OPSN REPORT

An analysis of how GCSE performance and institutional arrangements impact on students' choices and qualifications after 16

Educating the 'failing' 40%

A report by the RSA's Open Public Services Network
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RSA
21st century enlightenment

RSA OPSN
Education Data Panel

The work of OPSN in education is guided by an expert advisory panel:

Introduction

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> **This new RSA Open Public Services Network (OPSN) report takes a new look at post-16 education data at a regional and local authority level. By analysing the National Pupil Database[1], the RSA's OPSN sought to understand how qualification entries and completion vary by institution and local area[2].**

The number of children achieving the government's benchmark five A*-C grade at GCSE level has reduced significantly over the last two years. In 2013, 59.2 per cent of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs at A*-C. In 2015 the figure had reduced to 53.8 per cent. Based on this data, nearly half of pupils are deemed 'failures' when assessed against the Department for Education measures. Of the 'failing' 40 per cent, ten per cent did not achieve any A*-C grades at GCSE and a further 30 per cent failed to pass in English and Maths, subjects regarded as essential to economic and educational progression. If this accountability regime based on 'high standards' is to continue, the government should seek to ensure that high-quality vocational and academic pathways are made accessible to the 40–50 per cent of pupils who don't achieve the 'expected' measure at 16 years old.

This report highlights local authorities where 'failing' students are going on to higher than average rates of Level 3 qualifications at Key Stage Five (KS5), as well as areas that are performing significantly below average in terms of encouraging students to take up Level 3 study. We have used Level 3 study as indicative of an 'ambitious' education, acknowledging that analysis of attainment data has not been included. Our findings show that across England performance is highly variable, and when looking at different post-16 education institutions (FE colleges, schools with sixth forms, sixth form colleges) there are clues suggesting that this also affects the types of subject and qualification studied.

We risk losing a generation of talent if local political and education leaders – as highlighted in Sir Michael Wilshaw's recent comments[3] on schooling in Liverpool and Manchester – are not given sufficient levers to upskill children who have not performed to the government's rigid threshold of success at Key Stage 4 (KS4).

We have used attainment data at GCSE level (KS4) to analyse impact on different post-16 educational choices. We have focused in particular on the educational opportunities for pupils who, having reached the end of KS4, go on to complete Key Stage 5 (KS5), which is defined as being entered for two or more A levels or equivalent **(see Chart 1, page 10)**.

It is important to note that many of this cohort (38 per cent) will have completed post-16 study at Level 2 or below, failing to reach KS5 or Level 3 – three A levels or equivalent **(see Chart 2)**. As a result, while this report therefore offers a partial view of post-16 education, it serves to highlight the extent to which the significant numbers of young people who do not achieve the benchmark five A*-C grades at KS4 are then again limited in their access to higher level qualifications at KS5 (Level 3). To fully understand whether educational opportunities for those who do badly in exams at 16 are adequate, we would need to know more about the employment and life outcomes for those who received this education. Data is not yet available for third parties to access this linked data (although work is in progress with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills), but we can look at the variability in educational pathways for these students as a significant indicator of ambitious education.

Comparing outcomes for students educated to 16 years within each of the 150 local authority areas, our analysis identifies areas that we have termed 'ambitious educators' - areas which have more students entering and completing KS5 than students' prior attainment at KS4 might otherwise predict.

However, overall patterns of KS5 pathways suggest that many students are being let down, or at least not being given all the options that their peers in other places have available. Relatively few places buck this overarching trend.

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[1]   Data from National Pupil Database collected from students completing A levels in 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14.

[2]   National Public Database data is collected by schools and relevant local authorities. There are 150 Local Education Authorities, each with responsibility for educational and students' services in the area. For more information, see the National Pupil Database user guide wiki at https://nationalpupildatabase.wikispaces.com

[3]   https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chief-inspector-calls-for-education-to-be-central-to-manchester-and-liverpools-strategies-for-growth

Key findings

→ Key Stage 5 options for students not achieving five A*-C grades at GCSE (OPSN bands one and two) vary considerably. Of children who fail Maths and English at GCSE, in some parts of the country half will be entered for three Level 3 vocational qualifications. In other parts of the country up to 85 per cent will not.

→ In most parts of the country, vocational education is provided only for those students who do poorly at GCSE, resulting in a notion of failure attached to studying vocational qualifications. However, there are a small number of exceptions in which excellent technical and vocational qualifications attract significant numbers of students with strong academic records (students within OPSN band five).

→ It is very hard to disentangle the degree to which institutional arrangements reflect population needs or determine what a population gets – but there are some clues. For example, we can see that students who do well at GCSE are less likely to do facilitating subjects (see glossary) at A level if they are in an area where they transfer to a sixth form college from school for post-16 education.

→ Children with the same level of attainment at GCSE are less likely to continue to pursue academic qualifications if they attend an FE college as opposed to a school with a sixth form.

→ Portsmouth City Council is highlighted as a good example of a local authority that has been working with private businesses and partners in the city to increase the number of high-achieving students at age 16 taking up vocational qualifications at Key Stage 5.

Methodology

Our data was provided by The Fisher Family Trust[4] and covers entries and attainment for students who reached the end of KS4 in 2010/11. We then looked at their A level attainment and entries over the following three academic years (2011/12 to 2013/14 inclusive).

To measure the effect of prior attainment we have banded KS4 data as follows. Prior attainment data at GCSE level has been banded into five key performance indicators **(the 'OPSN banding')**:

Band 1	**No A*-C passes**
Band 2	Some A*-C passes but without English and maths
Band 3	**Five A*-C including English and maths (below Grade B)**
Band 4	Five A*-C including English and maths (Grade B or above)
Band 5	**Five or more passes at grades A*-A**

Band	Number of students	Percentage of total		
1	57,318	10.3%		
2	167,991	30.3%		
3	136,497	24.6%		
4	107,990	19.5%		
5	85,235	15.4%	**Total**	**555,031**

We have also identified whether their main establishment for completing KS5 was a school, a sixth form college or a general FE college **(see Chart 4)**. We have looked at the educational opportunities for students in the first two bands, which account for more than 40 per cent of students nationally.

