing services together, family hubs aim to secure greater impact from those services for children and families, including vulnerable and disadvantaged families.

56. On 25 March 2021 the Early Years Healthy Development Review, led by Early Years Health Adviser Andrea Leadsom MP, published *The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days*. The document sets out a vision for best practice in ensuring families with babies are supported in the period from conception to age two. The Government will now deliver on the 'Action Areas' set out in the Early Years Healthy Development Review.
57. The Department and the National Centre for Family Hubs are working with the Review team to support the implementation of the Vision's recommendations, including those on Family Hubs.
58. Through the Family Hubs-Growing Up Well project, we have already partnered with two local authorities to develop data and digital products to help improve how professionals across education, health and social care services collaborate and plan with families with children in the early years, with a focus on information sharing. We are recruiting a further three new partners will work with digital specialists at the DfE to explore, develop and test, data and digital products across the age range of conception to 19 (or up to 25 with SEND). Products that are developed will be replicable and scalable so that they can be used by many local authorities across England.
59. Our Government has an excellent track record for improving outcomes for young children. The proportion of children achieving a 'good level of development' at age 5 increased from 52% in 2013 to 72% by 2019. We have spent over £3.5bn in each of the past three years on our early education entitlements and the Government continues to support families with their childcare costs. The Chancellor announced on 25 November a £44 million investment for 2021-22, for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers for the Government's free childcare entitlement offers.

10. The Department must ensure that disadvantaged White communities are a priority for support. Schools should be an important part of the work of developing Family Hub models, following the example of the Reach Children's Hub. The Department must help schools emulate this model by inviting applications to open free schools from organisations interested in creating their own 'cradle to career' pathway. The Department should explore what support will effectively help existing

schools to build local partnerships in this way, as well as what resources schools need to build their own versions of parental engagement strategies such as those at Reach Academy Feltham, including parent-school pledges and home visits. Schools must have autonomy over the form of these parental engagement strategies, to take account of their local area's cultural nuances.

(Response to recommendation 10, paragraph 102)

60. Family hubs are a way of joining up locally to improve access to services, the connections between families, professionals, service providers, and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Family hubs can include both physical locations and virtual offers, with services for families with children of all ages. How services are delivered varies from place to place, but these principles are key to the family hub model. We expect family hubs to work with schools and academies to provide relevant and effective support to improve outcomes for children and families within local areas, and to ensure collaboration between the state, the community, and charities.
61. The National Centre for Family Hubs will engage with schools and academies, as part of their role to provide expert advice, guidance and advocacy to champion the family hub approach across local areas. The Centre will be open to enquiries from academies and schools, and will deliver several events that will give LAs, local commissioners, academies and schools opportunities to come together, share experience and explore ideas for introducing family hub or other models of integrated service delivery. The National Centre will also monitor sector insights of what further support is needed by key audiences such as local authorities, local commissioners, academies/schools, third sector bodies to champion the family hub model.
62. Future free approvals will be considered as part of the next spending review. We would of course welcome high quality free school applications that offer wider benefits to the local community by integrating with local services.
63. See the response to recommendation 6 for further discussion about Free Schools.

11. The Department must ensure that schools have the capacity to build a triangle of support for disadvantaged young people between schools, youth organisations and families, and consider introducing guidance for a designated extra-curricular co-ordinator in all schools.

(Response to recommendation 11, paragraph 105)

64. The response to this recommendation is covered within the response to recommendation 3.

12. Our report on adult skills highlighted the decline in support for adult learners. Evidence suggested to us that disadvantaged White parents may particularly struggle with their own levels of education, which may impact on their children's learning. The Department must give more serious thought to how it may implement our previous report's recommendations to break the cycle of disengagement in some disadvantaged White communities by:

- i) Ensuring there is a community learning centre in every town**
- ii) Incentivising employers to train their staff by introducing a skills tax credit.**

(Response to recommendation 12, paragraph 110)

65. *(Part i)* Community Learning is funded through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and plays a vital role within provision of supporting those furthest from the workplace. It helps develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds in order to: progress towards formal learning or employment and/or improve their health and wellbeing, including mental health and/or develop stronger communities.

66. Currently, approximately 60% of the AEB has been devolved to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority (GLA). These authorities are responsible for the provision of adult education, including Community Learning provision, and allocation of the AEB in their local areas. The Education and Skills Funding Agency is responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas where colleges and other providers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their AEB Community Learning funding, to best meet the needs of their communities.

