



Annual Report 2012/13

West Midlands regional report

The West Midlands encompasses huge diversity – from Birmingham and its surrounding towns and cities to the large rural counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire bordering Wales in the west of the region. The West Midlands has a proud industrial history, being the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in this country: iron and steel, bicycle and motor vehicle manufacture, the rail and aircraft industries, all forms of engineering, pottery and many others.

When measured against indices of multiple deprivation, the region as a whole is similar to Yorkshire and Humber; it is markedly more deprived than the East Midlands. However, as with any region, these headline facts hide a complex and varied picture. The large rural counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire in the west of the region, along with Worcestershire and parts of Warwickshire, are generally areas of greater affluence, although even they contain pockets of rural deprivation and unemployment.

Birmingham is the country's second city. It has high levels of deprivation and the greatest proportion of children eligible for free school meals in the region.





Director's summary



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The proportion of good or outstanding primary schools in the West Midlands has increased in 2012/13, in some local authority areas substantially. Despite this improvement, children in the West Midlands still have a lower chance of attending a good or outstanding primary school than in most other areas of the country. In 10 out of the 14 local authorities in the West Midlands, over a quarter of primary pupils attend a school that is not yet good. Across the West Midlands, this amounts to over 120,000 primary-aged children.

The proportion of good and better secondary schools is broadly in line with levels in England overall and the region has the lowest proportion of inadequate secondary schools. Improving the performance of colleges in the West Midlands is an urgent priority. Nearly half of all colleges are less than good, compared with just three in every 10 nationally. This is the lowest proportion in the country.

The proportion of good or better primary schools has increased in the last year. In some local authority areas, this increase has been substantial. For example, Coventry has seen a 21 percentage point increase in the proportion of primary schools judged good or outstanding. Despite this increase, the West Midlands remains below

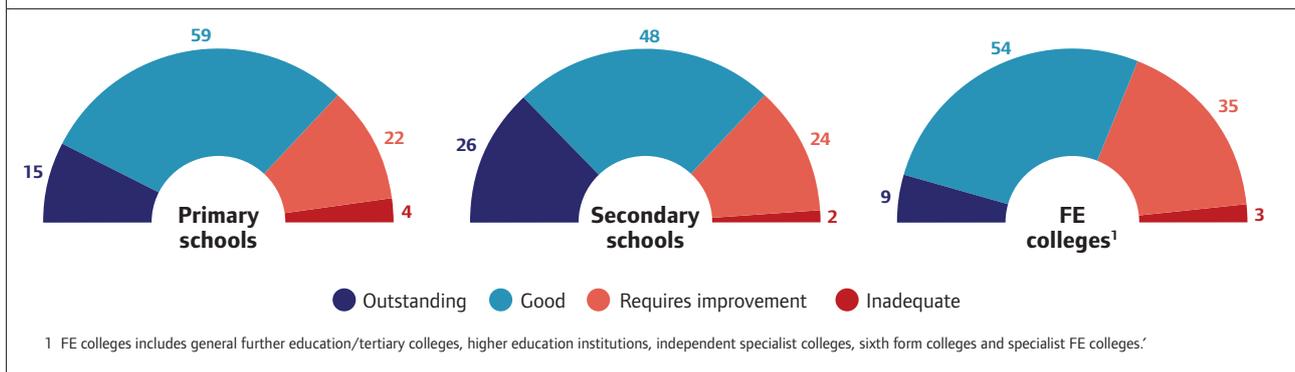
the national level and lagging well behind the best regions nationally for likelihood of a child attending a good or outstanding school. Seventy four per cent of primary schools are judged to be good or outstanding in the West Midlands compared with 78% for England. Only the East of England performs less well nationally. The performance of primary schools in the West Midlands therefore remains a cause for concern.

The West Midlands performs broadly in line with England as a whole at secondary level, with 72% of schools judged as good or outstanding compared with 71% of schools nationally. This proportion has improved at a slightly faster rate than in England as a whole.

The performance of further education (FE) colleges is poor. The West Midlands has the largest proportion of inadequate colleges in the country – only 51% of colleges were judged as good or outstanding against a national proportion of 72%. This is the lowest proportion in the country. Only one in 10 colleges in the West Midlands was judged outstanding compared with one in five nationally.