We have also looked at the paths followed by students at the other end of the spectrum in band five. For our measure of an *ambitious education*, we have used entry for at least **three Level 3** qualifications – either an academic A level or a vocational qualification. We use the government measure of 'equivalence' without any comment on the degree to which there is real equivalence between qualifications of such variability. Among our band one and band two students, the percentage entered for three Level 3 qualifications varied from zero to one in six for band one students and from one in ten to nearly half for band two.

Finally, we have looked by each band and the percentage of students who were classified as completing Level 3 (importantly not at Level 2) study by 2014 according to Department for Education's Post-16 Performance Tables. Completing Key Stage 5 is defined by being entered for a substantive Level 3 qualification (i.e. a single qualification equivalent in size to an A level).

The Department of Education's performance tables at post-16 destinations are broken down as below:

→ Percentage of Key Stage 5 completers, those entered for a substantive Level 3 qualification

→ Percentage of Key Stage 5 completers who entered the equivalent of three A levels or a qualifications equivalent

→ Percentage of Key Stage 5 completers who entered the equivalent of three A levels (A levels only)

→ Percentage of Key Stage 5 completers who entered the equivalent of three A levels (academic qualifications only)

→ Percentage of Key Stage 5 completers who entered the equivalent of three A levels (vocational qualifications only) which we call vocational Key Stage 5.

→ Percentage of Key Stage 5 completers who entered one or more facilitating A level

1. Overview and background

How progression post-16 is influenced by performance at GCSE

Students who perform poorly at GCSE are much less likely to complete any form of Key Stage 5 (KS5) education. The majority of students in band one (no GCSE passes) and band two (no passes in English and Maths) did not go on to complete Key Stage 5 education.

Rate of completion of Key Stage 5

Of those who did continue in education through to age 18, those following an academic route are typically educated to a significantly more ambitious level than those following a vocational route. The worse a student performs at GCSE, the less likely it is that they will be educated to Level 3.

1 Rate of completion of Key Stage 5 (one Level 3 qualification) by OPSN KS4 band

	1	2	3	4	5
Total	11.2%	40.2%	67.8%	87.9%	96.9%
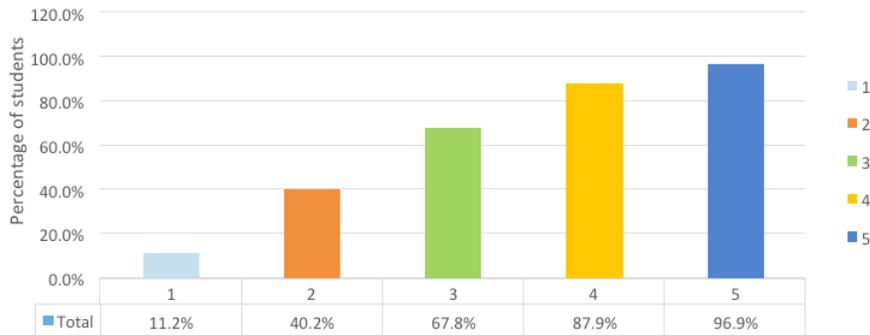
2 Percentage of Key Stage 5 completers who entered three Level 3 qualifications by OPSN KS4 band
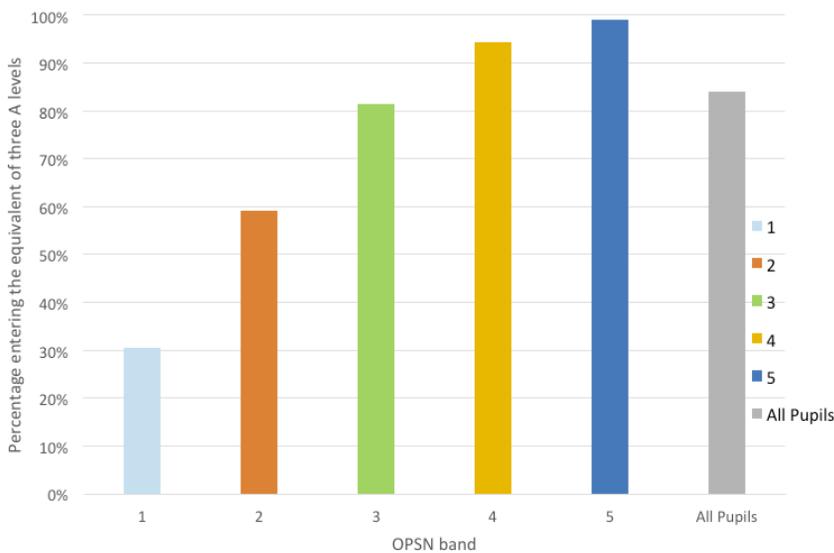

The impact of prior attainment on vocational and academic routes

The data below **(illustrated in Chart 3)** compares the percentage of students in each band who completed KS5 by the type of qualifications attained. Vocational education in England is largely provided primarily for those who 'fail' at academic exams at the age of 16. Nearly all (96 per cent) students in band five who entered three academic A levels completed the course, compared with just one per cent of those in band one. Of all pupils, 54 per cent of those taking up three academic A levels completed, compared with 42 per cent of students studying three Level 3 vocational qualifications.

3   Percentage of students completing different
     categories of Key Stage 3 by OPSN bandings
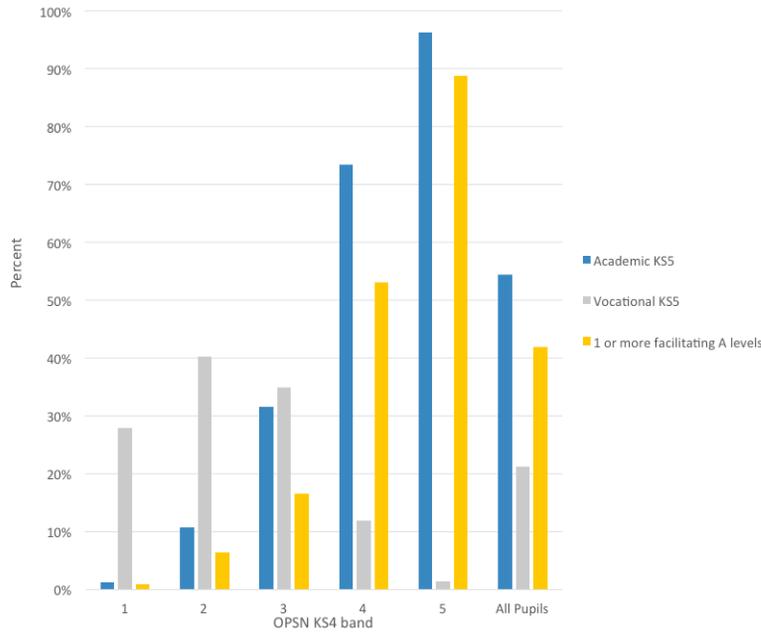
The impact of educational institution on post-16 choices