67. Community Learning is often run in accessible informal venues, such as libraries, children's centres and community centres to meet local needs. Therefore, it is for providers to decide if a specific community learning centre is required for their community.

68. *(Part ii)* We do not believe the Committee's suggestion of introducing skills tax credits to encourage employers to train and recruit workers is necessary in addition to the investments already made in skills and training.
69. As part of the current tax system, training expenditure for directors and employees can be claimed as a deduction when calculating taxable business profits where the skill being learned is merely to update expertise which the proprietors already possess. Where the training provides new expertise, knowledge or skills, the cost of this training is capital in nature and cannot be claimed as an expense.
70. The Government has made significant investments in skills and training to help adults build the skills they need to get into work:
- In the Plan for Jobs, the Chancellor announced funding to increase the scale of traineeships and sector-based work academy placements, incentives for apprenticeships, investment in the National Careers Service, and funding for school/college leavers to study high value courses.
 - At Spending Review 2020, the Government announced an additional £375 million investment in adult skills funding to continue the measures in the Plan for Jobs into 2021-22 and deliver the PM's Lifetime Skills Guarantee which will allow adults to access the education and training they need throughout their lives. Under the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, the Government is providing funding for all adults to obtain their first full Level 3 qualification (A Level or equivalent) in a high value subject and to expand the employer-led skills bootcamps model across England.
 - At Budget 2021, the Chancellor announced an additional £126m to continue the expansion of traineeships for young people in England for the full 2021/22 academic year, supporting 43,000 traineeships and continuing the £1,000 payment for employers who provide trainees with high-quality work experience.

The school system

13. High quality teaching is particularly transformative for disadvantaged pupils. Over a school year, these pupils get 1.5 years' worth of learning with high quality teachers, compared with 0.5 years with poorly performing teachers. To support the development of local teachers, we should incentivise highly commended initial teacher training providers (like Redcar and Cleveland TTP or Leicester and Leicestershire SCITT) to work with disadvantaged schools and develop top-class school-led routes. The Department must use its enhanced local area statistics to

target recruitment and retention policies to schools that are struggling, particularly those in left-behind White communities. The Department must build on the existing postgraduate teaching apprenticeship scheme to make it more widely available and introduce an undergraduate teaching degree apprenticeship with a specific focus on developing teacher subject specialisms. The Department must introduce bursaries, retention payments and salary bonuses to attract good teachers to challenging areas and prevent flight of local talent. This will encourage a more diverse workforce that reflects the communities it serves, through introducing more local teacher training centres in deprived White communities.

(Response to recommendation 13, paragraph 116)

71. High-quality teaching is the most important in-school factor for improving pupil outcomes, and this is even more important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
72. We have driven improvements in the support we give our teachers throughout their careers to enable them to delivery high quality teaching by making sure teacher training and professional development is based on the best available evidence and delivered by high quality national providers. We have introduced the Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework and, through the implementation of the Early Career Framework reforms, are supporting teachers in the first years of their career with a high quality, two-year induction into the profession. Our development offer for teachers who have completed induction and school leaders has also been improved with the introduction of a reformed suite of National Professional Qualifications, including new specialist NPQs.
73. World-class teacher development requires world-class delivery. That is why we are creating a new national professional development infrastructure made up of lead providers and delivery partners, responsible for designing and delivering training to schools. We have established a national network of 87 Teaching School Hubs, school-led centres of excellence, that every school in the country can access. The Hubs will deliver Initial Teacher Training, the Early Career Framework reforms and reformed National Professional Qualifications, as well as other evidence based CPD. We are also supporting the creation of a new independent Institute of Teaching which will become England's flagship training and professional development provider. The Institute's delivery model and choice of proposed campus locations must take account of local need, including where the Institute is most likely to benefit schools serving disadvantaged areas and cohorts, and where additional high-quality capacity is most needed.