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



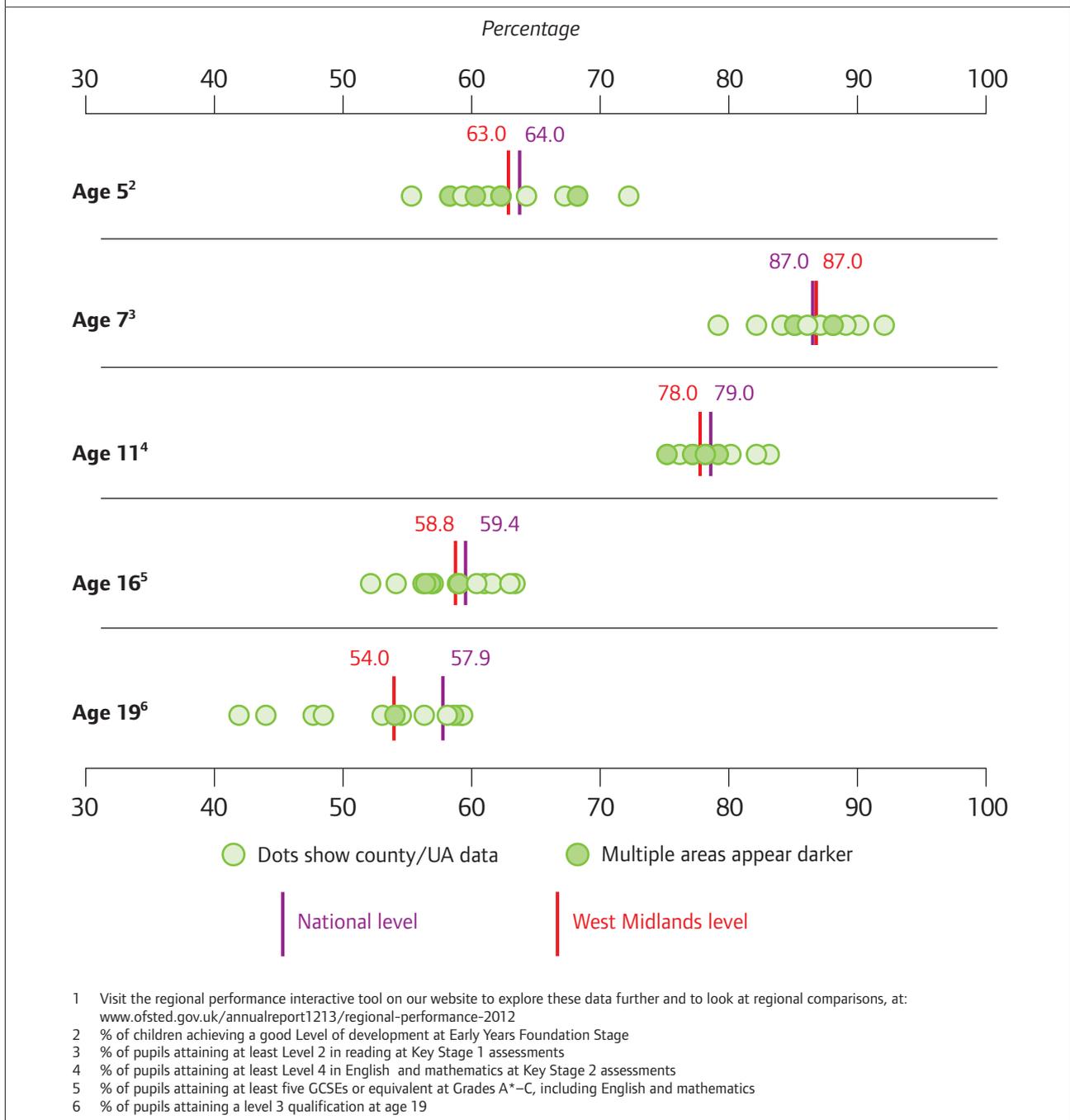
Pupil attainment in the West Midlands

Director commentary

Across the region, a smaller proportion of children reach a good level of development by the end of the Early

Years Foundation Stage than do nationally.¹ In **Walsall, Wolverhampton** and **Telford and Wrekin**, this is around one in two children. In **Solihull, Warwickshire** and **Shropshire** this is better and two out of three children reach a good level of development. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are nearer to the national figure and reading is in line with national levels, but some local authorities begin to lag behind. Only three are above the national level at this point – **Solihull, Staffordshire** and **Warwickshire**.