Location and attainment at the age of 16 has a significant relationship to the type of institutions in which young people are educated **(see Chart 4; for location, see Chart 8)**. As the chart below indicates, the majority of students achieving grades in low bands at GCSE mainly go on to attend FE colleges. Schools with sixth forms, and to a lesser extent sixth form colleges, have far higher rates of intake among higher achievers at KS4.

4   Percentage of students attending
     each institution by OPSN bands 1-5

OPSN KS4 band	1	2	3	4	5	All Pupils
FE college	83%	62%	45%	23%	8%	34%
Sixth form college	7%	11%	16%	21%	19%	17%
School	9%	28%	39%	56%	71%	49%
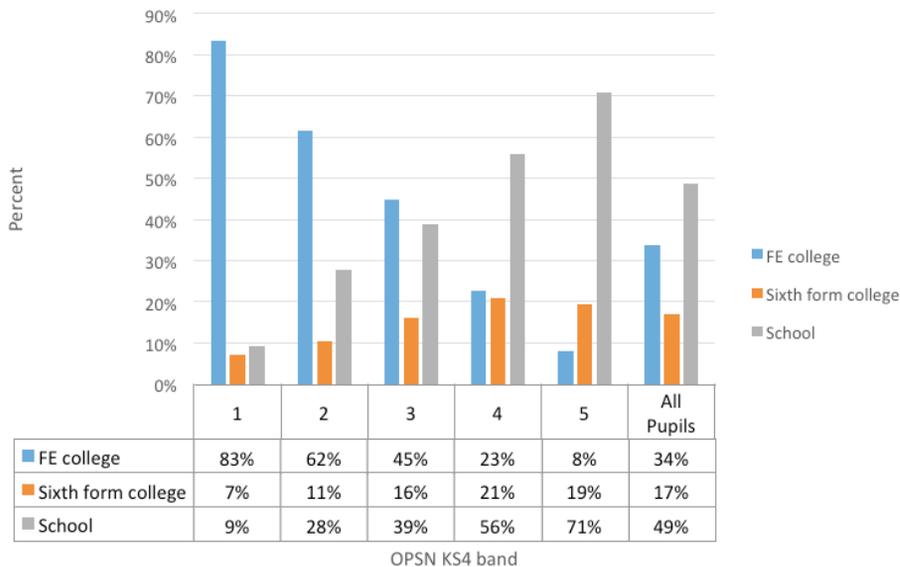
2: Regional variation and ambitious educators

Nationally, for students achieving no A*-C grades at GCSE only 30 per cent enter and 1.2 per cent go on to complete Level 3. There is significant variation across England in the extent to which students who do less well at Key Stage 4 continue to be educated with the goal of achieving good qualifications at Key Stage 5.

Variation is seen first in the numbers completing Key Stage 5, and second, in the extent to which those who do complete are entered for Level 3 qualifications. For example, in Rotherham, where 11 per cent of students were in band one, although six per cent did complete Key Stage 5, none were entered for three Level 3 qualifications. In Bracknell Forest, there were far fewer students in band one, but none of them went on to complete Key Stage 5. In contrast, in Hackney nearly half the students who failed to get English and Maths at GCSE nevertheless went on to complete Key Stage 5.

5 Comparison of Level 3 entries by LEA in OPSN band one and band two

Percentage of students entering 3 Level 3 qualifications, by LEA

High achievers and vocational qualifications

Our analysis has shown that, in most cases, vocational pathways are encouraged for students who perform poorly at GCSE. However, in a small number of places, vocational education routes are attracting high-achieving students who might have otherwise had the option to pursue academic routes. To examine this we looked at OPSN bands four and five and the extent to which these students chose to follow vocational routes. Of the total 150 LEAs in England, 24 did not have any students in band five completing vocational KS5. The highest rates in the country were Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, both with seven per cent. For band four, nearly a quarter of students in Middlesbrough chose to follow vocational routes.

Portsmouth City Council **(see box below)** is a good example of a local authority that has been able to work with private businesses and partners in the city to increase the number of high-achieving students at 16 taking up vocational qualifications at KS5. The prospect of devolution of skills policy and funding to combined authorities under Devolution Deals (following Area Based Reviews) could provide opportunities for other places to connect their post-16 education and training offer to meet local labour market needs.

Portsmouth High Flyers

→ Portsmouth City Council has been working with private businesses and partners in the city to increase the number of school leavers taking up vocational qualifications. A strong strategy and co-produced action plan has been delivered in partnership with the business community.

→ Portsmouth has made sure that it has a wide and varied base of experienced post-16 providers within the city and the travel-to-learn area. The council works with its colleges and training providers via a proactive Post-16 Forum, which reviews the curriculum in the travel-to-learn area and actively monitors achievement and progression.

→ A co-ordinated careers advice service supports this, with Portsmouth council managing the network to ensure that staff responsible for careers in secondary schools receive information, CIPD opportunities and access to a range of careers events. In addition, the council has an employment initiatives manager, who ensures that all major developments in the city have employment and skills plans that provide local high-level vocational opportunities, mainly in the construction sector.

→ On an annual basis the council, in partnership with the Skills Funding Agency and business leaders, hosts a Future Portsmouth event to highlight best practice and encourage businesses to sign the apprenticeship pledge. Local employers such as BAE Systems and others in the marine and maritime, defence and aerospace sectors take a large number of Level 3 young people for higher apprenticeships every year.

