



University
of Exeter

South-West Social
Mobility Commission



THE EQUITY SCORECARD

A New Approach to Assessing Educational Equity in Schools

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Beth Brooks, Anne-Marie Sim & Lee Elliot Major

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About the Authors

Beth Brooks is an Executive at the South-West Social Mobility Commission, where she leads on various social mobility projects. Before joining the Commission, Beth worked in Widening Participation at the University of Exeter, and as a secondary school teacher in the South West. She holds a PGCE with distinction from the University of Exeter.

Dr Anne-Marie Sim is co-founder and lead of the South-West Social Mobility Commission. Her PhD in social anthropology looked at how children talk about the future in their everyday lives and involved 18 months' immersive fieldwork with children in and out of school environments. Anne-Marie has also worked as a strategy consultant for the Boston Consulting Group and has a first-class undergraduate degree in Economics & Management from the University of Oxford.

Professor Lee Elliot Major OBE FAcSS is the country's first Professor of Social Mobility, based at the University of Exeter. As one of the world's leading social mobility experts, his work is dedicated to improving the prospects of young people from under-resourced backgrounds. Lee was formerly Chief Executive of the Sutton Trust and a trustee of the Education Endowment Foundation. He is focused on the impact of research, working closely with Governments, policy makers as well as schools, universities, and employers across the world, and advocates an 'equity approach' in schools based on principles set out in his book *Equity in Education*.

Foreword

I'm famous for being the bin man turned professor - the boy who lived on his own from 15 and went on to become a charity CEO and earned an OBE from the Queen. But when telling my personal journey, I'm not selling a heart-warming story, suggesting anything is possible. Indeed, my message is that these powerful American dream narratives can be dangerous.

The truth is that someone from my background growing up today has less chance of 'making it' in life. These stories are also stuck in a deficit mindset. They suggest some people are better than others. I was proud to be a bin-man (a job I did for a summer as a student). I learnt so much: resilience, teamwork, people skills. My work is guided by the principle that background shouldn't determine what you do whatever you choose to do in life.

In the education system we also value academic talents over everything else. That benefitted me – I was good at exams. But what if I had been blessed with other talents, if I had been more creative or vocational for example? I'm not sure I would have flourished at all. I call myself an 'awkward climber': I've changed to fit into the new world I now inhabit, losing my local accent, not fully sure where I fit in. I've become convinced that instead of focusing exclusively on individualistic stories of success, we need to challenge the system itself so that we make schools a place for children of all backgrounds and talents.

If like many teachers you share my passion, then I hope this equity scorecard is for you.

For too long, national education policies have overlooked the specific challenges faced by children who face extra cultural and material barriers to their learning. Generic school improvement strategies have failed to close the divide between the "education haves" and "have-nots." This divide has only deepened in the post-pandemic era. At the same time schools are unfairly expected to resolve all societal inequities, including the devastating rise in child poverty. Current Ofsted inspections often ignore the uphill battle faced by teachers working tirelessly in the most challenging contexts.

We need a new approach. Equity is not about treating everyone the same; it's about ensuring every child gets what they need to succeed. It's about tailoring resources to address specific needs and focusing on students' strengths, rather than their limitations.

The equity scorecard is a self-evaluation tool for schools to assess and enhance how they serve students from under-resourced backgrounds. By integrating public data, stakeholder surveys, and self-assessment insights, the scorecard offers a comprehensive view of a school's efforts to level the educational playing field. Initially developed for secondary schools in England, plans are underway to create a version for primary schools and we think this could be a model for schools in other countries.

The tool draws on evidence-informed practices—what we call "good bets"—as well as more innovative strategies designed to improve a broad range of outcomes for children. An equity-driven approach shifts the focus to identifying and removing barriers to learning while celebrating the diverse cultural and class backgrounds of all students. It challenges us to reflect on how our schools' cultural norms may unintentionally alienate students from different backgrounds. Crucially, this approach is about working with children, families, and communities—not imposing solutions on them.

This project is the result of extensive collaboration as part of work of the South-West Social Mobility Commission, led by my colleagues Beth Brooks, Anne-Marie Sim, and involving many other educators. We've drawn inspiration from scorecards in other countries, and shared our ideas with England's school inspectorate, Ofsted, as it develops its own balanced scorecard.

The response to this initiative from teachers has been overwhelmingly positive. Many schools have already signed up to pilot the scorecard, demonstrating a shared belief that we can create a more equitable system—one that nurtures every child, no matter where they come from or where they aspire to go.

Lee Elliot Major OBE FAcSS

Professor of Social Mobility, University of Exeter

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Summary overview

In this report, we set out proposals for changing school accountability metrics to incorporate assessments on how well secondary schools serve their pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.

At present, schools in England are inspected and regulated by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) who publish reports of their findings to improve the overall quality of education and training in England.¹ Their current framework measures schools on ‘Quality of education’, ‘Behaviour and attitudes’, ‘Personal development’ and ‘Leadership and management’. However, we believe that there should be a more explicit and focused approach to tackle disadvantage, amongst other key criteria, in measuring the performance of schools in England, as current inspections by Ofsted do not place sufficient emphasis on this vital aspect of schools’ work.²

Ofsted ‘aims to improve lives by raising standards in education and children’s social care’.³ Yet at a time of widening inequities in society and persistent socio-economic gaps in school achievement, current inspections provide a narrow and unrealistic view of what teachers and schools do. They also give little explicit focus to the extra barriers faced by some children in their learning. Our proposal for an ‘equity scorecard’ aims to change this.

