



Department
for Education

Non-GCSE qualifications in England: key stage 4 entries and absence and exclusions outcomes

Ad-hoc notice

March 2019

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Introduction

At key stage 4, pupils can take a range of types of qualification included in the performance tables: Technical Awards, GCSEs or academic certificates,¹ AS levels and other level 3 qualifications.² Schools and colleges may also offer qualifications that are not included in the performance tables where this is in the best interests of individual pupils. However, for funded institutions such as maintained schools and academies, these can only be the qualifications on the [Education & Skills Funding Agency \(ESFA\) list of qualifications available for funding 14 to 16](#).

The focus of this ad-hoc notice is on Technical Awards, which are approved level 1 and level 2 non-GCSE qualifications that provide 14- to 16- year-olds with applied knowledge and practical skills. There are 75 such qualifications eligible for inclusion in the 2020 key stage 4 performance tables.³

This publication covers two separate pieces of analysis from the Department for Education (DfE):

1. Analysis of pupil entries to Technical Awards and other types of qualification at key stage 4 in 2018, and how this varies by pupil characteristics. In this analysis, we have also looked at the trends in pupil entries from 2015 to 2018 by qualification type and we have looked at the distribution of pupils by number of Technical Awards entered in 2018.
2. Analysis that compares the rates of absence and exclusions in 2017 for pupils taking at least one Technical Award and similar pupils who took no Technical Awards.

This publication should be read in conjunction with the government consultation: [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England](#).

¹ Please note that in 2018, 2019 and 2020, legacy GCSEs (A*-G), international GCSEs (i.e. Edexcel Certificates and Cambridge International Certificate Level 1/Level 2) and level 1/level 2 certificates will no longer count in performance tables once the reformed GCSE subject has been introduced. For further information please refer to the [secondary accountability guidance](#).

² Graded music qualifications at grade 6 and above, and free standing mathematics qualifications.

³ A list of qualifications that count in the performance tables each year up to 2021 can be found at: [Key stage 4 qualifications, discount codes and point scores](#)

Main findings

Entries into non-GCSE qualifications

- When looking at qualifications taken in all schools and colleges, GCSEs or academic certificates have the largest proportion of entries at key stage 4. The figure increased year on year from 2015 (80%) to 2017 (84%) but fell slightly in 2018, to 83%.
- The proportion of Technical Award entries has decreased year on year since 2015 (7%), and in 2018 they accounted for 5% of entries.
- Looking at pupils in all schools and colleges in 2018, 35% of pupils took at least one Technical Award. Of these, the majority of pupils took only one Technical Award and very few pupils took more than two Technical Awards.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are over-represented in entries to level 1 Technical Awards and entry level and level 1 qualifications not included in the performance tables.
- Disadvantaged pupils⁴ are over-represented in entries to level 1 and level 2 Technical Awards and entry level qualifications not included in the performance tables.
- Boys are over-represented in entries to level 1 Technical Awards and entry level qualifications not included in the performance tables.
- No ethnic group is over-represented in entries to level 1 or level 2 Technical Awards and entry level or level 1 qualifications not included in the performance tables. There is some variation in entries into other levels and types of qualifications by ethnicity.
- Pupils with low prior attainment⁵ at key stage 2 are over-represented in entries to level 1 and level 2 Technical Awards and entry level and level 1 qualifications not included in the performance tables.

Technical Awards: absence and exclusions outcomes

- For pupils in state-funded mainstream schools, taking a Technical Award is associated with pupils having lower absence rates, lower permanent exclusion rates and lower fixed exclusion rates, when compared to similar pupils who did not take a Technical Award.
- The pattern is similar for pupils on SEN support taking a Technical Award in state-funded mainstream schools, who also have lower absence rates, lower permanent exclusion rates and lower fixed exclusion rates, when compared to similar pupils on SEN support who did not take a Technical Award.

⁴ Pupils are defined as disadvantaged if they are known to have been eligible for free school meals in the past six years (from year 6 to year 11), if they are recorded as having been looked after for at least one day or if they are recorded as having been adopted from care.

⁵ Pupils working below the expected level at key stage 2.

Entries into non-GCSE qualifications

This section looks at pupil entries to Technical Awards and other qualification types, how this varies by pupil characteristics, and how this has changed over time. For the most recent academic year, we have also looked at the distribution of pupils by Technical Award entry.

Methodology

The key stage 4 datasets used for this analysis come from three data sources:

1. Prior attainment records (key stage 2 results)
2. School census records
3. Qualifications entries and results collected from awarding organisations

Attainment data for all pupils at the end of key stage 4 are collected from the awarding organisations by the department's contractor. This information is linked with information on pupil characteristics taken from the [school census](#). Additional information on characteristics definitions can be found in the *Pupil characteristics definitions and historical changes* section in this document: [Key stage 4 methodology](#)

This section looks at pupils in all schools (including further education colleges with 14-16 provision)⁶ at the end of key stage 4, i.e. typically those pupils starting the academic year at age 15. We have also focused on qualifications that are approved for teaching to pupils at pre-16, as per the [ESFA list of qualifications available for funding 14 to 16](#), and our entries figures exclude qualifications that fall outside this category. Furthermore, if pupils at the end of key stage 4 did not take any approved qualifications, they are excluded from our analysis.