→ Building on this, Portsmouth is establishing a University Technical College (UTC) in the city that will create an environment of engineering excellence and innovation, so that UTC Portsmouth students of today will aspire to be the talented engineers, technicians and researchers of tomorrow. This is a collaborative venture between the University of Portsmouth, the Royal Navy, the council, BAE Systems and many other local employers. It will open in September 2017 and provide an enduring legacy of superior technical education and training for 14 to 19–year-olds.

→ The leader of Portsmouth City Council, Cllr Donna Jones, says: "We are immensely proud that we have been recognised nationally for having put our vision into practise to increase the take-up of vocational qualifications by our high achievers, thus generating many new sustainable jobs in our thriving marine and maritime, defence and aerospace sectors."

6 Students in OPSN bands 4
and 5 taking vocational KS5

Percent of students studying vocational qualifications at OPSN bands 4 and 5, by LEA

3: How do educational institutions affect student choice and educational attainment?

Although student attainment nationally at Key Stage 4 has a large impact on the types of qualification and institutions they attend for Key Stage 5, there is significant regional variation.

We examined the extent to which an area's predominance of types of education institutions (see Chart 7) mean that there are almost pre-determined courses that students are steered to take.

We have seen above **(Charts 1 to 4)** that those in band one are more likely not to enter or complete Level 3 and more likely to go to a FE college. They are also much less likely to take academic qualifications or facilitating A levels. Although some local authorities have been able to successfully buck the trend, they remain the exception.
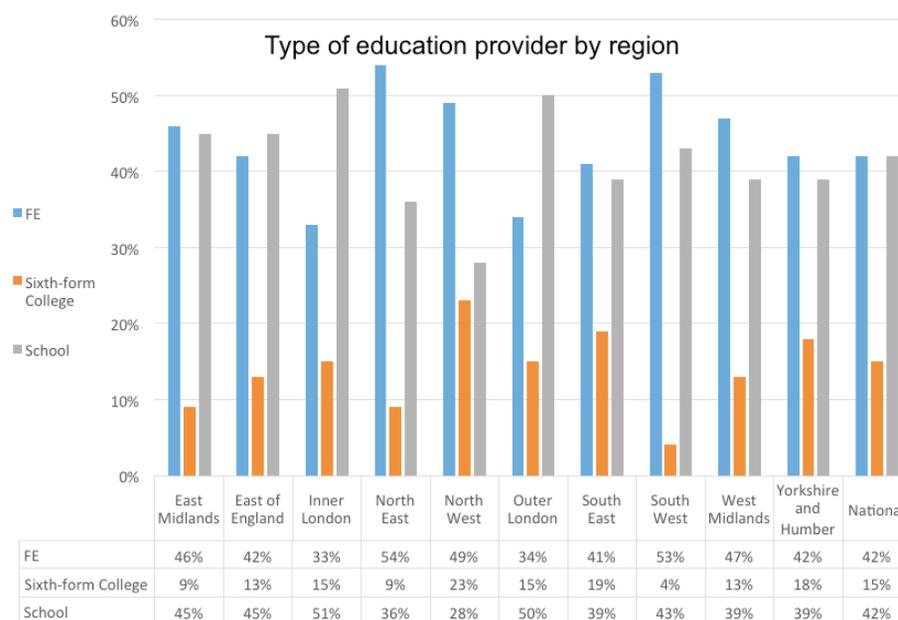
The extent to which students follow one or other educational route may to a large degree be determined by what is available to them. In England in 2011/2012, 44 per cent of students attended General FE colleges, 40 per cent attended schools with sixth forms, and 16 per cent sixth form colleges. However, this pattern of student numbers by institutional type varies across the regions.

As **Chart 8** demonstrates, the North East and the South West – regions with the highest numbers of students following vocational education routes – have the largest proportion of students at Further Education colleges at KS5 (54 per cent; 53 per cent). Outer London has the smallest proportion of students at FE colleges (34 per cent). The South West has, by a significant margin, the lowest number of students studying in sixth form colleges (four per cent, compared with the national average of 16 per cent). Inner London has the highest proportion of students studying at a school with a sixth form (51 per cent).

The range of students attending FE colleges varies widely by LEA, ranging from 13 per cent in Reading to 83 per cent in Salford. Those attending FE colleges are much less likely to study an academic subject at KS5 (48 per cent) compared with those attending schools (more than 90 per cent). However, it is also noticeable that the more FE college places there are, the less likely it is that students will study academic subjects. We can compare the experiences of students in band three *(five passes at GCSE including English and Maths but no passes better than a grade C)*. In some parts of the country the majority of these students will attend FE college. In others most will go to school. In areas where they are more likely to attend FE college, they are much less likely to take three academic qualifications.

While there is a benefit in having a wider option of potential routes to follow within a single education provider, there is a risk that the lower uptake of academic qualifications in areas with higher provision of places at FE colleges represents the choices of the institutions rather than the choices of young people. For some students, particularly those minded to continue to pursue an academic pathway, constraining choice at KS5 could have a significant impact on their education and employment options thereafter.

7 Percentage by region of students attending each type of institution

Type of education provider by region

	East Midlands	East of England	Inner London	North East	North West	Outer London	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and Humber	National
FE	46%	42%	33%	54%	49%	34%	41%	53%	47%	42%	42%
Sixth-form College	9%	13%	15%	9%	23%	15%	19%	4%	13%	18%	15%
School	45%	45%	51%	36%	28%	50%	39%	43%	39%	39%	42%

The impact of post-16 transfer on educational choices

It is difficult to determine the extent to which variations in institutional arrangements are proactively designed to reflect the needs of the local population or how they inadvertently determine the options available to them. However, evidence of the impact of institutional arrangements can be seen in the effect that sixth form colleges have on students who are following an academic route.