This work builds on the recommendation made in the 2022 report ‘*Social Mobility in the South-West*’ to adopt a sharper focus on disadvantage in the education system, amid particularly stark attainment gaps between pupils from under-resourced backgrounds and their more privileged peers across the region.⁴

It also contributes to a wider national debate about the future shape of the inspection framework in England.⁵ At the heart of our proposals lies a conviction that school accountability can act as a potential catalyst for

more equitable outcomes in education. We believe that prioritising the needs of students from under-resourced backgrounds and embracing a community centric approach to school accountability would introduce powerful incentives for schools to drive more equitable outcomes.

Throughout the report we use the term ‘students from under-resourced backgrounds’ to define, in non-deficit language, the extra material and cultural barriers faced by many pupils. This incorporates a broader range of pupils than just those in receipt of Pupil Premium funds in schools. We use the term ‘FSM eligible pupils’ for the specific set of children eligible for Free School Meals, the standard measure of disadvantage used in England.⁶ Evidence suggests that when schools take action to improve outcomes for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, all pupils benefit.⁷ We assume that any new Ofsted framework will also explicitly recognise children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Our focus in this work is on children’s socio-economic background, which has consistently been found to be one of the most powerful predictors of educational outcomes.

We are currently trialling the scorecard with schools in the South West to refine this approach and demonstrate how this could work for schools nationally. Schools are using the scorecard as a self-evaluation tool. In this report we outline the proposed assessment criteria, the rationale for their inclusion and explain how these would contribute to an overall school progress summary.

1 Ofsted (2024).

2 Elliot Major, L., Eyles, A., Lillywhite, E., & Machin, S. (2024).

3 Ofsted (2024).

4 Sim, A. and Elliot Major, L. (2022).

5 See for example: Perryman, J., Bradbury, A., Calvert, G. & Kilian, K. (2023).

6 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023) See also: Elliot Major, L. (2023).

7 As Ofsted’s Chief Inspector Sir Martyn Oliver has said: ‘inclusion means expecting the highest standards for all children, especially the disadvantaged and vulnerable – because if you get it right for them, you get it right for everyone.’ Ofsted (2024). *Sir Martyn Oliver’s speech at the NASS conference.*

The scorecard evaluates schools across three core areas: disadvantaged outcomes, disadvantaged inclusion and community engagement. All three elements are critical to schools collectively providing better support to pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. Each core area benefits from three forms of evidence: firstly, enhanced use of survey data from staff, pupils and parents/carers; secondly, self-assessed school-improvement checklists; and thirdly, publicly available data. This combination of evidence creates a detailed, useful and realistic accountability framework for schools.

The wider aim of this work is for these three strands to form part of a broader scorecard for assessing schools due to be introduced by Ofsted by September 2025. This equity scorecard eschews single-word judgements, in keeping with reforms ushered in by Ofsted in 2024.⁸ It uses directional assessments based on schools’ trajectories and regional contexts, with the objective of fostering a culture of continuous improvement

and collaboration. Whilst our focus in this work is on disadvantage, our scorecard provides a potential model for Ofsted’s broader framework.

This work is grounded in the belief that schools play a pivotal role in shaping the future of their communities. By providing schools with self-assessment tools, they will be equipped with the relevant data and insights to ensure that every pupil, regardless of background, has access to the resources and opportunities necessary for success.

The graphic below provides an example of what the scorecard is intended to look like for a school, with the model fully embedded. For some criteria – for instance the stakeholder opinion and checklist scores – comparisons with regional and national averages would only be available once embedded across the system. In the meantime, however, schools within a multi-academy trust or collaborative network could use the scorecard to benchmark their performance against each other.

School name:	Progress (direction of travel)	Regional comparison	National comparison
Disadvantaged outcomes			
School missed by FSM eligible pupils			
FSM eligible pupils missing 10%+ of school			
English and maths pass rate for FSM eligible pupils			
FSM eligible pupils in education or employment at age 16			
Parent/carers, staff and pupil opinion score			
Checklist score			
Disadvantaged inclusion			
Fair share of FSM eligible pupils			
Off-rolling practices for FSM eligible pupils			
Suspensions for FSM eligible pupils			
Permanent exclusions for FSM eligible pupils			
Parent/carers, staff and pupil opinion score			
Checklist score			
Area: Community engagement			
Parents evening attendance: FSM eligible pupils			
Survey completion rate: FSM eligible pupils and their parents/carers			
Parent/carers, staff and pupil opinion score			
Checklist score			

8 Department for Education (2024). *Removal of Ofsted single word judgements: what it means for schools and parents* – The Education Hub.