As we aim to capture the whole range of eligible qualifications entered by pupils, the [discounting and early entry rules](#) used in [key stage 4 statistics](#) have not been applied here. However, where a pupil has taken the same qualification multiple times we only count this once.

For these reasons, users should be cautious when comparing this analysis with [key stage 4 statistics](#), as the figures presented here are not directly comparable.

⁶ Includes pupils in state-funded schools, independent schools, independent special schools, non-maintained special schools, hospital schools, alternative provision (including pupil referral units, alternative provision free schools and alternative provision academies as well as state-funded alternative provision placements in other institutions), general further education colleges and sixth-form colleges.

Number and percentage of key stage 4 entries by qualification type and year

When looking at qualifications taken in all schools and colleges, GCSEs or academic certificates⁷ have the largest proportion of entries at key stage 4. The figure increased year on year from 2015 (80%) to 2017 (84%) but fell slightly in 2018, to 83% (see [Table 1](#)).

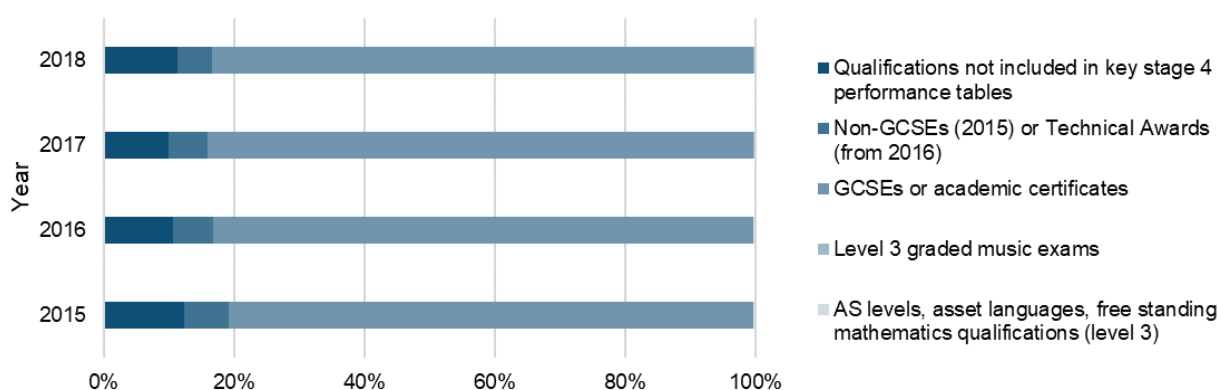
The proportion of Technical Award entries has decreased year on year since 2015 (7%), and in 2018 they accounted for 5% of entries.

Entries to qualifications not included in the school performance tables⁸ fell from 2015 (12%) to 2017 (10%), but increased slightly in 2018 to 11%.

Level 3 qualifications included in performance tables (AS levels, graded music exams, asset languages⁹ and free standing mathematics qualifications) continue to account for a very small proportion of entries (under 1% in 2018).

Figure 1: Proportion of key stage 4 entries by qualification type and year

England, all schools and colleges, 2015 to 2018



Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

Distribution of pupils by Technical Award entry

Looking at pupils in all schools and colleges in 2018, 35% of pupils took at least one Technical Award (see [Table 2](#)). Of these, the majority of pupils took only one Technical Award and very few pupils took more than two Technical Awards.

⁷ See [footnote 1](#).

⁸ In 2018, an additional 20 reformed GCSEs graded on a 9-1 scale were sat by pupils for the first time, along with the English language, English literature and mathematics GCSEs which were reformed in 2017. Once a GCSE subject has been reformed, any non-reformed entries in these subjects will count as qualifications not included in performance tables.

⁹ Asset languages qualifications were last included in the key stage 4 performance tables in 2017.

Pupil entries by pupil characteristics and qualification level¹⁰

In this section, pupil entries to non-GCSE qualifications at key stage 4 in 2018 are compared to the proportion of the cohort with certain pupil characteristics,¹¹ to see whether certain groups are over- or under-represented in entries to Technical Awards and qualifications not included in performance tables.¹²

The following pupil characteristics have been analysed: special educational needs (SEN), disadvantage, gender, ethnicity and prior attainment at key stage 2. SEN, gender and ethnicity provide some insight into the protected characteristics of disability, race and sex. We have additionally looked at disadvantage and prior attainment, as these are variables that we know to be related to educational outcomes at key stage 4.