8 Types of post-16 qualifications entered by education institution
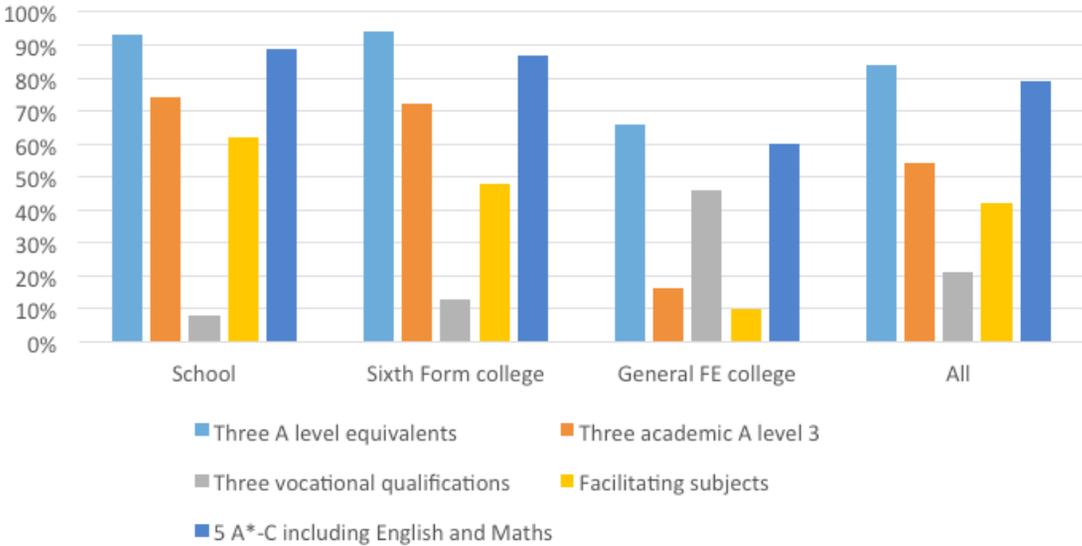
As illustrated above, students who attend a sixth form college are just as likely to follow an academic route (and take at least three A levels) as those who attend secondary school all the way through to 18 years. However, they are noticeably less likely to study facilitating subjects. If we look at the experiences of students in OPSN band four, this trend is clear **(see Chart 9)**.

This has serious implications for the opportunities for those students and provokes important questions about the bias of different institutions. One explanation for this might be that schools which only have responsibility for students up to 16 years are less motivated to encourage their leavers to then take up subjects which facilitate university entrance. Similarly, sixth form colleges might also be limiting subject availability or influencing student decision making. The RSA Open Public Services Network suggests further research into the underlying causes of these patterns in the data.

However, we have worked up two examples of this below, highlighting the institutional effect on subject choice. We have focused on band 4 **(chart 9)** in sixth form colleges and band 3 on the FE colleges **(chart 10)** and sixth form colleges, and have picked facilitating subject take-up and academic qualification in these two provoking, if un-exhaustive, examples.

We can see the impact of educational institution by looking at the experiences of students in OPSN band four (with five grade B GCSEs). The data shows that when more students are educated in sixth form colleges, they are less likely to do three facilitating subjects at Key Stage 5. The chart below demonstrates that this may have the effect of limiting their higher education options.

9 Percentage of students studying three
  facilitating subjects at sixth form colleges
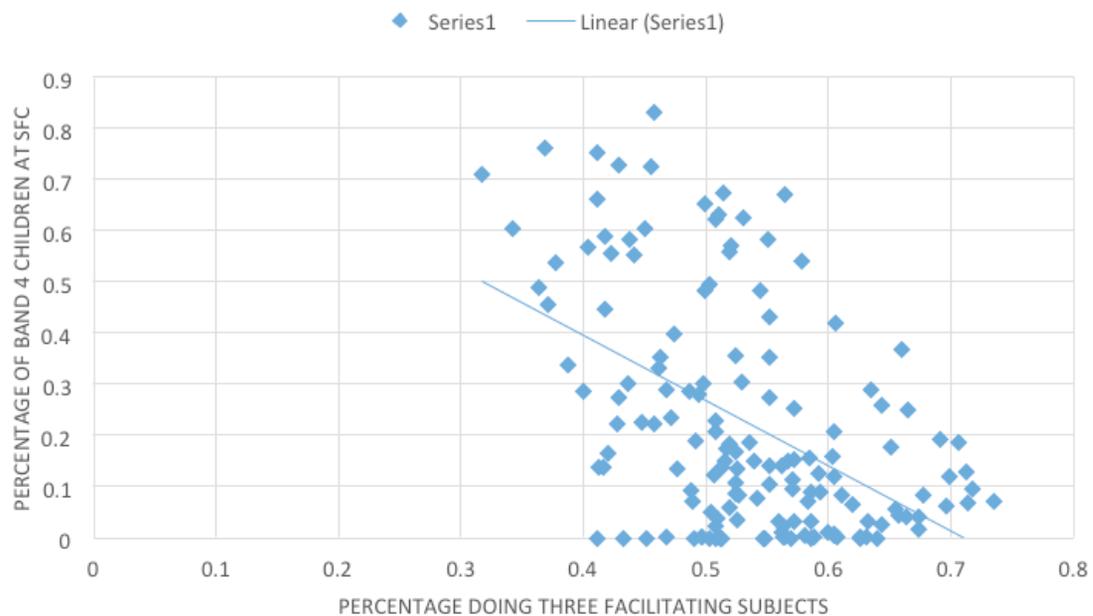
As this chart demonstrates, and following chart 6, the higher the percentage of pupils doing three facilitating subjects, the less likely a student in band four is studying at a sixth form college. This suggests that going to a sixth form college may be narrowing the opportunity of studying academic subjects, as opposed to schools with sixth forms, who are outperforming.

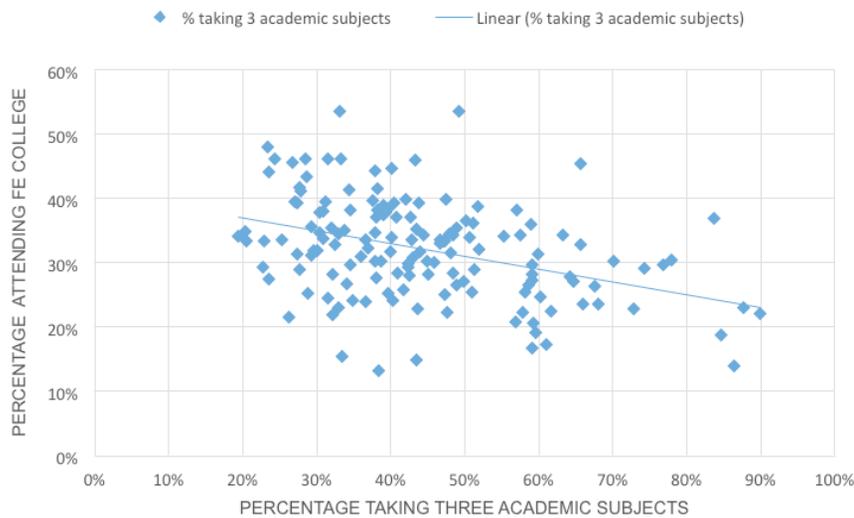## 10 Percentage of students in band three attending FE colleges and studying three academic subjects

Chart 10 also shows us that there is a positive correlation between taking up three academic subjects and the percentage studying at an FE college, in any area. The implication is, for areas with higher proportions of students studying at an FE college a student is less likely to progress to studying three academic subjects at Key Stage 5.

