



Annual Report 2012/13

North West regional report

The North West is a large, economically vibrant and diverse region, stretching from Carlisle to Crewe. Around 7.1 million people live in the region, of which 1.7 million are aged 19 or under. Unemployment is above the national level and full-time workers generally earn a lower rate than nationally. While some of the wealthiest areas in England are in the North West, the region has many areas of serious deprivation, especially around coastal communities. The region's more affluent areas also have significant numbers of disadvantaged children.





Director's summary



Michael Cladingbowl,
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North West

The primary and further education (FE) sectors in the North West are among the best in England.

The proportion of children in primary schools judged good or better is the highest in England. The region has the highest proportion of good or outstanding colleges nationally.

The performance of secondary schools in the North West is patchier and access to good or outstanding secondary education is a postcode lottery for too many young people. This needs to change.

Primary children known to be eligible for free school meals performed better in Key Stage 2 tests than similar pupils in England as a whole, but there is still a large attainment gap between poor children and their more affluent peers.

By the age of 16, those students eligible for free school meals do less well at GCSE than similar students nationally. Moreover, these young people have dramatically different chances of achieving good qualifications depending on where they attend school. Children from poorer families in Trafford, for example, have nearly twice the chance of achieving good grades at GCSE than their counterparts in Cumbria.

The current approach to deploying National and Local Leaders of Education is not working as well as it needs to in many parts of the North West.

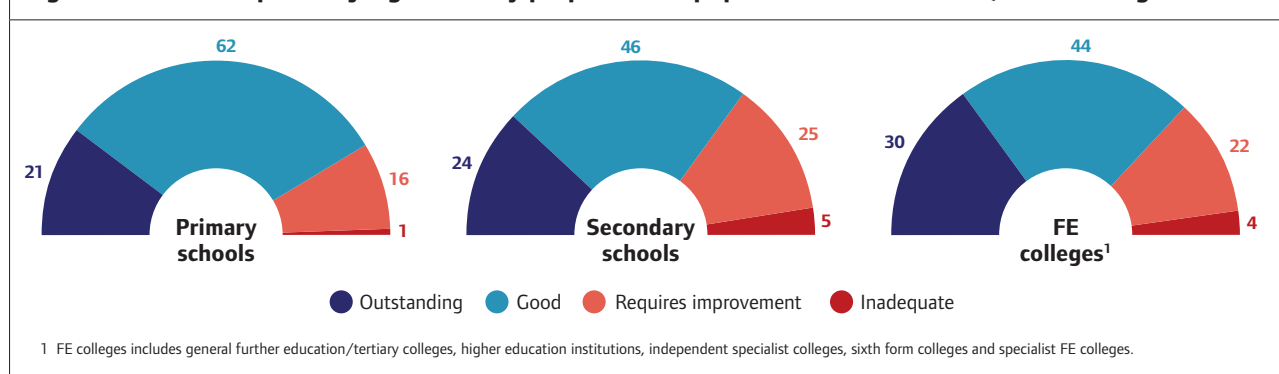
During 2012/13, inspectors visited too many requires improvement or inadequate schools that had not been linked with stronger schools.

While the North West has the highest proportion of good and outstanding colleges in England, some of the largest providers are failing to provide good education and training.¹ Only 20% of learners who have not achieved a GCSE grade C or above in English and mathematics at the age of 16 go on to achieve these by age 19. Moreover, further education and skills training is often poorly matched to local skills shortages.

Apprenticeship success rates are less positive than the overall figures might suggest. This is because these figures mask poor performance in approaching one in five providers, particularly along the M62 corridor, which links the cities of Liverpool and Manchester, where much of the new economic development is taking place.



Figure 1: Overall inspection judgements by proportion of pupils for the North West, as at 31 August 2013



