

The most able students – still too much talent going to waste

Accompanying methodology note

Age group: 4–18

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Introduction

This note explains the methodology and analysis that informed HMCI's commentary on outcomes for the most able pupils that was published on 10 June 2016.¹

Methodology

All analysis of outcomes and contextual factors for the most able pupils was based on analysis of pupil level data in Ofsted's RAISE online database, which is in turn based on data from the Department for Education's performance tables. Data relates to pupils who sat key stage 2 tests in 2010 and key stage 4 examinations in 2015. The most able pupils are defined as those that reached level 5 in the specified subject (English and/or maths) at key stage 2. Pupils who achieve a level 5 at key stage 2 are expected to achieve a grade B in that subject at GCSE. Some pupils may go on to achieve a grade A or A*.

The outcomes for over 80,000 pupils were used for this analysis. Pupils whose attainment at key stage 2 (prior attainment) was based on teacher assessments, not examination results, are excluded from the analysis. As some schools boycotted key stage 2 tests in 2010, the number of children for whom we only have teacher assessments was higher than usual. Outcomes at key stage 4 for the most able pupils who were teacher assessed at key stage 2 are generally lower than for those that sat the key stage 2 tests. This means that if pupils with prior attainment information based solely on teacher assessment had been included in the analysis, the proportions achieving a B or A/A* would be slightly lower. The overall story would be the same.

The commentary states that it makes little difference whether most-able pupils attend an academy or a local authority maintained school. There is however considerable variation between different types of academies. Nationally 73% of most-able pupils achieved a B or above in English and maths at key stage 4: this compares to 72% for local authority maintained schools, 76% for academy converters, and 65% for sponsor-led academies.

Information on the type of school and admissions policy is taken from the Department for Education's Edubase website.²

Data on the proportion of pupils on free schools meals that go on to attend higher education institutions is taken from the Department for Education's statistical first release 'Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils: 2014'.³ Data refers to destinations in 2013/14, which is the most recent data available. This is not the same

¹ HMCI's monthly commentary: May 2016, Ofsted, May 2016; www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-monthly-commentary-june-2016.

² EduBase2, DFE: www.education.gov.uk/edubase/home.xhtml

³ 'Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils: 2014', Department for Education, January 2016: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-ks4-and-ks5-pupils-2013-to-2014

group of children included in the key stage 2 and key stage 4 analysis within the commentary.

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