74. The ITT Market Review Report was published on 5 July with a set of recommendations to the Government around ensuring high-quality, coherent and consistent initial training for every trainee teacher. We have consulted on these recommendations over the summer and will be publishing our response in the autumn.
75. The Department already uses its data to target policy towards schools who serve disadvantaged communities, and will continue to do so. We continue to target our Early Career Payments and Teachers' Student Loan Reimbursement offer towards teachers in schools in the most disadvantaged areas, and the funding approach for our new reformed National Professional Qualifications which aim to support teachers' and school leaders' professional development and boost retention - will target disadvantaged areas by focussing scholarships towards the top 30th percentile of schools in relation to pupils on Pupil Premium.
76. Apprenticeship programmes and standards are employer-led by Trailblazer groups working alongside the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. Changes to the apprenticeship standards are driven by these Trailblazer groups to meet the needs of the sector. The Department encourages a wide range of routes into teaching, including apprenticeships via the PGTA. This route can unlock up to £15,000 of grant funding for high priority subjects such as physics, maths and computing; and is provided in addition to levy funding.
77. An undergraduate teaching degree apprenticeship was previously considered. As apprenticeship standards are led by employers in Trailblazer groups, the group leading this one determined that there was insufficient interest from employers – a key factor in any new apprenticeship creation. The group also determined the proposed apprenticeship to be too expensive to operate, making the route unviable at this time.
78. We are continuing to offer Early Career Payments and Teachers Student Loan Reimbursement to eligible teachers. These pilot schemes are tilted towards disadvantaged areas to encourage teachers to work in schools in these areas. We are conducting evaluations to assess the impact of these pilots and we will consider any future retention offer in light of the evaluation findings.

14. The Department must do more to target funding to address attainment gaps, such as that which persistently affects disadvantaged White pupils. This should begin with reform to the pupil premium, which should be weighted to account for persistent disadvantage, including in disadvantaged White communities, in line with our recommendation on better measures of disadvantage. The Department must also heed

recommendations from the National Audit Office and keep its catch-up funding initiatives under close review, and introduce significant reform if take up of the National Tutoring Programme has not improved by the end of the school year. The Department should introduce changes to ensure the schools and pupils that most need the extra resource have access to it.

(Response to recommendation 14, paragraph 129)

79. The Government is committed to its mission to provide a world-class education for all children, irrespective of their backgrounds, and level up opportunity so that all children can realise their potential and are prepared for a successful adult life. Our approach to supporting disadvantaged pupils is not just about the Pupil Premium.
80. Firstly, the national funding formula (NFF) was introduced in 2018-19 to allocate funding fairly to schools across England, based on the needs of schools and their pupil cohorts. This year (2021-22), the schools NFF is providing a total of £6.4 billion of funding directly targeted at schools with higher numbers of pupils with additional needs, including deprivation. This is 17 percent of the total schools NFF and is on top of £2.5 billion of Pupil Premium funding which schools will receive this year.
81. We have now held our first stage consultation on completing the reforms to the NFF. Our intention since the introduction of the NFF has always been to move in time to every school's final funding allocation being determined by the same national funding formula, and no longer be subject to further adjustment from one of the 150 local authority formulae. This will mean the funding system is fair for every school, with funding matched to a consistent assessment of need. We recognise that this marks a major reform to the funding system, so we have proposed taking a gradual, measured approach to transition smoothly to the new system.
82. Secondly, we constantly review and assess the effectiveness of the Pupil Premium to make sure it is supporting pupils facing the most disadvantaged at school.
83. Thirdly, we have also announced funding of over £3bn since June 2020 to support education recovery for children and young people in schools, colleges and early years settings; this will have a material impact in addressing lost learning and closing gaps that have emerged.
84. Recovery programmes have been designed to allow early years, school and college leaders the flexibility to support those pupils most in need, including the most disadvantaged. This includes the Recovery Premium for the 2021/22

academic year worth over £300m, weighted so that schools with more disadvantaged pupils receive more funding, and including £22m to scale up proven approaches to reduce the attainment gap. The £650m Catch-up Premium provided in the 2020/21 academic year also required teachers to prioritise disadvantaged pupils and the National Tutoring Programme is specifically targeted to support disadvantaged pupils catch-up on learning. Schools are free to determine who is best placed to deliver tutoring support to meet their specific needs and can exercise their discretion in determining which pupils are most in need of tutoring support, including using this grant to support tutoring for non-pupil-premium students, as they see fit. From 2021/22, we will also be providing all schools with direct funding for school-led tutoring, which will allow them to make their own tutoring arrangements, using their own staff or external tutors, to support disadvantaged pupils. Further details will be available to schools in Autumn 2021.

85. This is on top of our investment of more than £400m to provide internet access and over 1.35m laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people, so that they were able to continue their education and access social care at home.
86. The Government has committed to an ambitious, long-term education recovery plan and the next stage will include a review of time spent in school and college and the impact this could have on helping children and young people to catch up. The findings of the review will be set out later in the year to inform the Spending Review.