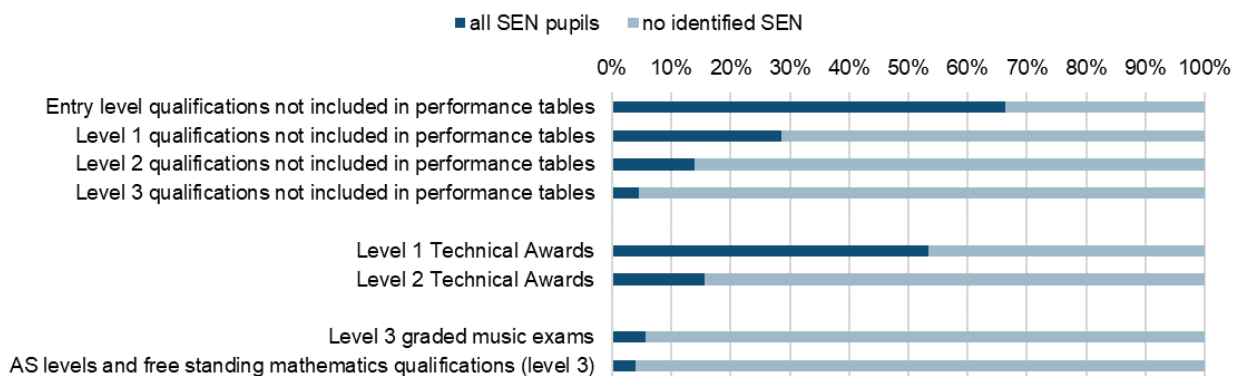
Special educational needs (SEN)^{13, 14}

Pupils with SEN (15% of the cohort) are over-represented in entries to level 1 Technical Awards (53% of entries), and entry level and level 1 qualifications not included in performance tables (66% and 29% of entries respectively).

They are under-represented in entries to level 3 qualifications not included in performance tables (5% of entries): see [Table 3](#).

Figure 2: Proportion of key stage 4 entries by pupil SEN provision

England, all schools and colleges, 2018



Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

¹⁰ Please see: [What qualification levels mean](#) for more information.

¹¹ For additional information about characteristics definitions, please see the *Pupil characteristics definitions and historical changes* section in this document: [Key stage 4 methodology](#)

¹² We have compared the proportion of the cohort with each characteristic to the percentage of entries from pupils with this characteristic, and where the absolute difference is at least 20% we have reported this.

¹³ The SEN variable indicates whether a pupil has learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. Pupils with special educational needs include those with SEN support, with statements of SEN or an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

¹⁴ For the purposes of this analysis, we have excluded pupils whose SEN provision could not be determined (9% of pupils).

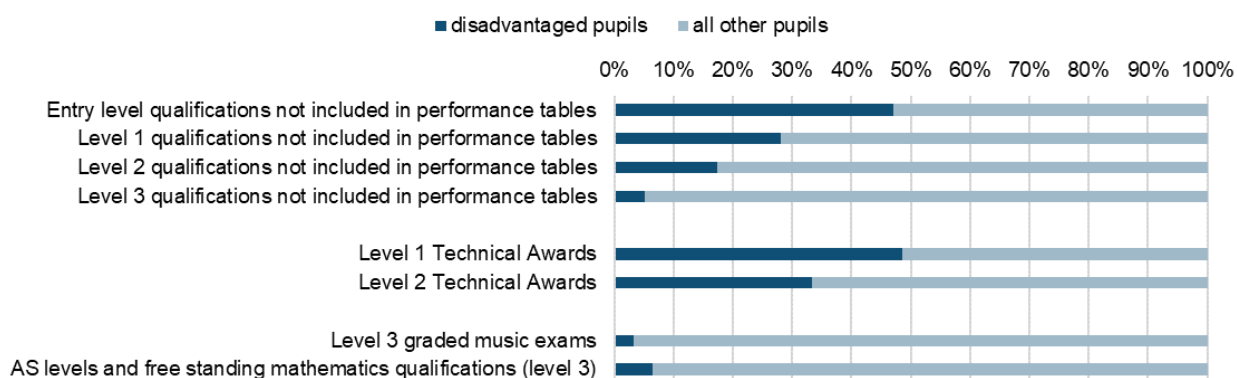
Disadvantaged pupils¹⁵

Disadvantaged pupils (25% of the cohort) are over-represented in entries to level 1 and level 2 Technical Awards (49% and 33% of entries respectively), and entry level qualifications not included in performance tables (47% of entries): see [Table 4](#).

They are under-represented in entries to level 2 and level 3 qualifications not included in performance tables (18% and 5% of entries respectively).

Figure 3: Proportion of key stage 4 entries by pupil disadvantaged status

England, all schools and colleges, 2018



Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

¹⁵ See [footnote 4](#).