Introduction

This piece of work responds to the South-West Social Mobility Commission’s goal that ‘every child finishes school with foundational English and maths, a broad education, and a plan for 16–18 study or training.’⁹ This addresses the South West’s poor educational performance for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. In the academic year 2022–23, the South West also had a lower proportion of pupils on Free School Meals achieving a grade 4 or above in English and maths GCSE than the England average – 40% compared with 44% nationally, making it the third-lowest performing region of nine English regions.¹⁰

In this report, we set out a ‘balanced scorecard’ tool, influenced by models used in other education systems such as the New York City school report cards.¹¹ These report cards offer a comprehensive assessment of schools across various dimensions including pupil progress, extra-curricular offerings and community engagement. Our equity scorecard focuses on how well secondary schools serve their pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.

Our aim is that this scorecard will act as a self-assessment tool in its first iteration, to support schools to develop a deeper understanding of their performance in key areas of practice. To prevent this work from being too onerous for schools, we are developing an automated model that supports them with the elements of the scorecard that rely on publicly available data. We will develop a parallel scorecard for primary schools.

Rationale for an equity scorecard

To Redefine Success Metrics

- Shifting away from an over-reliance on narrow attainment measures towards a more holistic assessment framework.
- Including indicators of educational quality that reflect and reward the wider work of schools within their local contexts and communities.

To Prioritise an Equity Approach

- Integrating indicators that highlight the context in which schools are working and encourage some schools to better support the education system by taking their ‘fair share’ of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.
- Making schools’ strengths and weaknesses explicit, to help them better serve their communities and encourage equitable outcomes, as seen in the self-assessed school-improvement checklists.

To Foster Collaboration and Engagement

- Promoting collaboration within the education system to improve practice.
- Encouraging meaningful engagement with local communities to serve local contexts.

To Build Capacity and Support

- Incentivising schools to invest in professional development to equip educators with the knowledge and skills needed to support equity within their school and community contexts.
- Providing schools with a framework to assess, and then implement and sustain, good practice in our three key areas of interest.

9 Sim, A., Bickford Smith, W., & Elliot Major, L. (2023).

10 Sim, A., Mullen, A., Brooks, B., Jones, H., & Elliot Major, L. (2024).

11 New York City Public Schools (2020).

What the scorecard assesses

We focus on three primary areas of interest:

disadvantaged outcomes, disadvantaged inclusion, and community engagement.¹² Within each core area, we delineate four to six specific criteria against which schools can gauge their performance. The core areas and criteria are as follows:

Disadvantaged outcomes:

This area assesses how well a school performs for its pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, bringing a sharper focus to this work. In this section, we assess:

- School missed by FSM eligible pupils
- FSM eligible students missing 10%+ of school
- English and maths pass rate for FSM eligible pupils at age 16
- FSM eligible pupils in education or employment at age 16
- Parent/carer, staff and pupil opinion score
- Checklist score

We have adapted the first four descriptors from publicly available data to make them clearer for our users. The indicators refer to the following data published by the Department for Education:

- Overall absence rate for FSM eligible pupils (%)
- Persistent absence rate for FSM eligible pupils (%)
- 'Pass' rate (grade 4 & above) in English & maths GCSE for FSM eligible pupils (%)
- KS4 destinations: FSM eligible pupils staying in education and/or employment for at least 2 terms after Key Stage 4 (%)

Disadvantaged inclusion:

This area assesses the extent to which a school is supporting all children in their community, and especially those from under-resourced backgrounds, increasing incentives for schools to act 'fairly' and serve all children.

- Fair share of FSM eligible pupils
- Off-rolling practices for FSM eligible pupils
- Suspensions for FSM eligible pupils
- Permanent exclusions for FSM eligible pupils
- Parent/carer, staff and pupil opinion score
- Checklist score

As above, the first four indicators refer to the following data published by the Department for Education:

- % of pupils FSM eligible at any point in the last six years (FSM6)
- % FSM eligible non-mobile pupils
- Number of suspensions for FSM eligible pupils during the last academic year
- Number of permanent exclusions for FSM eligible pupils during the last academic year

Community engagement:

This area assesses a school's efforts to engage parents/carers and the wider community and encourages efforts to do so.

- Parents evening attendance: FSM eligible pupils
- Survey completion rate: FSM eligible pupils and their parents/carers
- Parent/carer, staff and pupil opinion score
- Checklist score

The assessment criteria have been chosen for a range of reasons including data availability, validity, reliability and overall practicality. The rationale for inclusion of each of the criteria is explained later in this report. Below is an outline of why we have chosen our data sources, and why they are valuable to the equity scorecard.

¹² We use the term 'pupils from under-resourced backgrounds' to describe all pupils who have faced extra barriers to their learning. However, available data from the Department for Education relates specifically to students who have been eligible for Free School Meals in the last 6 years. We refer to these pupils as 'FSM eligible pupils'.

Data sources

The scorecard will collect data from three main sources:

- Publicly available data from the Department for Education
- Survey data from parents/carers, staff and pupils
- Self-assessment checklists for schools

The rationale for the use of multiple data sources is to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance a school's understanding of its own performance.

Publicly available data

The inclusion of quantitative data from the Department for Education serves as a crucial component in measuring school effectiveness due to its comprehensive nature and the validity and reliability of metrics used. This data, derived from standardised assessments, attendance records and other key indicators, offers a standardised framework for evaluating the performance of schools regionally and nationally. By incorporating this data into our assessment framework, we ensure transparency and comparability.