15. The Department must also acknowledge that due to funding pressures 34% of headteachers are using the premium to plug financial gaps in other parts of their operation. We note the Department's recent changes to the conditions of the pupil premium grant, but in the light of the Sutton Trust's findings about the number of schools using their grant to plug other gaps, we want to see more action. We will hold the Department to account for their progress, and should the reforms not be successful in ensuring this funding always directly benefits the most disadvantaged we will expect the Department to consider further measures. This should include ringfencing a percentage of the pupil premium grant to offer activities and enrichment opportunities to disadvantaged pupils, helping them access the same extra-curricular opportunities as their better-off peers.

(Response to recommendation 15, paragraph 130)

87. We recognise the pressures schools have faced and have listened to teachers and parents. This Government has announced the biggest funding boost for schools in a decade, which will give every school more money for every child. As a result, funding is increasing by £7.1 billion between 2019-20 and 2022-23, taking total funding next year to over £52bn. Schools continue to be able to access existing support for financial issues, including a wide range of school resource management tools, and, in serious circumstances, additional funding or advances from local authorities for maintained schools, or ESFA for academy trusts.
88. Total Pupil Premium funding has increased to more than £2.5bn this year. The Education Endowment Foundation's Guide to the Pupil Premium advises school leaders on the most effective, proven approaches for accelerating their pupils' progress. There are many excellent examples of schools using their Pupil Premium money effectively to close the attainment gap between children from deprived backgrounds and their counterparts. Most schools will include enrichment and extra-curricular activities within their strategy.
89. We have amended Pupil Premium conditions of grant for the 2021/22 academic year, to require all schools to use their funding on evidence-based approaches, to maximise the benefits of the Pupil Premium for their disadvantaged pupils. Schools will also be required to publish an online statement, using a new standardised template, which requires them to outline the evidence-based rationale for their spending decisions across the Pupil Premium, and the recovery premium.
90. Highly effective, proven practice that helps pupils catch up is needed now more than ever. It is important that all schools decide how to use their funding drawing on the best available research evidence such as that provided by Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). The Department is constantly working to review how we can support and encourage schools to do this to best effect.

Destinations for disadvantaged White pupils

16. The Department must revisit the benefits of celebrating greater diversity of subjects in the pre-16 curriculum. The focus should be ensuring all pupils achieve the essential level of qualifications they need with academic rigour and high expectations, while acknowledging the value of vocational and skills-based subjects and their potential to engage otherwise disaffected groups, such as some disadvantaged White pupils. We are clear that this does not mean introducing a two-tier system, with practical subjects a poor alternative for children who are perceived to be less able. The Department must reform current accountability measures by widening the range of subjects that can count towards the EBacc to

include subjects that have been in decline over the past 10 years, such as Design and Technology, and incentivise schools to celebrate all their pupils' aptitudes and create a parity of esteem for vocational subjects alongside a rigorous academic offer.

(Response to recommendation 16, paragraph 141)

91. Every state-funded school must offer a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. The Government wants pupils to leave school prepared, in the widest sense, for adult life and the acquisition of knowledge is the basic building block of education to which all pupils should have fair access.
92. Central to raising standards has been ensuring that all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to the 'best that has been thought and said', as part of their cultural inheritance. This has meant overhauling the so-called skills- or competence-based national curriculum, replacing it with one that makes sure children are taught the essential building blocks of knowledge, providing them with the understanding they need to participate fully in society.
93. The national curriculum reforms focused on restoring knowledge to the heart of the curriculum. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from a knowledge-rich approach for two main reasons. Firstly, securing domain-specific knowledge is essential to learning. Pupils start school with differing levels of knowledge depending on their background, meaning those with greater levels of prior knowledge learn more easily than those with limited prior knowledge, and therefore the gap between these two groups widens. Secondly, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to access 'communal knowledge' or the 'cultural commons of the nation' at home. It is, therefore, important that schools make sure that all pupils have access to this through the delivery of an effectively sequenced knowledge-rich curriculum.
94. The EBacc (English Baccalaureate) subject pillars are English, maths, history or geography, the sciences and a language. This covers seven GCSEs if pupils take combined science, and eight GCSEs if they take triple science. To achieve the EBacc pupils must get a grade 9 to 4 (A* to C equivalent) in each pillar. The proportion of all pupils in state-funded schools that entered the EBacc rose from 21.8% in 2010 to 40.0% in 2019; those that achieved it rose from 15.1% to 24.9% in the same period. The Government's ambition is to make progress towards 90% of year 10 pupils in state-funded mainstream schools studying EBacc GCSEs by September 2025 (examination in 2027).