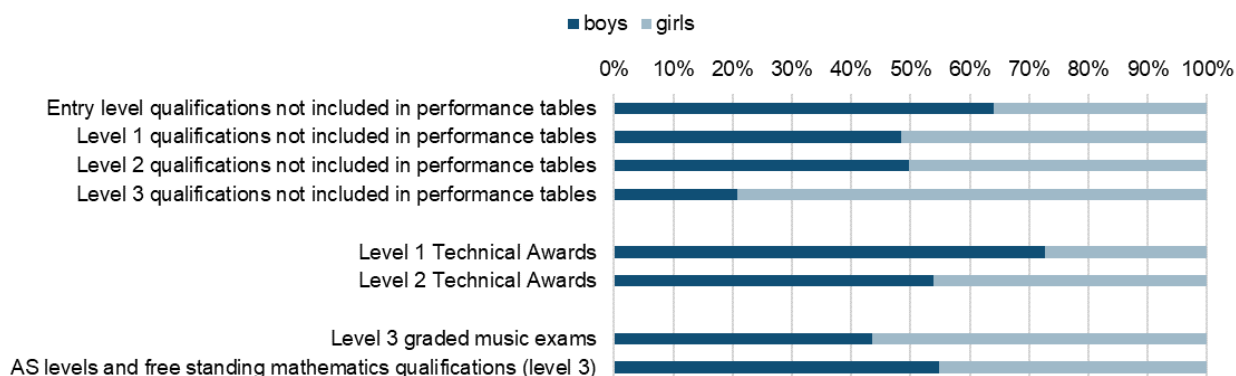
Gender¹⁶

Boys (51% of the cohort) are over-represented in entries to level 1 Technical Awards (73% of entries) and entry level qualifications not included in the performance tables (64% of entries): see [Table 5](#).

They are under-represented in entries to level 3 qualifications not included in performance tables (21% of entries).

Figure 4: Proportion of key stage 4 entries by gender

England, all schools and colleges, 2018



Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

¹⁶ The gender of the pupil is recorded as male or female on the [school census](#). In exceptional circumstances, a school may be unsure as to which gender should be recorded for a particular pupil. The advice from the department is to record the gender according to the wishes of the pupil and/or parent.

Ethnicity^{17, 18}

White and mixed ethnicity pupils (77% and 5% of the cohort respectively) are not over- or under-represented in entries to Technical Awards or qualifications not included in performance tables at any level (see [Table 6](#)).

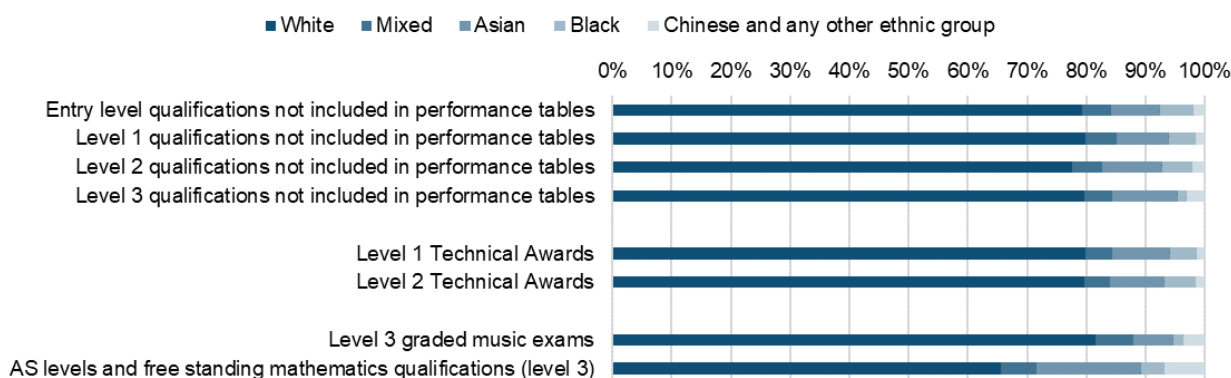
Asian pupils (11% of the cohort) are under-represented in entries to entry level qualifications not included in performance tables (8% of entries).

Black pupils (6% of the cohort) are under-represented in entries to level 1 Technical Awards (4% of entries), and level 3 qualifications not included in performance tables (2% of entries).

Figures for Chinese pupils and pupils from any other ethnic group can be seen in [Table 6](#). We have not reported on them here due to the small numbers of pupils.

Figure 5: Proportion of key stage 4 entries by ethnicity

England, all schools and colleges, 2018



Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

¹⁷ Ethnicity is a personal awareness of a common cultural identity. Ethnicity relates to how a person feels and not necessarily how they are perceived by others. It is a subjective decision as to which category a person places themselves in and therefore cannot be used to infer any other characteristics such as religion, country of origin etc. [Ethnicity monitoring advice](#) is available from the department's website.