Breakdown by LEA

LEAs where more than 70 per cent of students attend FE colleges

• Sunderland	74%
• Swindon	79%
• Barnsley	81%
• Salford	83%

LEAs where fewer than 20 per cent of students attend FE colleges

• Reading	13%
• Bromley	15%
• Redbridge	16%
• Southampton	16%
• Sutton	16%
• Newham	16%
• Wokingham	17%
• Buckinghamshire	18%
• Kingston upon Thames	18%
• Warrington	18%
• Kensington & Chelsea	18%
• Wirral	18%
• Greenwich	19%
• Hammersmith & Fulham	19%
• Luton	19%

MAP 1: Ambitious educators
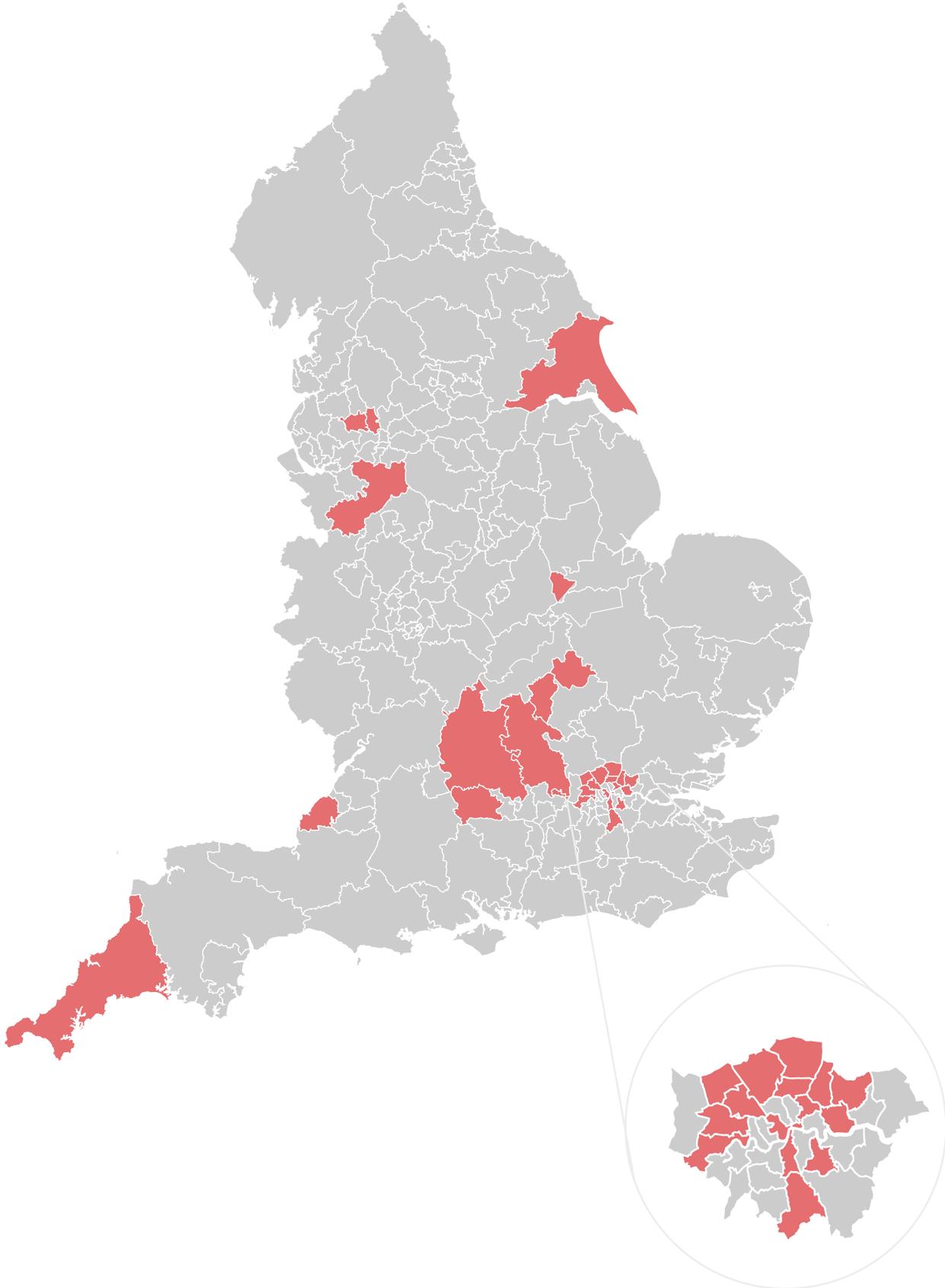
■ **Ambitious educators:** LEAs where 30% or more of OPSN band 2
students go on to be entered for three level three qualifications

MAP 2: Regional distribution of General FE colleges, schools with sixth forms and Sixth Form Colleges