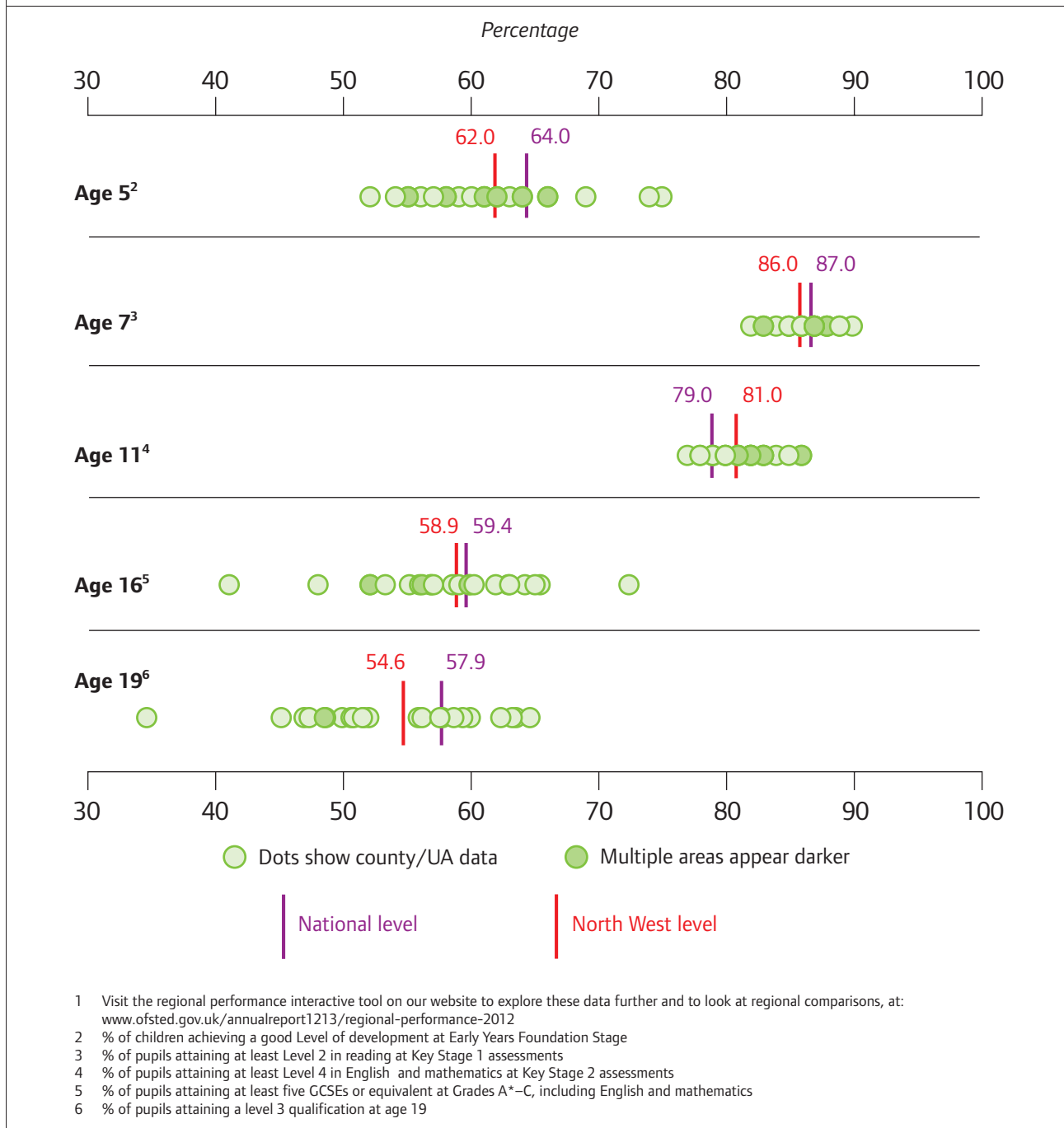
¹ Such as The Manchester College and The City of Liverpool College

School performance in the North West

Over the last year, there has been an increase in the number of schools providing children with a good or outstanding education in the North West.

The proportion of schools judged good or outstanding in the last year rose to 80%, an increase of six percentage points on the previous year. Of 1,114 schools inspected in the last year in the North West, 37% had improved since their last inspection, 43% remained the same and only 17% declined.² Pupils in the North West do well at Key Stage 2, performing at a level above that seen nationally. However, by the end of Key Stage 4, performance is disappointing and is poorer than in England as a whole.

Figure 2: Pupil attainment in the North West at ages 5, 7, 11, 16 and 19 in 2012¹



² For 3% of schools, this was their first inspection.



In early years, only seven of the region's 23 local authorities were equal to, or above, the national level for the percentage of five-year-olds who achieved the benchmark of 78 points, with at least six points in each scale, at the Early Years Foundation Stage.

At Key Stage 1, 86% of pupils attain a Level 2 or higher in reading, slightly below the national level of 87%.

At the end of primary school, the percentage of pupils in the region attaining Level 4 or above in both English and mathematics was above the national level. Primary schools in the North West deserve much credit for this. However, in a few local authority areas, such as **Rochdale**, **Blackburn with Darwen** and **Manchester**, results at Key Stage 2 remain too low.

Some secondary schools must do better

Transition between primary and secondary school is a watershed moment for many children in the North West. In several local authority areas, the proportion of good

primary schools far outweighs the proportion of good secondary schools. For example, 94% of pupils attend good or outstanding primary schools in **Sefton** compared with only 56% who attend good or outstanding secondary schools. Moreover, the decline in the results achieved by children when they reach secondary school, in several local authority areas, is a concern.

At GCSE, students in 13 of the North West's local authority areas did not reach the 2012 national level for five good passes, including English and mathematics. **Knowsley** was the nation's poorest performer, with only 41% achieving five or more GCSEs grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.

Variation between the different areas in the North West

There was large variation between different areas, with only 48% of Blackpool students achieving five or more good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, compared with 72% in Trafford. It is this variation in performance that needs tackling if students in the region are to improve their performance at GCSE.

The picture at advanced level is starker still. Fewer than one in 10 children in areas such as **Rochdale** and **Halton**, achieve AAB at A level or equivalent, compared with more than one in three in **Trafford**.





Table 1 shows the proportion of pupils attending good or outstanding schools in the North West.

For too many pupils, reaching the age of 11 can mark the end of access to a good education. In Blackpool, Salford, Tameside and St Helens, children have less than a one in two chance of attending a good or outstanding secondary school.