95. We have five headline measures of secondary school accountability designed to encourage schools to teach a broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on a strong academic core. Two of these measures, Progress 8 and Attainment 8, allow scope for pupils to pursue their personal interests, by counting up to three further “open” subjects, alongside English and maths and three EBacc subjects. These “open” subjects can be GCSE qualifications (including additional EBacc subjects) or Technical Awards from the DfE approved list.
96. Key to giving all children the same chance to succeed through education is ensuring that they can study core academic subjects at GCSE – English, maths, science, history or geography and a language that make up the EBacc. From 2011 to 2020, there was a 19.2 percentage point rise in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in state-funded mainstream schools entering the EBacc. The equivalent figure for non-disadvantaged pupils during that period is 18.3.
97. Part of the reason why lower socio-economic groups are underrepresented at high status universities, is differences in subject choice at A level. Evidence suggests that these gaps can be closed by reducing differences in attainment and subject choice at GCSE. DfE research from January 2019 shows over 9 in 10 Oxbridge students entered a GCSE in languages which form part of the EBacc, with more than 75% entering both languages and humanities. These pupils studied a broad and balanced curriculum before going on to highly selective universities.
98. A study by the UCL Institute of Education shows that studying subjects included in the EBacc provides pupils with greater opportunities in further education and increases the likelihood that a pupil will stay on in full-time education. Sutton Trust research from 2016 suggested that 300 schools which had increased EBacc take-up were more likely to achieve good GCSEs in mathematics and English, with Pupil Premium pupils benefitting the most.
99. The Government believes it is important to ensure that young people have the knowledge they need to succeed. We reformed GCSEs as a response to concerns being raised by employers and higher and further education institutions that GCSEs did not adequately prepare young people for the demands of the workplace and higher study.
100. The reformed GCSEs rigorously assess the knowledge acquired by pupils during Key Stage 4 and are in line with expected standards in countries with high-performing education systems. We created more linear exams, ending modularisation, so that less time would be spent on preparing for module re-sits and more time on teaching and holistic learning. There are no plans to change the current system for A levels and GCSEs and the Government remains clear that exams are the fairest method by which to assess students.
101. We need to remove the barriers that stop people from being the best they can be, and ensure that all children are given the same chances through education to

succeed. We recognise that there will be a minority of pupils for whom taking all the EBacc subjects at GCSE will not be appropriate, and it is for schools to decide which pupils this applies to and what alternative curriculum options for them should be.

102. Key stage 4 (KS4) students (14 to 16 year olds) can choose from a variety of appropriate qualifications, including GCSEs and Technical Awards, and build a programme of study that provides them with a comprehensive and respected general education. With a focus on practical and technical subjects, Technical Awards offer 14 to 16 year olds an opportunity to gain skills and knowledge not usually acquired through general qualifications. There are Technical Awards in a range of subjects, from engineering and information technology to catering or automotive maintenance.
103. In September 2020, the Department announced the launch of a new approvals process for Technical Awards to improve the quality of non-GCSE qualifications at KS4. Only those technical qualifications that meet stretching requirements and that have been reviewed by Ofqual and approved by the Department, will be recognised in the 2024 KS4 performance tables alongside academic qualifications.
104. The introduction of T Levels for 16-19 year olds will boost access to high quality technical education for thousands of young people, providing a real and attractive alternative to A levels. Designed by employers and including a 9 week industry placement, T Levels will help more young people from all backgrounds to access skilled work. All students who take T Levels will undertake a 9 week industry placement, helping them to gain employability skills and develop the confidence they need in a workplace environment. The first three T Levels were introduced in September 2020 (in 43 providers with a cohort of around 1,300 students) and feedback from both providers and students has been positive.
105. We are also working closely with the first T Level providers to develop a T Level Transition Programme, for students who are not ready to start a T Level but have the potential to progress onto one following a tailored preparation programme. This will allow more young people to successfully compete a T Level.