Type of Education Provider by Region

- Further education college
- Sixth form college
- School
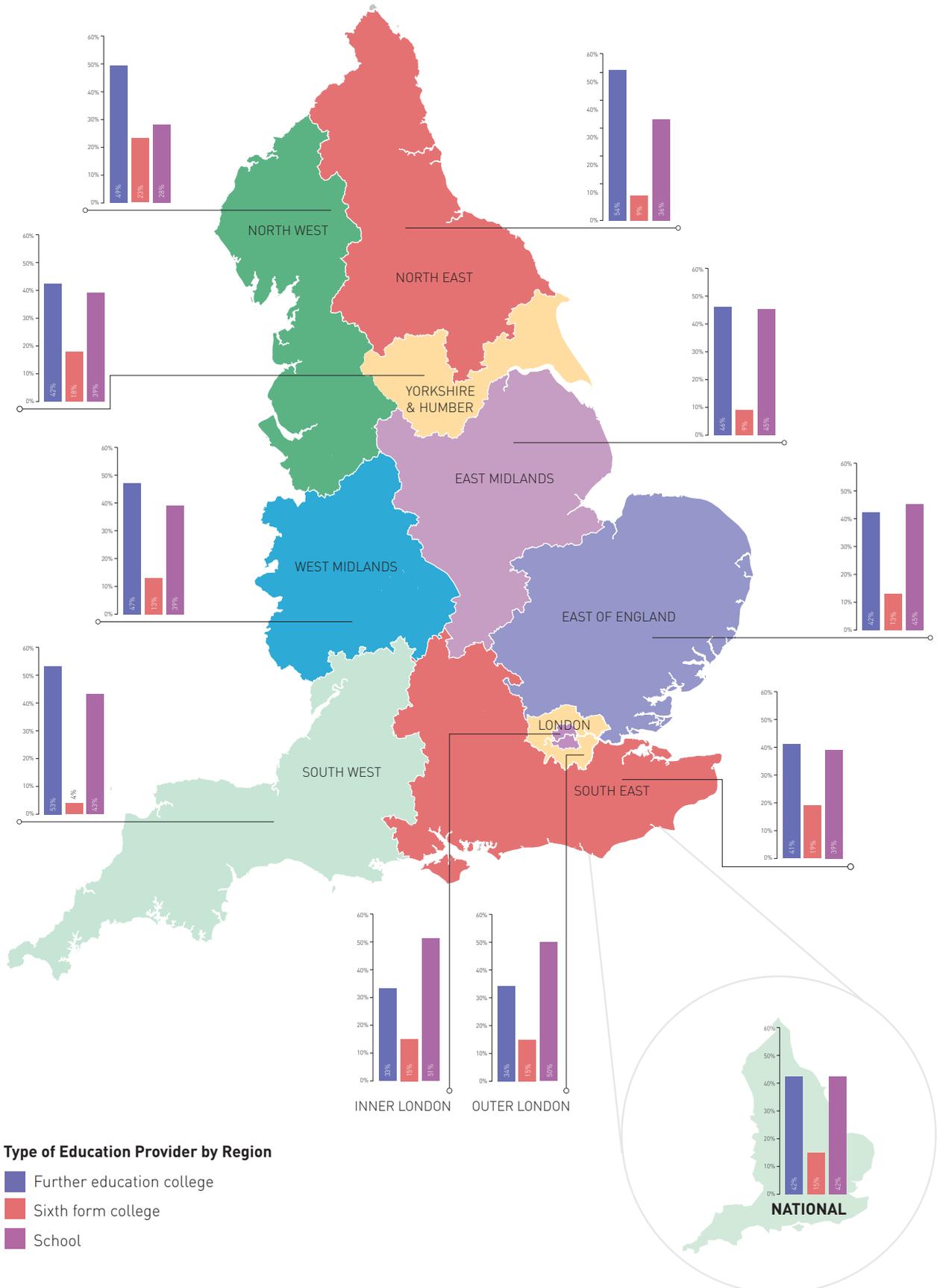
As highlighted above, there are huge inconsistencies (on an LEA to LEA basis) in the extent to which LEAs and post-16 education providers are ambitiously educating students, and map one showcases some good examples. However, we have also identified 'areas of lost talent,' areas that have the most work to do in order to be classed as ambitiously educating. Firstly, we looked at the number of band one students who were going on to enter into three level three qualifications. We then looked at the areas where no band five students go on to study vocational qualifications, as an indication of the contribution a local area is making to filling the skills gap nationally.

The LEAs below are where less than 10 per cent of students went on to complete three level three qualifications. The national average for band one is 31 per cent.

Areas where less than 10 per cent of OPSN band one students entering three level three qualifications:

- Brighton and Hove
- Camden
- City of Derby
- Darlington
- Doncaster
- Herefordshire
- Islington
- Kensington & Chelsea
- Rotherham
- Sandwell
- South Tyneside
- Stockton on Tees

Areas where no OPSN band five students study vocational qualifications:

- Bromley
- Calderdale
- Camden
- City of Kingston-Upon-Hull
- Ealing
- Enfield
- Hammersmith & Fulham
- Haringey
- Kensington & Chelsea
- Knowsley
- Leicester City
- Merton
- Reading
- Redbridge
- Slough
- Southend
- Sutton
- Tower Hamlets
- Wandsworth
- West Berkshire
- Westminster
- Windsor and Maidenhead
- Wokingham

Important to note that Camden and Kensington and Chelsea come under both these categories.

Policy recommendations

1. **The Department of Education has to look more carefully at why and how it accounts for the difference in institutional provision. Responsibility has to be placed with local authorities to ensure that there is an appropriate, strategic mix of provision in their areas for post-16 education, taking into account the impact this can have on choices and attainment.**

2. **Post-16 area reviews of local education and training provide an opportunity to assess the structure and quality of provision in an area, and the links to local economic opportunities. Area Review teams should look carefully at their educational institutional arrangements and the impact this might be having on curriculum access and attainment at Key Stage 5 and beyond.**

3. **More, contextualised destinations data are required in order to avoid an implicit hierarchy in post-16 education qualification and subject choice. For example, for those studying vocational qualifications at Level 3, some indication of the quality of those qualifications in relation to Higher Education progression and subsequent labour market outcomes would help to shift the system beyond headline, attainment-based accountability. Forthcoming linked data from the Department for Education, BIS and HMRC should allow government to respond to the**

critique of Professor Alison Wolf in her 2011 report, which was damming about the quality of many vocational qualifications taken by young people. A breakdown of students aged 16 to 18 years taking Level 2 qualifications or below would also be necessary to complete the analysis, particularly as students are also now required to retake GCSE English and Maths until they achieve a C grade.

4. Collection and analysis of student and parent experience data could help us to understand the quality of teaching, learning and careers guidance. It would also minimise gaming by providers in limiting student choice and curricula. The Friends and Family Test (where service users are asked if they would recommend this school/sixth form college/FE college to a friend or family member) that is commonly asked in health and social care might be an appropriate starting place for the Department and/or Ofsted to consider in developing a cost-effective equivalent in education.