Survey data

The equity scorecard incorporates the enhanced use of survey data from parents/carers, staff and pupils for each of the three areas of interest mentioned above to provide opinion data where none currently exists. Including stakeholder opinions is essential to gain a fuller picture of the effectiveness of a school. Quantitative data cannot capture all the intangible qualities of a school that matter to stakeholders and affect their everyday experiences.

We have designed separate parent/carer, staff and pupil surveys which incorporate relevant data for each of our core areas (disadvantaged outcomes, disadvantaged inclusion and community engagement). A Likert scale is used for most questions where 1 represents “strongly disagree” and 5 represents “strongly agree”. This provides opinion data in an easily quantifiable format, whilst delivering deeper insights than those offered by a binary yes/no approach.

Checklists

The checklists for each area are intended to act as an easy-to-use self-assessment tool for schools, with examples of good practice in each key area. We split the checklists into two sections: ‘Good Bets’, demonstrating evidence-informed suggestions of good practice that have a record of working well for a range of schools; and ‘Have You Tried?’ which suggests more innovative promising practices for schools to try in their individual contexts. Ideas for equity strategies for practitioners for example are presented in the book ‘Equity in Education’¹³ and are being piloted by schools involved in the Reach cradle to career partnership.¹⁴ Rather than being definitive, these innovative practices are aimed at providing ideas and inspiration from other expert practitioners. School should mark themselves against the ‘Good Bets’ section, considering the ‘Have You Tried?’ suggestions for future improvements.

Here we draw on the approach set out by Elliot Major and Higgins in their What Works? book (2019).¹⁵ The authors of the first Sutton Trust pupil premium toolkit emphasise the power but also limitations of research evidence in helping teachers shape their practice. This is about adopting a research mindset as a practitioner, remaining sceptical that an idea piloted in another school may work in your specific context but also being open to new practical ideas that have yet to be researched extensively across a range of schools.

“Teachers will always have limited research evidence to draw on. It will never answer every question,” argue Elliot Major and Higgins. “The humbling conclusion is the behaviour of effective teachers is hard to characterise; much depends on how teachers relate to their particular pupils. Knowing something has worked in the past for some pupils is no guarantee in education for predicting what will happen in the future for other pupils.”

At the same time, some best bets and innovative practice we list relate to wider outcomes than solely academic attainment – enabling parents and pupils to engage more with schools in a post-pandemic era when many families have disengaged from the education system. Moreover, an equity approach is about recognising that human talents are insufficiently

¹³ Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023).

¹⁴ Sim, A. (2025).

¹⁵ Elliot Major, L. & Higgins, S. (2019).

encompassed by academic tests alone; evidence suggests that arts and sports activities for example lead to a range of positive life-skills. More studies are needed to assess whether these approaches are effective for a range of school contexts, but they may provide some good bets for school leaders. As ever, as Elliot Major and Higgins (2019) note, it's how they are implemented that often determines their effectiveness.¹⁶

Results for checklists are scored using a Likert scale with five options:

- 1. Fully in place with regular review
- 2. Mostly in place
- 3. Somewhat in place
- 4. Not in place but being considered
- 5. Not in place and not being considered

These checklists provide a structured approach for schools to assess the practices which affect their pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. By employing a Likert scale with five distinct options, our checklists facilitate nuanced assessment and aim to prompt conversations within schools and multi-academy trusts. This approach allows schools to not only identify areas of strength and weakness but also to gauge the degree to which practices are implemented and sustained. As a tool for self-assessment, these checklists seek to empower schools to identify areas for improvement and consider ideas to bring about a sharper focus on disadvantage. An online community of practice for those schools piloting the scorecard will also allow for the sharing of ideas between practitioners.

Mechanism for assessing performance

For each criterion, where possible, we compare a school's current performance with its recent past performance ¹⁷ as well as regional and national averages, enabling a school to understand its performance over time and against relevant benchmarks.

Comparing performance solely to the national average does not sufficiently consider local contexts, which is why we include comparison to the regional average. On the other hand, comparison solely to the regional average may not sufficiently maintain high expectations, especially in regions like the South West, where performance may already lag significantly behind the national average.¹⁸ Incorporating both comparisons can provide a more robust benchmark for evaluating school performance, ensuring contextual assessment which also maintains high standards. In future, there may be scope to carry out analysis against the same criteria using similar families of schools as a point of comparison, with a larger data set.

We use colour to indicate a school's performance trajectory relative to its own past achievements, with green signalling improvement, yellow indicating maintenance of standards, red suggesting decline.¹⁹ In tandem, the colour comparison to the regional and national averages – green for above, yellow for in line, and red for below – offers an understanding of school performance relative to other schools. This allows for nuance in assessment; for instance, a school may exhibit improvement on its own performance and perform in line with regional averages, whilst still falling below national average benchmarks. As such, the equity scorecard provides crucial insight for schools into areas of success, and highlights any need for specific change.

This scorecard seeks to support educators and policymakers to interpret data effectively, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement within schools. In future iterations, we intend to improve the accessibility of this tool for use by parents and carers.