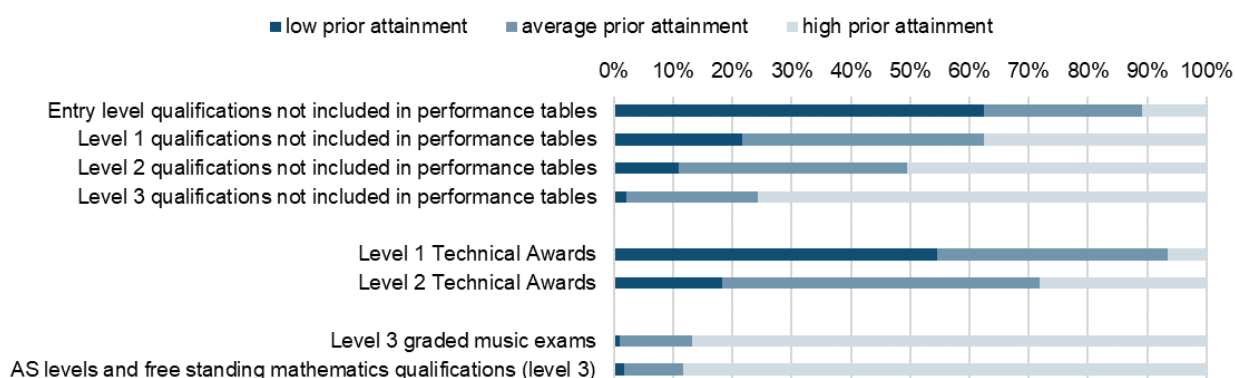
¹⁸ For the purposes of this analysis, we have excluded pupils whose ethnicity is unclassified (10% of pupils).

Prior attainment group^{19, 20}

Pupils with low prior attainment at key stage 2 (14% of the cohort) are over-represented in entries to level 1 and level 2 Technical Awards (55% and 18% of entries respectively), and entry level and level 1 qualifications not included in performance tables (62% and 22% of entries respectively): see [Table 7](#).

They are under-represented in level 2 and level 3 qualifications not included in performance tables (11% and 2% of entries respectively).

Figure 6: Proportion of key stage 4 entries by prior attainment group
England, all schools and colleges, 2018



Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

¹⁹ Pupils are grouped based on their performance in reading and mathematics at key stage 2. Indicators are shown for:

- Low attainers = those below the expected level (level 4) at key stage 2
- Middle attainers = those at the expected level (level 4) at key stage 2
- High attainers = those above the expected level (level 4) at key stage 2

²⁰ For the purposes of this analysis we have excluded pupils with missing prior attainment information (13% of pupils).

Technical Awards: absence and exclusions outcomes

In this section, we have looked at the association between taking at least one Technical Award²¹ at key stage 4 and absence and exclusions outcomes in 2017. This analysis has been restricted to pupils in state-funded mainstream schools only.^{22, 23}

Methodology

This analysis uses propensity score matching (PSM), a statistical technique used to evaluate the impact of an intervention or treatment, such as taking at least one Technical Award.

PSM estimates the probability – or ‘propensity score’ – that a given pupil takes at least one Technical Award based on their characteristics. Pupils taking Technical Awards are matched to similar pupils not taking a Technical Award with a similar propensity score, called the control group. We compare absence and exclusions outcomes during the final year of key stage 4 for pupils taking Technical Awards and control group pupils.²⁴ The R statistical language and [Matching](#) package were used to carry out our PSM analysis.

[Table 8](#) sets out the main pupil characteristic information obtained from the [National Pupil Database](#) used in this analysis, to match pupils taking Technical Awards to similar pupils who did not take a Technical Award. We include pupil characteristic information for the academic years before key stage 4, as we are interested in the effect that taking a Technical Award has on absence and exclusions during the final year of key stage 4.

With this approach, there may be unobserved characteristics which bias our estimate of the impact of taking at least one Technical Award, as we cannot identify and control for them within the data available. For example, pupils taking Technical Awards may be more motivated when going into key stage 4 than the control group pupils.

²¹ This analysis excludes [BCS Level 2 ECDL Certificate in IT Application Skills](#), which was removed from the school performance tables in 2018.

²² Excludes pupils with missing characteristic information.

²³ We have focused on state-funded mainstream schools as opposed to other school types (e.g. independent schools and special schools), to try to ensure that the pupils we are comparing are as similar as possible in terms of their characteristics. State-funded mainstream schools include academies, free schools, city technology colleges and further education colleges with provision for 14- to 16-year-olds. They exclude state-funded special schools, independent schools, independent special schools, non-maintained special schools, hospital schools and alternative provision (including pupil referral units, alternative provision free schools and alternative provision academies as well as state-funded alternative provision placements in other institutions).

²⁴ To calculate the absence rates for the two groups we take the average absence rate of all the pupils within the group. For the exclusions outcomes, we sum the total number of exclusions within each group and divide the total number of pupils in the group. These follow a slightly different methodology from the [pupil absence statistics](#) and [exclusions statistics](#), which look at enrolment numbers as opposed to pupil numbers.

We try to avoid this issue by controlling for all measurable pre-key stage 4 characteristics. However, users should only interpret the results as a comparison of outcomes for pupils taking a Technical Award during key stage 4 and a group of similar pupils selected using observable characteristics. The associations that we identify do not allow us to infer causality and a finding might support a particular hypothesis but it is not its absolute proof.

All the estimated differences in outcomes between the treatment group and control group in this analysis are statistically significant (using a 95% confidence interval).