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



¹ Local Area Interactive Tool, Department for Education; www.education.gov.uk. All attainment data in this chapter is for 2012.r 2012.



At the end of Key Stage 2, standards for the region are just below national levels, but again marked differences exist between local authorities. **Solihull, Warwickshire** and **Shropshire** are above the national level, whereas the remainder are just below. By the end of Key Stage 4, the region is broadly in line nationally. However, **Sandwell** and **Stoke-on-Trent** do not perform well.

The widest gap in performance between national and West Midlands' results is for the percentage of learners achieving a level 3 qualification at age 19. Two local authorities, **Sandwell** and **Stoke-on-Trent**, remain 10 percentage points below the national level.

There is considerable variation between the local authorities within the West Midlands. It is only in **Solihull** and **Warwickshire** that a greater proportion of students attain the national benchmark at ages five, seven, 11 and 16 compared with nationally. In five local authorities, **Herefordshire, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Sandwell** and **Stoke-on-Trent**, fewer pupils reach the expected standard than nationally at each milestone. In **Staffordshire**, despite a greater proportion of pupils

meeting the benchmark than nationally in the early years, comparative attainment slips at each age milestone and by age 16 the county is performing below national and regional levels. Transition and progress are key concerns for the region.

Variation in performance across local authorities

The West Midlands has experienced an increase of almost 60,000 pupils who are attending good or outstanding primary schools between 2012 and 2013. **Worcestershire, Sandwell, Telford and Wrekin** and **Coventry** each saw an increase of over 20 percentage points. Despite this, the region continues to perform poorly compared with other regions. For some authorities, this increase has been minimal and has not kept pace with improvements nationally. In 10 of the 14 local authorities, one in four pupils attend primary schools which are less than good. In **Wolverhampton** and **Walsall** this proportion is more

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

Primary schools			Secondary schools		
2013 Rank	Local authority (education)	2013 %	2013 Rank	Local authority (education)	2013 %
43=	Worcestershire	83	26=	Herefordshire	89
43=	Solihull	83	26=	Telford and Wrekin	89
54=	Sandwell	82	32=	Coventry	88
79=	Birmingham	79	51=	Worcestershire	81
105=	Telford and Wrekin	74	56=	Solihull	80
105=	Shropshire	74	63=	Birmingham	78
108=	Warwickshire	73	63=	Walsall	78
114=	Herefordshire	72	77=	Shropshire	74
114=	Dudley	72	77=	Sandwell	74
121=	Staffordshire	71	91=	Wolverhampton	72
121=	Stoke-on-Trent	71	100=	Warwickshire	70
140	Coventry	64	105=	Staffordshire	68
145=	Walsall	60	129=	Dudley	55
150	Wolverhampton	56	148	Stoke-on-Trent	34



than one in three pupils. These two authorities are now in the bottom 10 of local authorities across England and both have over 40% of children attending a primary school which is not yet good.

Secondary schools are performing better than primary schools in the West Midlands. Almost 30,000 more pupils attend a good or outstanding secondary school. Eleven of the local authorities saw a higher proportion of pupils attending a good or outstanding secondary schools than a year ago. Large increases in the proportion of students attending good or outstanding schools can be seen in **Solihull, Walsall, Telford and Wrekin**, and **Sandwell**. However, **Herefordshire, Dudley and Stoke-on-Trent** saw a decline. **Stoke-on-Trent** is in the bottom five of local authorities nationally for performance at secondary level.

In some local authorities; **Solihull** and **Worcestershire** for example, pupils are likely to attend a good or better primary school and secondary school. In Wolverhampton and **Stoke-on-Trent**, both primary and secondary schools perform poorly.

Tackling weaker performance

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) are working with a range of authorities and schools with some success. For example, a group of secondary schools from six local authorities, **Wolverhampton, Stoke-on-Trent, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Sandwell** and **Birmingham**, are participating in a literacy project initiated by HMI that is focused on improving the reading ages of students in Years 7 and 8 and increasing their enjoyment of reading.