16 Ibid.

17 Comparing the past three years to the three years prior.

18 Sim, A., Mullen, A., Brooks, B., Jones, H., & Elliot Major, L. (2024).

19 Categorisation is calculated based on an allowance value to assess the significance of the change. The choice of allowance value is unique to each metric and is decided by looking at the spread of the data. These allowance values will be adjusted over time based on piloting.

Rationale for criteria

Disadvantaged outcomes

1. Indicators from national datasets

- School missed by FSM eligible pupils

School missed is equivalent to the Department for Education's overall absence indicator, which refers to the total number of sessions missed due to absence for all pupils as a percentage of the total number of possible sessions. According to Department for Education methodology, 'absence rates are calculated by dividing the number of sessions coded as an absence by the total number of possible sessions, where possible sessions include on-site attendance, approved off-site educational activity and absence.'²⁰ One session is equal to half a day.²¹ To give an example, in England, local authority maintained schools must open for at least 380 sessions (190 days) during a school year.²² If 45 sessions were coded as absence across an academic year for one pupil out of the possible 380, the absence rate for that pupil would be 11.84%.

In a 2023 blog, the Department for Education stated that 'being around teachers and friends in a school or college environment is the best way for pupils to learn and reach their potential. Time in school also keeps children safe and provides access to extra-curricular opportunities and pastoral care.'²³ Research shows that, generally, the higher the percentage of pupil absence at both Key Stages 2 and 4, the lower student attainment is at the end of both key stages.²⁴ Recent data has also shown that students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) are more likely to have a higher overall

absence rate than their peers, both in the South West and nationally.²⁵ In the autumn term of the 2023/24 academic year, nationally, FSM eligible students attended at a rate of 86.6% compared to 93.5% for their non FSM eligible peers.²⁶

- FSM eligible pupils missing 10%+ of school

This indicator denotes the Department for Education's 'persistent absence' measure, which refers to pupils who miss 10% or more of possible school sessions.²⁷ In the 2021/22 academic year, 22.5% of pupils were recorded as persistently absent, equating to around 1.6 million pupils in England.²⁸ As above, this is an area in which FSM eligible pupils are disproportionately affected compared to their peers. In 2021/22, 37.2% of FSM eligible pupils were persistent absentees, compared to 17.5% of pupils who were not FSM eligible.²⁹

- English and maths pass rate for FSM eligible pupils at age 16

This measures the percentage of FSM eligible pupils achieving grade 4 or above in English and maths GCSE. We consider grade 4 in English and maths GCSE to be vital 'foundational' literacy and numeracy for all young people, as noted in our Commission goal: 'every child finishes school with 'foundational' English and maths'.³⁰

20 GOV.UK (2024). *Pupil attendance in schools, Methodology*.

21 GOV.UK (2023). *Pupil absence in schools in England, Academic Year 2020/21*.

22 Long, R. (2021).

23 Department for Education (2023). *Why is school attendance so important and what are the risks of missing a day?*

24 For example: GOV.UK (2022). *The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4, Academic Year 2018/19*.

25 Data available: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/6f794311-4937-4aa0-d528-08dc26de3fc1> Accessed 17 April 2024.

26 Data available: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/a28bd83b-3eed-42fb-a037-08dcedcd278c> Accessed 22 October 2024.

27 GOV.UK (2024). *Pupil absence in schools in England*.

28 GOV.UK (2023). *Pupil absence in schools in England, Academic Year 2020/21*.

29 Data available: [School attendance in England - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/libraries/commons/libraries/commons-library/school-attendance-in-england) Accessed 30 October 2024.

30 Ibid.

Achieving a grade 4 in maths GCSE means ‘you have the essentials of numeracy, the core skills needed for daily life...Grade 4 is widely interpreted as a ‘good pass’, equivalent to the former (low) grade C pass, and...acts as an effective passport to A Levels and equivalent Level 3 courses and apprenticeships.’³¹ A GCSE grade 4 in England is considered by the Government as the ‘standard’ pass rate for pupils.³² Recent analysis found that teenagers who don’t achieve a grade 4 in their core GCSEs tend to face worse outcomes not just in education but in health and wellbeing and are more likely to be involved in criminal behaviour.³³

- FSM eligible pupils in education or employment at age 16

The proportion of FSM eligible pupils staying in education and/or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of KS4 (%) is an important metric when considering the progress of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, because, as the Department for Education states, ‘destination measures provide clear and comparable information on the success of schools in helping all their pupils take qualifications that offer them the best opportunity to progress. They will also encourage institutions to make sure their pupils receive the support needed to prepare for and complete the transition on to education or training that offers good long-term prospects.’³⁴ This aligns with the South-West Social Mobility Commission’s goal that every young person is equipped with the skills employers need now and in the future, the qualifications required to progress and a plan for the next three years.’³⁵

2. Survey questions

- Parent/carer, staff and pupil opinion score

The full surveys can be found in the Appendix, but here we explain the rationale for the survey questions relating to the scorecard section devoted to outcomes for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.³⁶

Survey questions linked to this section are as follows:

*** denotes where a survey question is the same as or very similar to an existing Ofsted Parent View/staff/pupil survey question.*³⁷

Parent/carer:

1	My child receives Free School Meals.
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This aims to identify parents/carers of pupils eligible for Free School Meals, using this statement as the first question in the survey. We will then use this data in two ways:

- When measuring survey completion rates, measuring this for FSM eligible pupils compared to all pupils and;
- giving separate scores for FSM eligible families across all opinion scores, for comparison with all pupils.