Absence and exclusions outcomes for all pupils

For the main sample we looked at all pupils taking Technical Awards in state-funded mainstream schools, and the matching approach used²⁵ resulted in roughly 0.1% of treatment pupils being dropped from the sample.

For pupils in state-funded mainstream schools, taking a Technical Award is associated with lower overall absence rates, by 1.03 percentage points (15% lower) when compared to similar pupils who did not take Technical Awards (see [Table 11](#)).

Both fixed and permanent exclusion rates are also lower for pupils taking Technical Awards than rates for similar pupils who did not take Technical Awards, by 1.09 and 0.04 percentage points respectively (10% lower and 62% lower respectively).

Absence and exclusions outcomes for pupils on SEN support²⁶

For pupils on SEN support in state-funded mainstream schools,²⁷ taking a Technical Award is associated with lower overall absence rates, by 1.93 percentage points (21% lower) when compared to similar pupils on SEN support who did not take a Technical Award (see [Table 12](#)).

Both fixed period exclusion and permanent exclusion rates are also lower for pupils on SEN support taking Technical Awards than for similar pupils on SEN support who did not take a Technical Award, by 2.1 and 0.03 percentage points respectively (10% lower and 44% lower respectively).

²⁵ One-to-fifty matches between pupils in the treatment and control group are made using a replacement Nearest Neighbour matching algorithm. In our main sample we used a caliper of 0.1 standard deviation to limit instances of poor quality matches. However this does result in small number of pupils being excluded from the analysis through not being matched.

²⁶ We have focused on pupils on SEN support, as other pupils with SEN (i.e. those with statements of SEN or an education, health and care plan) are less likely to be in state-funded mainstream schools, which is the focus of our analysis.

²⁷ In this analysis, just under 0.6% of pupils were dropped from the sample as a result of the matching process.

Tables

Table 1: Percentage of key stage 4 entries by qualification type and year²⁸

England, all schools and colleges, 2015 to 2018

Qualification types	Entries			
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Qualifications not included in performance tables ²⁹	12%	11%	10%	11%
Technical Awards ³⁰	7%	6%	6%	5%
GCSEs or academic certificates ³¹	80%	83%	84%	83%
Level 3 graded music exams	0%	0%	0%	0%
AS levels, asset languages, ³² free standing mathematics qualifications	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of key stage 4 entries	6,300,721	6,133,362	5,827,730	5,194,142
Number of pupils³³ at the end of key stage 4	611,762	599,067	582,963	578,411

Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

Table 2: Number and percentage of pupils by Technical Award entry at key stage 4

England, all schools and colleges, 2018

Number of Technical Awards taken at key stage 4	Number of pupils ³³ at the end of key stage 4	Percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4
0	378,161	65%
1	139,516	24%
2	47,667	8%
3	11,267	2%
4	1,523	0%
5 and above	277	0%
Total	578,411	100%

Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

²⁸ Figures for 2018 are revised, figures for 2015 to 2017 are final. Additional information on revised dataset and final dataset can be found in the *How the output is created* section in this document: [Key stage 4 methodology](#)

²⁹ In 2018, an additional 20 reformed GCSEs graded on a 9-1 scale were sat by pupils for the first time, along with the English language, English literature and mathematics GCSEs which were reformed in 2017. Once a GCSE subject has been reformed, any non-reformed entries in these subjects will count as qualifications not included in performance tables.

³⁰ A list of Technical Awards approved for reporting in [school performance tables](#) is available at: [Performance tables: technical and vocational qualifications](#)

³¹ Please note that in 2018, 2019 and 2020, legacy GCSEs (A*-G), international GCSEs (i.e. Edexcel Certificates and Cambridge International Certificate Level 1/Level 2) and level 1/level 2 certificates will no longer count in performance tables once the reformed GCSE subject has been introduced. For further information please refer to the [secondary accountability guidance](#).

³² Asset languages qualifications were last counted in the 2017 key stage 4 performance tables.

³³ We have focused on qualifications that are approved for use by pupils aged 14 to 16, as per [ESFA list of qualifications available for funding 14 to 16](#). Therefore, our entries figures exclude qualifications that fall outside this category, and furthermore if pupils at the end of key stage 4 did not take any such qualifications, they are excluded from our analysis.

