



Summary of 'Attainment and performance in the controlled schools' sector'

The Controlled Schools' Support Council's (CSSC) attainment and performance in the controlled school's sector report provides an exploration of attainment and performance in the controlled sector. It looks at GCSE results and school leaver destinations, with a particular focus on pupils entitled to free school meals.

The analysis relies on two datasets: the Summary of Annual Examination Results (SAER) 2016/17 and Qualifications and Destinations of School Leavers data 2015/16.

GCSE attainment is analysed at school level, pupil level and school leaver level. Each contributes to a better understanding of patterns of attainment and how these link to school type, sector and pupil characteristics.

The report also examines the destinations of school leavers from the controlled sector, identifying the routes controlled pupils take upon leaving school and how this compares to other sectors.

Key findings

GCSE attainment

- In the controlled sector 29% of post-primary schools are low attaining (40% or less pupils achieve five GCSEs A*-C, including English and maths).
- In the maintained sector 27% of schools were low attaining. This proportion is broadly similar to the controlled sector.
- 24% of controlled post-primary schools are high attaining (over 80% of pupils achieve the GCSE standard).
- 61% of controlled pupils attain five or more GCSEs grades A* - C (including English and Maths), exceeding the results of pupils in the maintained (55%) and Grant Maintained Integrated (GMI) (49%) sectors.
- The high performance of pupils in controlled grammar schools props up the results of the sector as a whole.
- Female pupils achieve better results than male pupils.
- Pupils entitled to free school meals do less well across each of the sectors, compared to pupils who are not entitled. This trend is consistent across gender, religion, and school type.
- Female pupils entitled to free school meals attain better results than their male counterparts.

- When all free school meal entitled boys in controlled schools are considered, 35% attain good GCSEs.
- This is three percentage points lower than the results of FSME boys in maintained schools (38%).
- When only the GCSE results of male FSME pupils attending secondary schools in the controlled sector are analysed, the proportion gaining five GCSEs grades A*-C including English and Maths drops to 29%.
- In the school leavers' data, which also details GCSE results, within controlled schools the same proportion of Catholic and Protestant boys achieve the desired GCSE standard. However an analysis including free school meal entitlement and gender across all NI school leavers shows that Catholic boys attain better results than their Protestant counterparts.
- These results not only reiterate that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds underachieve, but that there is a specific need to focus support on disadvantaged pupils from Protestant backgrounds.

School leaver destinations

- Grammar school pupils are more likely than secondary school pupils to continue their education in an institute of higher education.
- Pupils in controlled secondary schools are less likely to go onto higher education, when compared to the maintained and integrated sectors.
- More pupils in controlled secondary schools go on to further education and training than those in the maintained or GMI sectors (67% in controlled secondary schools, 54% maintained and 57% GMI).
- Within controlled schools:
 - Catholic pupils are more likely than Protestant pupils to continue their study in higher or further education.
 - double the number of Protestant pupils, compared to Catholic pupils, left school and entered employment.
 - training was a more popular choice amongst Protestant than Catholic pupils.
 - as the entire cohort of pupils, whether Catholic or Protestant, attend controlled schools the trends noted above indicate that the choices pupils make could be influenced by other factors, such as family or community values.
- Fewer pupils entitled to free school meals go on to study in higher education (13.5%). These pupils are more likely than those not entitled to free school meals (37%) to attend further education or training upon leaving school.

Main messages

1. An education system should equip pupils with the skills they need to fulfil their potential. The successful achievement of qualifications which open the door to further study, employment and career opportunities are central to a school's role in preparing pupils for adult life.

2. Within the controlled sector some excellent schools exist. On the whole controlled school pupils are on par with those in the maintained sector in terms of standard GCSE performance.
3. The report adds to the growing body of evidence that pupils in the sector entitled to free school meals are underachieving, especially male pupils, when compared to the other sectors.
4. There are definite opportunities for improvement, particularly if attention is focused on initiatives targeted at free school meal entitled pupils and community/family engagement in schools is considered.

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