17. Level 2 apprenticeships are a vital stepping-stone for disadvantaged learners. The Department must investigate and address the falling numbers of apprenticeship starts from deprived communities, to ensure disadvantaged White pupils have equal access to the opportunities offered by skills-based routes. As the Centre for Social Justice recommends, the Government should “rebalance the levy so that it supports more young people”, and more of the levy’s funding should be directed to disadvantaged learners or on courses meeting the skills

needs of our nation. Skills tax credits, for example, could be introduced to incentivise businesses to retrain workers without high-level qualifications and in our vital skills areas.

(Response to recommendation 17, paragraph 144)

106. We agree with the Committee that apprenticeships are a vital stepping-stone for young people, and that disadvantaged pupils should have equal access to them.

107. Apprenticeships are jobs with training, and so the apprenticeship opportunities available in different regions depend on the workforce decisions of employers. We continue to monitor the number of apprenticeships starts by those in deprived communities, and keep under review the support we provide to ensure that apprenticeship opportunities are available for people of all ages and backgrounds.

108. We recognise the important role that SMEs play in creating apprenticeship opportunities in disadvantaged areas and for younger apprentices. Apprenticeship starts in employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy, who are typically smaller employers, accounted for 34% of total starts in 2019/20, but these employers supported 57% of total starts by 16-to-18-year-olds. As we have set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper, we are supporting SMEs to offer more apprenticeship opportunities. In 2021-22, we are making £2.5 billion available to support apprenticeships, including for employers who do not pay the levy, who will continue to be able to reserve funding for 95% of apprenticeship training and assessment costs. SMEs can now reserve funding for up to 10 new apprenticeship starts in 2021-22 financial year, increased from three. We have also made it easier for levy payers to transfer their levy funds to support more apprenticeships in SMEs. From August (2021) we have introduced a new online service, whereby levy payers can pledge funds that they want to make available for transfer, enabling them to make greater use of their funds.

109. We are continuing to promote apprenticeships in schools across England through our Apprenticeship Support & Knowledge (ASK) outreach programme which provides students with information on, and support with, searching and applying for apprenticeships. To ensure that disadvantaged pupils have equal access, the ASK Development Schools project is providing specific support to 40 schools. These schools have disadvantaged students in years 10 and 11 who have the potential to progress into a traineeship or an apprenticeship but who are facing significant personal barriers such as learning difficulties, disabilities, or emotional, behavioural development issues.

110. We do not agree with the Committee that changes are needed to the apprenticeship levy. The apprenticeship levy is important in supporting employers

of all sizes to invest in high-quality apprenticeship training. It is right that employers continue to fulfil their skills needs by determining which apprenticeships they offer and when. We have created an employer-led system, improved quality, and increased investment to ensure that apprenticeships better meet the skills needs of employers and learners today. We have already committed to improving the working of the levy and will be making improvements in response to employers' feedback – parts of these improvements are around making it easier for levy-payers to transfer unspent funds and making training more flexible to meet the needs of different sectors.

111. Apprenticeships remain available at all levels; we continue to welcome the development of high-quality occupational standards at Level 2, where there is employer demand for those. It should be possible for someone with limited experience to start an apprenticeship at either Level 2, which is equivalent to GCSE level, or at Level 3, which is equivalent to A Level. There are over 340 standards available at Levels 2 and 3. We want to see a rich apprenticeship landscape that provides a range of opportunities at all levels and delivers occupational competence across the economy.
112. We are making apprenticeships more flexible so that more individuals, and employers in more sectors, can benefit from them. Employers have told us they want more front-loaded training which will support young apprentices, who are likely to have limited experience, develop the skills they need before putting them into practice in the workplace. We have published manuals to promote flexible training options in the construction and health and social care sectors. We are also supporting progression routes for young people from traineeships, skills bootcamps and T Levels into accelerated apprenticeships which will allow apprentices to complete more quickly by recognising their prior learning. We are also investing £7 million to help employers set up new flexi-job apprenticeships supporting more opportunities for young people in sectors such as construction and creative. Apprentices will be able to work across a range of projects with different employers to gain the skills and experience they need to complete their apprenticeships.
113. We already provide additional funding to employers and training providers to support them to take on younger apprentices. We offer £1,000 payments for employers who take on 16–18-year-old apprentices, or those aged 19-24 with an Education Health and Care plan or who have been in the care of their local authority. These young apprentices may also receive a £1,000 bursary payment if they have been in the care of a UK local authority. Furthermore, we also pay 100% of training costs for employers with fewer than 50 employees when they take on these young apprentices.
114. As part of the Plan for Jobs we introduced incentive payments of up to £3,000 for employers specifically when taking on an apprentice as a new employee. Employers have submitted claims for over 85,000 apprentices so far; 75% of