5. The Department for Education, Ofsted and schools must play closer attention to the risk of students achieving five A*-C grades including Maths and English (band three, KS4) being discouraged from continuing academic study post-16.

6. Where students are systemically not completing KS5, despite success at KS4, government, the regulators and schools must consider whether sufficient support is in place for all students to reach their potential at KS5 and/or whether we need to be more ambitious for students in setting the bar for GCSE attainment.

Conclusion

→ Previous education analyses by the RSA's Open Public Services Network (Lack of Options: How a pupil's academic choices are affected by where they live, and Empowering Parents, Improving Accountability) have found access to qualification type and subject choice at GCSE varies between local education authorities (LEAs) and across the regions in England. This report shows that patterns of variation at KS4 have profound effects at KS5, in most cases entrenching the gap between vocational and academic educational pathways. Bridging the gap at 16 and opening up a variety of institutions in each area and improving the quality of vocational education will require overcoming significant barriers, particularly the impact of prior attainment at 16 years on student choice of subject and institution from ages 16 to 18.

→ Education and skills policy is currently inconsistent with the provision of education at 16 to 18. Refining of policy is required to tackle persistent problems in education and skills, including chronic underperformance relative to our international competitors, grade inflation and institutional gaming of the accountability system. However, such attempts – whether by new accountability measures, such as Progress 8 and Attainment 8, or a fundamental shift in the financing system of Further Education colleges – need to be considered against the contextual analysis provided in this report; prior attainment at KS4 and institutional type at KS5 have a significant impact on the educational outcomes for young people aged 16 to 18. The RSA's Open Public Services Network is arguing for a step change in the expectations and ambitions for the lowest achievers at post-16.

→ Publication and linking of destinations data, available for third parties such as OPSN, is a promising step in the right direction. But these data need to be contextualised. Are students able to make informed choices at 16 as to their education and training at Key Stage 5 and beyond? Are education providers committed to ensuring parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes? What role might LEAs, Combined Authorities or Local Enterprise Partnerships be able to play in levelling the playing field equipping our young people with sufficient skills for the world of continued learning and employment?

→ This report, Educating the failing 40%, is centred on valuing different educational pathways equally and offering students meaningful choice, based on talent and aptitude, not on assumptions of 'better' or 'worse' institutions or subject choices. The Prime Minister's recent Life Chances speech[5] has initiated a renewed focus on the importance of the 'life cycles' that reinforces disadvantage, one that schooling is an important part of. Taking on the recommendations of this report is one way to ensure that all students are provided with adequate choices and opportunities to succeed no matter what their previous attainment, where they were educated or where they live.

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5   https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-on-life-chances

Glossary

Levels (2 and 3): Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are grouped into levels, from entry level to level 8. Qualifications at the same level are a similar level of difficulty.

Level 2 includes:
-GCSE (grades A*-C)
- Key Skills level 2
- NVQ level 2
- Skills for Life level 2
- Higher diploma
- BTEC award, certificate and diploma level 2
- Functional Skills level 2
- Cambridge National level 2
- Cambridge Technical level 2

Level 3 includes:
AS and A level, Advanced Extension Award, Cambridge International award, International Baccalaureate, Key Skills level 3, NVQ level 3, Advanced diploma, Progression diploma, BTEC award, certificate and diploma level 3, BTEC National, Cambridge Technical level 3

More Level 3 qualifications and more examples: https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels

Key Stage 5 completions:
Percentage of cohort who entered and passed two or more A levels or A level equivalents (Level 3), typically by 19 years

Key Stage 5 entries:
Academic or vocational subject entries at Level 3

Prior attainment:
Results at Key Stage 4 (GCSE, typically by 16 years)

Average Point Score (APS):
APS per examination entry is calculated as the sum of the qualification points awarded to each 16 to 18-year-old student, divided by the total number of qualification entries. For more information on APS: http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/archive/16to18_09/d4.shtml

Facilitating subjects:
Academic A level subjects identified by the Russell Group of universities as preferable and suitably rigorous in relation to Higher Education.
For a list of facilitating subjects, see http://russellgroup.ac.uk/for-students/school-and-college-in-the-uk/subject-choices-at-school-and-college/ or look at the Department for Education's definition: http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/archive/Statement_of_Intent_2014.pdf

A levels or equivalents:
Qualifications achieved, either A level or equivalent, as laid out under Department of Education guidelines: https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels

About OPSN

The Open Public Services Network (OPSN) is a programme of work based at the RSA. It provides independent assessment of information designed to monitor and assess the performance of government and public services. Its aims are:

→ **To provide independent assessment of information designed to monitor the performance of government and public services.**

→ **To make information about public services accessible in ways that help users of those services achieve better outcomes.**

OPSN aims to improve the debate surrounding the quality and value of information available to the public about education, health and other key services. It develops new and better ways to measure impact and value for money in ways that make sense to and engage the public.

We are committed to supporting the delivery of the most efficient, effective and highest quality public services. OPSN will advocate and showcase better use of information and technologies, especially online communication tools, to improve public understanding and use of public services.

By presenting data and information to the public in an engaging way, OPSN enables public service users, professionals, regulators and policy makers to answer a range of questions about the quality of provision: are our local public services delivering their intended outcomes? How does their quality compare against similar organisations? Is their performance improving over the longer term?

This project was kindly sponsored by Cambridge Assessment and Fisher Family Trust (FFT). FFT also provided secure access to the National Pupil Database (with special thanks to Dave Thompson), upon which this analysis is based. Recent work from the RSA's Open Public Service Network includes analysis of GCSE subject deserts, Lack of Options: How pupils' academic choices are affected by where they live (February 2015), with particular focus on access to triple science and modern foreign languages.

In November 2015 we published Getting the Message on Mental Health: From public data to public information alongside our comparative data tool, Living a Long Life, enabling people to compare the difference in physical healthcare outcomes and mortality rates for people with serious mental health illness compared with the general population. 'Getting the message on mental health' was kindly funded by the Cabinet Office.

For more information on OPSN, see our website: www.thersa.org/opsn