Unlike the other questions, respondents’ options for answering question one will be Yes/No/Not sure.

2	I am happy with the education that my child is receiving.
3	The school has high expectations for my child. **
4	My child and I are supported to ensure that they attend school.

These questions are intended to gain parents’/carers’ views on the school’s provision of education and wider support for achieving positive academic outcomes.

31 Elliot Major, L. & Parsons, S. (2022).
32 Parsons, S., & Elliot Major, L. (2024).
33 Ibid.
34 Department for Education (2020).
35 Sim, A., Bickford Smith, W., & Elliot Major, L. (2023).
36 Whilst we recognise that engagement with these surveys can be low, especially for parents/carers of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, we incentivise schools to get better at engaging all parents/carers by including a survey completion rate measure in the ‘community engagement’ area.
37 Ofsted (2019). *Ofsted Parent View*.

Staff:

1	The school challenges all pupils to make good progress across all subjects. **
2	This school provides appropriate support for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, even in difficult circumstances.
3	This school provides appropriate academic interventions for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds who need them.
4	This school provides a clear strategy to help me support the attendance of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.

These questions are intended to assess the extent to which staff believe that the school provides adequate and appropriate support to ensure that pupils from under-resourced backgrounds can achieve positive outcomes.

Pupils:

2	I enjoy my lessons.
3	I understand why it is important to come to school.

These questions act as a proxy for good outcomes, given that research shows that pupils’ experiences of school learning and school attendance are positive influences on outcomes.³⁸

3. Checklist

The checklist for this section covers good and innovative practice in ensuring good outcomes for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. ‘Good Bets’ listed are evidence-informed suggestions for good practice, usually generated from syntheses of research studies indicating that they may work in lots of different school contexts, while the suggestions in the ‘Have You Tried?’ section refer to what we consider as more innovative practice, showing promise in improving outcomes indicated by individual studies or ideas which have been trialled in other schools.

Disadvantaged outcomes checklist:

1	Is the school effectively utilising staff to ensure the best outcomes for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds? Good Bets: 1. Ensuring that pupils are taught by subject-specialist teachers throughout their secondary education. Assign the most effective teachers to the lowest sets if setting in a subject. Also keep a close watch on which pupils have been served by supply teachers.³⁹ 2. Facilitating a timetable in which staff are teaching classes who will be best supported by their skill set - allocating the best teachers to children from under-resourced backgrounds. Ensure that support staff are highly trained and have a clear understanding of their role in helping pupils to achieve. This may involve specific ‘equity’ training.⁴⁰ 3. Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers to teach pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. Are the school’s staff retention rates in line with national averages? Policies at school level such as managing workload and working conditions, induction support, coaching and mentoring, and collaboration with colleagues can all be effective in staff retention and recruitment.⁴¹
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38 For example, Department for Education (2023) *Why is school attendance so important and what are the risks of missing a day?* See also: Harland, J., Sharp, C., Judkins, M., Flemons, L., Dey, M., Keenan, C. and Nugent, R. (2024).

39 Subject specialist teaching is positively associated with improved attainment in core subjects like English and Mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4. See: Department for Education (2016), which states that ‘There is a positive association between the level of ‘specialist’ teaching in English and Mathematics and attainment in these subjects at the end of key stage 4.’ See also: Elliot Major, L. & Higgins, S. (2019). Coe, R., Aloisi, C., Higgins, S., & Elliot Major, L., (2014) find strong evidence that content knowledge (especially pedagogical content knowledge) encompassing subject material and how students think about it, has impact on student outcomes.

40 Demie, F., & Mclean, C. (2016). See also: Macleod, S., Sharp, C., Bernardinelli, D., Skipp, A. & Higgins, S. (2015), which states that one building block for success is to ‘deploy the best staff to support disadvantaged pupils; develop skills and roles of teachers and TAs rather than using additional staff who do not know the pupils well.’ It goes on to say that ‘schools...use their best teachers to work with pupils who need the most support and train teaching assistants to support pupils’ learning.’ Studies have shown positive outcomes when schools implement a whole-school approach—where teaching assistants (TAs), support staff, and administrative personnel receive training and collaborate with teachers. Education Endowment Foundation (2023); Elliot Major, L., & Briant, E. (2023).

41 Education Endowment Foundation (2023).

Have You Tried?