claims have been for young people under the age of 25. Starts by young people under the age of 25 still account for more than half (53% in 2019/20) of new apprentices, this compares to 56% in 2015/16. On 4 October, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a £500m expansion of the Plan for Jobs. This included the extension of the incentive payments. Employers will be able to receive payment for any apprentice that has an employment start date between 1 October 2021 and 31 January 2022. As well as supporting young people into employment it is important to recognise the role that apprenticeships play in upskilling and reskilling people throughout their lifetimes, reflecting the demands of the modern labour market.

115. It is also important that we equip young people who are not yet ready for an apprenticeship with the skills they need to get into employment. We have therefore developed the first-ever occupationally specific traineeships to provide young people with a springboard into apprenticeships in key industries such as rail engineering, bricklaying and adult care. We are working to develop more of these opportunities in the early years, construction, digital, engineering, logistics, automotive and nuclear sectors. In the 2021/22 academic year we are investing an additional £126 million to fund up to a further £43,000 traineeships places and we have extended our £1,000 cash incentive for employers offering traineeship work placements until 31 July 2022.

116. As covered in the response to recommendation 12 part ii, we do not believe the Committee's suggestion of introducing skills tax credits to encourage employers to train and recruit workers is necessary in addition to the investments already made in skills and training.

18. The Government must conduct a significant review of Government-funded careers agencies to identify if they are focused on skills, building employer-school partnerships and helping those from White working class in schools in disadvantaged areas. The Government should bring forward measures to tie Government-funded careers advice support to compliance with the Baker Clause. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers have called for compliance with the Baker Clause to be linked to Ofsted judgements. We believe that a school's Ofsted grade should be limited to "Requires Improvement", should the school fail to comply with the Baker Clause.

(Response to recommendation 18, paragraph 148)

117. We agree with the Committee that we need to ensure the careers system is effective in supporting people from all backgrounds. That is why the Secretary of State has appointed Professor Sir John Holman as Independent Strategic Adviser on Careers Guidance. Sir John is developing recommendations on how to deliver closer alignment between the Department for Education's two main careers delivery partners, The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service, as well as with wider government careers and employment services such as Job Centre Plus. We expect these recommendations to be presented to the Secretary of State in the summer of 2022.
118. Our aim is to create a clear, all-age careers system which supports everyone to reach their full potential. This is more important than ever as the economic downturn brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting opportunities for young people and we need to support them to get ahead in their careers and achieve their full potential. We have already committed to a full review of the careers delivery system in the longer term, as set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper. We plan to undertake the review following the roll out of Careers Hubs, the Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Leader training to all secondary schools and colleges in England. We also expect Sir John Holman's recommendations to inform the review.
119. The Committee's suggestion to tie Government funded careers support to compliance with the Baker Clause was already announced in the Skills for Jobs White Paper, as part of a Baker Clause three-point-plan that will:
- Create clear minimum legal requirements;
 - Take tougher formal action to enforce compliance;
 - Make Government investment in careers conditional on Baker Clause compliance.
120. The Department will set out more details soon on the legislative changes. We intend to establish a new minimum legal requirement about *who* is to be given access to *which* pupils and *when*.
121. It is important that schools comply with the Baker Clause and are held to account for this through Ofsted's inspections. Ofsted's updated school inspection handbook for September 2021 sets out strengthened expectations with respect to careers information, education, advice and guidance (CIEAG), and specifically the Baker Clause. It makes clear that if a school is not meeting the requirements of the Baker Clause, inspectors will state this in the published inspection report, and that they will consider what impact this has on the quality of CIEAG and the subsequent judgement for personal development.
122. Under Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework, which took effect from September 2019, in order to achieve an outstanding judgement, inspectors have

to be assured that each of the criteria for a good judgement are met. As such the quality of CIEAG may have a limiting effect on a school attaining an outstanding grade. When considering whether a school is good however, inspectors are expected to apply a 'best fit' approach - using their professional judgement to weigh up the evidence on a school's performance across the range of inspection indicators for good. Inspectors will consider carefully how the quality of CEIAG and compliance with the Baker Clause affects the overall assessment for the 'personal development' judgement when awarding a good grade, but this specific matter will not, in an automatic way, mean a school will be judged to require improvement.