Following the formal launch of the project, when the participating schools met staff from a school featured in an Ofsted good practice resource,² **James Bateman Junior High School**, a middle school in Staffordshire, introduced a new whole school approach to teaching literacy and staff have undertaken professional development on how to improve the teaching of reading and writing. It has purchased a phonic reading scheme for pupils in Key Stage 2 and a computer-based reading scheme for students in Key Stage 3. The school is now using reading age tests to identify students in need of support and those falling

behind. Over 50% of the students have reading ages below chronological age. It has increased the time dedicated to reading in form time and in lessons through its 'DEAR' (Drop Everything And Read programme). It is purchasing books that it hopes will encourage boys to read and has developed a 'literacy e-box' similar to the toolbox developed by Cardinal Hulme Catholic School, a resource that teachers can use to support their teaching of literacy.

In **Coventry**, which was identified last year as having the lowest proportion of primary pupils at a good or outstanding school in England, our work with the local authority has helped to galvanise improvement: nearly 7,000 more pupils than at the time of the last year's Annual Report now attend a good primary school.

In 2012, **Stoke-on-Trent** had the lowest proportion of pupils at Key Stage 1 nationally attaining Level 2 or above at reading. HMI are working with the authority to improve children's early reading outcomes. Over the past five years, a low proportion of children in Stoke-On-Trent have achieved expected standards from the start to the end of their schooling.³ In recent years, by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the gap between the lowest attaining children and others has reduced but overall standards remain low. We are working with both schools and the local authority specifically to improve reading, writing and language teaching.

In **Birmingham**, the headline figures for educational outcomes hide significant variation across wards and constituencies. The percentage of schools in each constituency judged to be good or outstanding varies considerably. HMI have worked with the local authority to identify specific electoral wards that are in need of greater challenge and of support for school leaders to promote school improvement and raise aspirations and standards.

A worrying issue often hidden at ward level is the achievement of White British pupils eligible for free school meals in the region. An example is the Northfield constituency in Birmingham, where there are high proportions of White British pupils who are eligible for free school meals and who attend schools that are not good or outstanding. HMI are working with senior leaders and local authority officers to promote school improvement and raise aspirations for this forgotten group of pupils.

2 Good practice resource – Raising standards through literacy: Cardinal Hume Catholic School (130209), Ofsted, 2013; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-raising-standards-through-literacy-cardinal-hume-catholic-school.

3 Local Area Interactive Tool, Department for Education; www.education.gov.uk. All attainment data in this chapter is for 2012.



Further education and skills

The performance of FE colleges is poor. The West Midlands has the largest proportion of inadequate colleges in the country. The proportion of learners that achieve level 3 qualifications is below the national level.

Tackling weak provision in colleges is a priority for the region: the proportion of good or outstanding colleges is the lowest in the country. From January 2013, Ofsted has worked intensively with colleges judged as requires improvement and have, additionally, targeted a further group of colleges, most of which were found to be satisfactory under the previous inspection framework. Tackling poor performance in the region has started with raising aspiration and ambition and sharing the most successful practice from good and outstanding providers. Of the 17 colleges that have been inspected under the new Common Inspection Framework for Further Education and Skills,⁴ seven have improved to, or have maintained their overall effectiveness grade of, good or outstanding. Many of the good and outstanding colleges are large and cover a substantial number of learners (as seen in figure 3 below).

In independent learning and skills providers and in community learning and skills providers, the proportion of good and outstanding providers is slightly higher than nationally and this proportion has increased at a faster rate than is the case nationally.



Regional maps: FSM pupils

The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals in the West Midlands is above the national level at Key Stage 4,⁵ but this masks large variations between local authorities in the region. In some local authorities, mainly the large and more affluent counties, the gaps in progress and attainment between pupils eligible for free school meals and those not eligible are stark. Examples include **Herefordshire at 36.6 percentage points and Shropshire at 37 percentage points.** These counties have low proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, yet the gaps are among the largest in the country. In these authorities, the needs of these most vulnerable pupils are not a high enough priority. Working with the local authorities, we have highlighted the needs of these children to improve their educational outcomes. In Herefordshire, for example, the performance of pupils in receipt of free school meals has been low. We are working with school leaders and local authority officers to tackle this inequality, ensuring that careful monitoring makes sure that these pupils are making the progress of which they are capable.

⁴ The new Common Inspection Framework began on 1 September 2012.

⁵ *Local Area Interactive Tool*, Department for Education; www.education.gov.uk. All attainment data in this chapter is for 2012.