1. Conducting a skills audit of each member of support staff, surveying them to assess where they may have specialisms or interests to create teams of staff to be deployed to best support pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.⁴²
2. Considering how you can diversify your school workforce so that it is more representative of the local communities you serve. Can you consider apprenticeship routes? Teachers can also be parents and community members: they bring their lived experience and integration with the community beyond the bounds of the school day.⁴³
3. In parallel, considering how to recruit parent governors from across your community, by assessing how you work as governors. Do you need to work in the formal style that is so off-putting to many people unused to making their views known in committees?⁴⁴

2 Does the school ensure that effective teaching and learning practices are consistently high quality and inclusive of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds?**Good Bets:**

1. Ensuring that inclusive teaching and learning practices are made explicit to staff. Focus on providing and receiving effective feedback that moves learning on; encouraging independent learning through metacognitive or 'thinking about thinking' strategies; providing one-to-one (or indeed two-to-one or three-to-one) tuition for children falling behind their peers. Setting children by perceived ability can lead to widening educational inequities, particularly when delivered in an inflexible way with little movement of pupils between groupings.⁴⁵
2. Ensuring that pupils from under-resourced backgrounds have access to both stretch and challenge activities and, where necessary, academic support to address any underachievement.⁴⁶
3. Providing alternative and context-specific interventions such as peer tutoring or intervention groups in maths and English.⁴⁷

Have You Tried?

1. Reviewing curricula to include resources from a wide range of backgrounds across all subjects. All learners deserve to feel connected and represented in the curriculum; leaders and teachers should draw on the 'rich cultural assets of working-class communities' into the curriculum by incorporating stories, achievements, and contributions from diverse cultural backgrounds. Be explicit about the countless examples of working-class inventors, artists and leaders who have contributed to our shared knowledge. We should celebrate all the great minds who have graced and shaped our world wherever they come from.⁴⁸
2. Providing specific training in unconscious bias to support staff, so that they are well equipped in supporting pupils from under resourced backgrounds and reflecting on their biases. Ideally this should be accompanied by mitigating strategies such as anonymising assessment or implementing standardised protocols and identifying any 'hidden learners' in the classroom. This also involves facilitating strong teamwork between teachers and support staff by providing time for them to plan and work together.⁴⁹
3. Developing strength-based or equity language within your school. Developing a shared, non-deficit language guide setting out consistent respectful terminology for how you talk about children and families, particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds. Strength-based language aims to avoid the labels that may stigmatise pupils and parents and lead to unconscious biases and lower expectations. For example, this may look like replacing the term 'disadvantaged students' with 'children from under-resourced backgrounds' and avoiding terms such as 'hard to reach' families.⁵⁰

42 Education Endowment Foundation (2021) 'Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants' suggests that schools should carry out a thorough audit to include 'A thorough audit of the current situation is conducted. This can include: • Self-assessment of current practices; • Surveying staff (anonymously) for their views and experiences; • Conducting observations and asking questions about teachers' decision-making regarding TA deployment; • Making an effort to listen to TAs' interactions with pupils; • A skills audit to collect details of TAs' qualifications, certifications, training, experience, specialisms and talents; and • Obtaining the views of other stakeholders, such as pupils and parents/carers. SLT should explain the purpose of the audit process to staff, and emphasise the collaborative nature of the review and the changes to practice that will follow. It is important to be alive to the sensitivities of carrying a process, the intentions of which could be misread by TAs in particular.'

43 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023).

44 Ibid.

45 Elliot Major, L. & Higgins, S. (2019).

46 Cullen, S., Cullen, M.-A., Dytham, S. and Hayden, N. (2018).

47 Peer tutoring has been found to boost the progress of pupils from low-income backgrounds, but delivery is key. See: Education Endowment Foundation (2017). See also: Demie, F. & Mclean, C. (2016).

48 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023 p.78-79).

49 Lee, M. W. and Newton, P. (2021) state that: on average, teachers tend to judge students from under-resourced backgrounds as lower academic achievers than their actual test marks might suggest. Olczyk, M., Gentrup, S. & Volodina, A. (2022, p. 443-468) state that: Teachers can unconsciously act differently towards children from disadvantaged backgrounds, providing lower-quality feedback. In his seminal book 'The Hidden Lives of Learners', Graham Nuthall revealed the challenge every classroom teacher is up against: 70% of pupils' time was spent pretending to listen; 80% of the feedback pupils received was from their fellow peers; and 80% of this was wrong (Nuthall, G., 2007).

50 See: Elliot Major, L. (2023). Many organisations have developed asset-based language guides. See for example: Think Forward (2024).

3 Does the school understand how its pupils from under-resourced backgrounds are performing from the start of their time at school until they leave?

Good Bets:

1. Providing a clear, continuous assessment policy for staff to be able to identify need and make any necessary interventions, early. Develop staff skills in assessment and data literacy to help them identify and clearly highlight instances of student underperformance. Train staff around key strengths and limitations of standardised assessments such as SATs and CAT tests. Ensure that there is an individualised approach to addressing barriers to learning, rather than providing access to generic support or focusing on pupils nearing their end-of-key-stage assessments.⁵¹
2. Considering your practices to support transition, given that education transition points are a vulnerable time for all pupils and particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds. You could appoint a transition officer to visit local feeder schools and feed back key information to relevant staff members about each pupil's extra support needs and motivations, for example. You could also consider establishing pre-transition shared activities with local feeder schools to familiarise children and parents with secondary school. Develop a curriculum transition plan to reinforce KS2 learnings and ensure that pupils have the critical prior knowledge for the secondary curriculum.⁵²

Have You Tried?