123. We are committed to providing all disadvantaged students, including White working-class disadvantaged students, with the careers support they need. The Careers & Enterprise Company has a Community of Practice for Inclusion which supports disadvantaged young people in schools, colleges and alternative provision by sharing good practice, providing training for teachers and Special Educational Needs Coordinators and resources to be used by schools working to support disadvantaged young people to plan their careers.

19. The OfS should review how it holds providers to account for ensuring all low-participation groups are equally supported into higher education. This should not just be about inclusion, but ensuring disadvantaged White pupils are also completing their courses and progressing on to skilled work and satisfying careers. The OfS should also implement a target for inclusion of pupils from disadvantaged White backgrounds, to ensure that White working-class students' participation in HE is a key priority for all universities. At least some of the funding that universities currently spend on boosting access and participation should be redirected to where it can be more effective: either through school-based initiatives "upstream" in pupils' journeys or towards increasing take-up of apprenticeships and particularly degree apprenticeships.

(Response to recommendation 19, paragraph 153)

124. It is essential that education beyond the age of 18 offers opportunities for real social mobility and equality of opportunity for White working-class students, and other under-represented groups. It must ensure that students are able to make the right choices and access, and succeed on, high quality courses - either academic degrees or apprenticeships - which are valued by employers and lead to good graduate outcomes. It is our priority to ensure that access to higher education, including to our most selective universities, is based upon a student's

attainment and their ability to succeed, rather than on their background. We are already taking proactive steps in this space. We wrote to the OfS in February 2021 setting out our strategic priorities and requested a specific focus on white working-class boys.

125. The OfS understands our desire to go further and faster on access to HE for under-represented groups, and to ensure these groups then succeed and achieve meaningful outcomes and high-skilled employment from their degrees.
126. There is much in this recommendation that the OfS already has underway, such as reviewing the metrics it uses to hold providers to account. The OfS has published an experimental 'Associations Between Characteristics' (ABCs) measure, which combines race and ethnicity with other factors such as neighbourhood and free school meal status. It will deploy this measure within future versions of the access and participation data-set and guidance. This should enable closer targeting of White working-class students within access and participation plans.
127. The OfS agrees targets with individual providers based on their existing student intake and works with them to improve the provider's weakest areas. We recommend this individualised approach continues, but that we further strengthen the guidance OfS issues to providers on the importance of increasing access for White working-class students.
128. We fully agree with the focus on schools set out in this recommendation, and this is a key component of the work for the Director for Fair Access and Participation at the OfS. Early intervention in schools provides the foundations for some of the activity already underway that is working effectively for areas with very low representation in HE. This work is being documented and shared via the UniConnect programme and TASO 'What Works'³ so that best practice can be shared across the sector.

20. The OfS should also commit to a report to Parliament in a year's time to review progress against this measure and their targets and the Secretary of State's request for a focus on disadvantaged White boys accessing higher education. The OfS should review how it classifies 'under-represented groups' to ensure it keeps pace with the current demographics of the higher education student population.

³ TASO – Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education, provides a comprehensive evidence base of what 'works' in access and participation. TASO supports evidence-led policy and effective approaches to access, student success and progression to good quality employment and further study. <https://taso.org.uk/>

(Response to recommendation 20, paragraph 154)

129. The OfS produces an annual report each year which highlights the progress it has made across all of its functions including access and participation.

Furthermore, it publishes the outcomes of its annual monitoring of providers' access and partnership plans and updates annually the access and participation data dashboard which provides individual university and college performance.

This enables public transparency of individual providers' performance in closing the access gaps for all underrepresented groups. The OfS closely monitors demographic trends across education and updates and refines its measures where appropriate.

130. The OfS does keep its definition and metrics of 'under-represented groups' under review. As described under recommendation 19, it will deploy its recently published ABCs measure within future versions of the access and participation data-set and guidance, which should enable closer targeting of White working-class students within access and participation plans.

Concluding remark

131. The Government agrees with the overriding ambition of this report that groups of children and young people must not be left behind. We are committed to closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their wealthier peers, and this has been the driving objective of our education reforms since 2010. We therefore largely accept the majority of the recommendations in the report and where we do not fully accept recommendations this is in the main because we feel our existing or planned policies are better formulated to improve the attainment of disadvantaged children and young people. Any future funding will be agreed as part of the 2021 Spending Review.