Table 3: Percentage of key stage 4 entries into non-GCSE qualifications, by SEN provision
England, all schools and colleges, 2018

SEN provision	Percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4	Percentage of key stage 4 entries into							
		Technical Awards		Qualifications not included in performance tables				Graded music exam	AS levels and free standing mathematics
		Level 1	Level 2	Entry level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3
All SEN pupils	15%	53%	16%	66%	29%	14%	5%	6%	4%
No identified SEN	85%	47%	84%	34%	71%	86%	95%	94%	96%
All pupils	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

Table 4: Percentage of key stage 4 entries into non-GCSE qualifications, by disadvantage status
England, all schools and colleges, 2018

Disadvantage status	Percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4	Percentage of key stage 4 entries into							
		Technical Awards		Qualifications not included in performance tables				Graded music exam	AS levels and free standing mathematics
		Level 1	Level 2	Entry level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3
Disadvantaged pupils	25%	49%	33%	47%	28%	17%	5%	3%	7%
All other pupils	75%	51%	67%	53%	72%	83%	95%	97%	93%
All pupils	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

Table 5: Percentage of key stage 4 entries into non-GCSE qualifications, by gender
England, all schools and colleges, 2018

Gender	Percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4	Percentage of key stage 4 entries into							
		Technical Awards		Qualifications not included in performance tables				Graded music exam	AS levels and free standing mathematics
		Level 1	Level 2	Entry level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3
Boys	51%	73%	54%	64%	48%	50%	21%	44%	55%
Girls	49%	27%	46%	36%	52%	50%	79%	56%	45%
All pupils	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

Table 6: Percentage of key stage 4 entries into non-GCSE qualifications, by ethnicity
England, all schools and colleges, 2018

Ethnicity	Percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4	Percentage of key stage 4 entries into							
		Technical Awards		Qualifications not included in performance tables			Graded music exam	AS levels and free standing mathematics	
		Level 1	Level 2	Entry level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3
White	77%	80%	80%	79%	80%	78%	80%	82%	66%
Mixed	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%
Asian	11%	10%	9%	8%	9%	10%	11%	7%	18%
Black	6%	4%	5%	6%	5%	5%	2%	2%	4%
Chinese	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	3%	2%
Any other ethnic group	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	4%
All pupils	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

Table 7: Percentage of key stage 4 entries into non-GCSE qualifications, by prior attainment group
England, all schools and colleges, 2018

Prior attainment group	Percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4	Percentage of key stage 4 entries into							
		Technical Awards		Qualifications not included in performance tables			Graded music exam	AS levels and free standing mathematics	
		Level 1	Level 2	Entry level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3
Low prior attainment	14%	55%	18%	62%	22%	11%	2%	1%	2%
Average prior attainment	44%	39%	53%	27%	41%	39%	22%	12%	10%
High prior attainment	42%	6%	28%	11%	37%	51%	76%	87%	88%
All pupils	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

Table 8: Characteristic information used in matching pupils taking Technical Awards to similar pupils for the PSM analysis

England, state-funded mainstream schools, 2017

Data items	Details
General pupil level characteristic data	Characteristics such as age when taking exams at the end of key stage 4, gender and ethnicity.
Free school meals (FSM) eligibility and deprivation measures	<p>Where a pupil's family have claimed eligibility for free school meals in the school census, they are defined as eligible for free school meals. Parents are able to claim free schools meals if they receive a qualifying benefit.</p> <p>We have used the data for this variable from the January 2015 school census record – i.e. data for the academic year before key stage 4.</p> <p>We have also used data for each pupils' FSM6 status in 2017 – this shows whether a given pupil has been eligible for FSM on Census day in the last six years.</p> <p>We also used data on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) score and rank derived from a given pupil's postcode in 2016.</p>
SEN provision	The pupil level measure SENprovisionMajor indicates whether a pupil is classified as SEN with statement or SEN without statement (or not SEN at all). We have used the data for this variable from the January 2015 school census record.
Prior attainment at key stage 2	As we are considering key stage 4 results of pupils at the end of key stage 4 in 2017, the corresponding key stage 2 prior attainment data is for most pupils from 2012. For this purpose, we have used data on each pupil's key stage 2 prior attainment in English (key stage 2 point score in English using fine grading and teacher assessment), mathematics (key stage 2 point score in mathematics using fine grading and teacher assessment) and science (national curriculum level awarded for science teacher assessment).
Absence data at key stage 3	We have used authorised and unauthorised absence data for each pupil for 2013, 2014 and 2015 – for most pupils at the end of key stage 4 in 2017 this will represent the three academic years before key stage 4.
Exclusions data at key stage 3	We have used pupil level data showing whether each pupil had one or more fixed exclusions from school in 2013, 2014 and 2015 – for most pupils at the end of key stage 4 in 2017 this will represent the three academic years before key stage 4.
Mobility Indicators	<p>We have used a mobility indicator flag that indicates if a pupil has a different postcode from the previous Spring Census. We have used the data for this variable relating to 2015 – for most pupils at the end of key stage 4 in 2017 this will represent the academic year before key stage 4.</p> <p>We also took into account data on whether each pupil had moved school between either year 7 and year 8 or year 8 and year 9.</p>
Ofsted rating ³⁴ of feeder school	We used data on the school that each 2017 pupil at the end of key stage 4 attended as of February 2015, where possible, ³⁵ to identify the Ofsted rating of the pre-key stage 4 school for each pupil.

Source: [National Pupil Database](#)

³⁴ For more information please refer: [State-funded school inspections and outcomes: management information](#)

³⁵ For a small number of schools we have used figures from May 2014, due to data availability.