Some local authority areas are good across both primary and secondary phases – for example, Trafford, Bury, Stockport, Liverpool and Wigan.

Secondary schools in metropolitan areas such as Manchester and Stockport have shown considerable improvement in recent years, but in other local authority areas, improvement is less marked, such as in the seaside town of Blackpool.

It is no surprise that this regional variation is also reflected in the differing extent to which secondary school students make the expected progress in English and mathematics between the ages of 11 and 16.

Table 1: Percentage of primary and secondary pupils attending good or outstanding schools by local authority in the North West

Primary schools			Secondary schools		
2013 Rank	Local authority (education)	2013 %	2013 Rank	Local authority (education)	2013 %
4=	Sefton	94	13=	Bury	95
9	Trafford	93	21=	Trafford	90
12=	Cheshire East	90	48=	Cheshire West and Chester	82
14=	St. Helens	89	48=	Liverpool	82
21=	Knowsley	88	51=	Wigan	81
23=	Stockport	87	69=	Lancashire	77
28=	Bolton	86	69=	Cheshire East	77
32=	Wirral	85	74=	Warrington	75
40=	Liverpool	84	84=	Rochdale	73
43=	Wigan	83	91=	Stockport	72
43=	Rochdale	83	95=	Wirral	71
43=	Cumbria	83	102=	Bolton	69
60=	Cheshire West and Chester	81	105=	Blackburn with Darwen	68
60=	Blackburn with Darwen	81	114=	Cumbria	63
68=	Bury	80	116=	Manchester	62
68=	Lancashire	80	124=	Oldham	57
68=	Manchester	80	124=	Halton	57
68=	Halton	80	127=	Sefton	56
84=	Warrington	78	136=	Knowsley	50
87=	Oldham	77	138=	St. Helens	47
97=	Blackpool	75	138=	Blackpool	47
97=	Salford	75	138=	Salford	47
114=	Tameside	72	142	Tameside	46

More particularly, children identified as being the most able at age 11 often do not go on to fulfil their potential in GCSE examinations. In Knowsley, only 7% who achieved a Level 5 or above in mathematics and English aged 11 went on to attain an A*/A grade at GCSE aged 16 in a Knowsley secondary school. This contrasts with a nearby authority, Wirral, where the figure is 46%.

Tackling weaker performance

In 2012/13, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) have challenged schools in the North West to focus more sharply on making a greater difference. Senior HMI have met with governing bodies and Directors of Children's Services in the region, as well as those others responsible for schools, highlighting concerns and the need for urgent action where there is underperformance.

Tackling the gap between the achievement of children and young people eligible for free school meals and their more affluent peers is one of the most important challenges for our education system. In many schools in the **North West**, the poor performance of a small number of pupils entitled to free school meals is lost in the midst of otherwise stronger performance, for example in secondary schools in **Cheshire West** and **Chester**, **Cheshire East** and **Cumbria**.

Making better use of our people

There are large numbers of outstanding leaders in the region, including National Leaders of Education. However, they are not always used as well as they could be.

Many North West schools have improved through school-to-school support, including as a result of leadership coaching. But in some cases National Leaders have not been used at all since designation, even though there are many weak schools in the region that require support.

There is little tangible evidence across the North West of the systematic and successful deployment of National Leaders to the schools, or areas, that need it the most. In addition, the arrangements for checking on the quality of the work of those National Leaders that are deployed are insufficient.

A key priority for the North West must be to make better use of its people so that weaker providers are supported by the most successful.

Challenging the system to do better is a key part of inspection. In 2012/13, HMI carried out monitoring inspections to weaker schools. In addition we have given more schools the opportunity to shadow inspections. More headteachers and senior leaders in the North West are joining Ofsted's contracted inspection teams. These leaders bring with them valuable and recent experience. In 2013/14, Ofsted will expand its programme of involving serving headteachers and senior leaders in inspection in the North West.

Further education and skills

In the North West, 172,900 young people aged between 16 and 19 years attend a college or skills training. Of the 63 colleges, 87% are good or better. This is 15 percentage points higher than England as a whole.

However, at 55%, too few learners leave full-time education or training with a qualification at level 3. This figure varies considerably across the 23 local authorities. In Knowsley, only 34% achieve a qualification at level 3 by 19.

The North West economy depends on children and young people achieving their full potential so that we can compete nationally and internationally. A few larger training providers have poor apprenticeship success rates and this must improve urgently.

Where FE and skills provision has been judged as requires improvement, HMI carry out improvement visits that can include providing challenge to governing bodies, a focus on English and mathematics, joint lesson observations and analysis of self-assessment.

Many weak colleges and training providers have stepped up, enthusiastically, to the challenge of getting to good, including through more robust performance management of staff, higher expectations of learners and better teaching.



Only the best is good enough

In all the best schools, early years settings, colleges and training providers in the North West, the key priority for leaders must be to improve the quality of teaching. It is not yet consistently good enough across the region.

We need to do more to provide good and outstanding teaching across all settings so that outcomes rise for all children, young people and learners, including for the most able and those who live in disadvantaged communities.