Table 9: Pupil characteristics for the all pupils sampled in the PSM analysis
 England, state-funded mainstream schools, 2017

Pupil characteristics	All data			Matched Data		
	Mean for treatment group	Mean for control group	Difference in means ³⁶	Mean for treatment group	Mean for control group	Difference in means ³⁶
Age	15.49	15.51	-0.01	15.49	15.49	0.00
Male	0.53	0.49	0.04	0.53	0.53	0.00
Any other ethnic group	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00
Asian	0.08	0.10	-0.02	0.08	0.08	0.00
Black	0.04	0.05	-0.01	0.04	0.04	0.00
Chinese	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mixed	0.04	0.05	-0.01	0.04	0.04	0.00
Unclassified ethnicity	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00
White	0.81	0.78	0.04	0.81	0.82	0.00
FSM	0.18	0.13	0.05	0.18	0.18	0.00
FSM6	0.32	0.23	0.09	0.32	0.32	0.00
Disadvantaged	0.33	0.24	0.09	0.32	0.32	0.00
IDAC1	0.22	0.18	0.04	0.22	0.22	0.00
First language ³⁷	1.12	1.14	-0.02	1.12	1.12	0.00
Mobility indicator	0.09	0.08	0.01	0.09	0.09	0.00
SEN support	0.17	0.11	0.06	0.17	0.16	0.01
SEN with a statement	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.00

Source: [National Pupil Database](#)

³⁶ Differences in means are calculated using unrounded data.

³⁷ "First Language" is the language to which a child was initially exposed during early development and continues to be exposed in the home or in the community. It does not mean that pupils are necessarily fluent in a language other than English or cannot speak English. In this analysis, we have recorded:

- 1 = pupils for whom first language was not known but believed to be English.
- 2 = pupils for whom first language was not known but believed to be other than English.
- 3 = pupils for whom first language was not obtained, refused or could not be determined.

Table 10: Pupil characteristics for the SEN support sample in the PSM analysis (pupils on SEN support)

England, state-funded mainstream schools, 2017

Pupil characteristics	All data			Matched Data		
	Mean for treatment group	Mean for control group	Difference in means ³⁸	Mean for treatment group	Mean for control group	Difference in means ³⁸
Age	15.47	15.48	-0.01	15.47	15.47	0.00
Male	0.62	0.59	0.04	0.62	0.63	0.00
Any other ethnic group	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00
Asian	0.08	0.07	0.01	0.08	0.08	0.00
Black	0.05	0.06	-0.01	0.05	0.05	0.00
Chinese	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mixed	0.04	0.05	-0.01	0.04	0.04	0.00
Unclassified ethnicity	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00
White	0.80	0.80	0.01	0.80	0.80	0.00
FSM	0.27	0.23	0.03	0.26	0.26	0.00
FSM6	0.43	0.38	0.05	0.43	0.43	0.00
Disadvantaged	0.45	0.40	0.05	0.44	0.44	0.00
IDAC1	0.24	0.21	0.03	0.24	0.24	0.00
First language ³⁹	1.12	1.13	0.00	1.12	1.12	0.00
Mobility indicator	0.10	0.09	0.01	0.09	0.10	0.00
SEN support ⁴⁰	0.81	0.76	0.05	0.81	0.81	0.00
SEN with a statement	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00

Source: [National Pupil Database](#)

³⁸ See [footnote 36](#).

³⁹ See [footnote 37](#).

⁴⁰ Please note that this is the SEN support provision in 2015. For key stage 4, this will be equal to 1 for both treated and control groups before and after matching.

Table 11: Absence and exclusions outcomes for the all pupils sampled in the PSM analysis
England, state-funded mainstream schools, 2017

Outcome (%)	Mean for treatment group	Mean for control group	Percentage point difference ⁴¹	Percentage difference ⁴²
Unauthorised absence rate	1.79	2.32	-0.53	-23%
Authorised absence rate	3.99	4.49	-0.50	-11%
Overall absence rate	5.78	6.81	-1.03	-15%
Fixed period exclusion rate	9.8	10.9	-1.09	-10%
Permanent exclusion rate	0.02	0.06	-0.04	-62%

Source: [National Pupil Database](#)

Table 12: Absence and exclusions outcomes for the SEN support sample in the PSM analysis (pupils on SEN support)
England, state-funded mainstream schools, 2017

Outcome (%)	Mean for treatment group	Mean for control group	Percentage point difference ⁴¹	Percentage difference ⁴²
Unauthorised absence rate	2.52	3.60	-1.08	-30%
Authorised absence rate	4.72	5.58	-0.86	-15%
Overall absence rate	7.24	9.18	-1.93	-21%
Fixed period exclusion rate	18.1	20.2	-2.10	-10%
Permanent exclusion rate	0.04	0.07	-0.03	-44%

Source: [National Pupil Database](#)

⁴¹ Percentage point differences are calculated using unrounded data.

⁴² Percentage differences are calculated using unrounded data.



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