1. Using a 'vulnerabilities index' as a tool to identify, prioritise and track vulnerable pupils across a range of indicators. For example: cypsomersethealth.org/resources/MHTK/Behaviour_and_Vulnerability_Profile_Tool.pdf.⁵³
2. Assessing the attitudes of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds as well as their assessment scores. This may involve schools developing their own trackers by interviewing and surveying pupils, asking them to self-report on their progress to gain qualitative data to support quantitative attainment data.⁵⁴
3. Tracking through the data of pupils who are underperforming and using this to create an understanding of what pupil disadvantage might look like in your specific community context. Rather than basing ideas of disadvantage around standard measures such as receipt of pupil premium, this method of looking at underperforming pupils and common characteristics - such as specific postcodes or family circumstances - can help you develop a more nuanced understanding of disadvantage for your context, and how to address it.⁵⁵

4 Do pupils from under-resourced backgrounds have equitable access to resources to support their learning, including technology and online resources?

Good Bets:

1. Using a wide range of data and information to give equitable access to pupils. For instance, asking pupils and families what they have and what they need, not making assumptions.⁵⁶
2. Running a homework club to provide a space and relevant support for pupils with homework and revision.⁵⁷
3. Providing students with extra targeted academic interventions, if they would not otherwise have access to these, such as small group tutoring where needed.⁵⁸

Have You Tried?

1. Considering a 'poverty proofing' service, supporting schools to understand and mitigate the impact of poverty. For example, schools may reduce hidden costs by offering free breakfast clubs, affordable uniforms, or covering costs for trips and extra-curricular activities.⁵⁹
2. Considering how the school can signpost parents to support services that exist in the local area, such as local food banks, wraparound care and citizens advice. This might involve school staff conducting an 'asset mapping' activity to understand local authority and third sector provision available locally.⁶⁰
3. Creating mentorship opportunities for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds where a need has been identified.⁶¹

51 The Key (2022). See also: Macleod, S., Sharp, C., Bernardinelli, D., Skipp, A. and Higgins, S. (2015 p.4) recommend that schools 'make decisions based on data and respond to evidence.'; Popham, W.J. (2009, p. 4) notes 'educators' inadequate knowledge in assessment can cripple the quality of education. Assessment literacy is seen as a sine qua non for today's competent educator'. See also: Kime, S. (2016).

52 Sim, A. (2025).

53 Somerset County Council (2011).

54 The Key (2022).

55 As mentioned in talks with school leaders.

56 Education Endowment Foundation (2024). *The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium*. See also: Rowland, M. (2020).

57 Homework, if managed and monitored well for secondary school students, can lead to five months' extra progress over one academic year. See: Elliot Major, L. & Higgins, S. (2019); Education Endowment Foundation (2021). *Homework*.

58 One-to-one or small group tutoring remains a strong evidence-informed bet for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. See: Nickow, A., Oreopoulos, P. & Quan, V. (2020). See also: Kraft, M. A. & Falken, G., T. (2021). There is also promising evidence that trained undergraduates can serve as tutors providing targeted support. See: Elliot Major, L., Eyles, A., Lillywhite, E., & Machin, S. (2024).

59 See for example: Children North East (2024).

60 Sim, A. (2025). See also: The Reach Foundation (2024).

61 Ibid.

5 Does the school have and regularly review an attendance improvement plan, with specific support for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds?

Good Bets:

- 1. Having a clear policy and protocols, including rapid response systems in place to address poor attendance patterns when they first begin. Review existing attendance plans and policies post-COVID. Consider appointing an existing member of staff as an attendance mentor to monitor and oversee the attendance of all pupils.⁶²
- 2. Working to establish the root causes of persistent absence. One manner of doing so may be interviewing pupils to try and establish the reasons for their absence by asking questions such as ‘what is your experience of lunch/break times?’, ‘is it easy or difficult for you to get to school in the mornings?’⁶³

Have You Tried?

- 1. Rather than focusing on attendance as a negative outcome, schools could try having more open-ended discussions with parents/carers about the pressures they may be facing and how the school could help support parents/carers with these pressures, as a means of addressing the root causes of absence over the longer term. Schools are more likely to be able to help support pupil attendance by working together with parents/carers, and this relies on forging stronger relationships of trust with them.⁶⁴
- 2. Reviewing where and how you conduct meetings between teachers and parents/carers related to attendance. This could involve establishing a neutral space in which to conduct meetings, in order to put parents/carers at ease when having these conversations.⁶⁵

62 Successful ‘schools...respond quickly to poor attendance.’ Macleod, S., Sharp, C., Bernardinelli, D., Skipp, A. and Higgins, S. (2015). See also: Department for Education (2022); Gunter, T. & Makinson, L. (2023); Elliot Major, L., Eyles, A. & Machin, S. (2020); Adams, R. & Aguillar Garcia, C. (2023); Department for Education (2024); In the service provided by the government, ‘The original programme, which has been running since 2022 in five pilot areas, sees attendance mentors provide one to one support to persistently absent pupils including those with SEND or mental ill health to break down the barriers to attendance, getting them back in the classroom, learning and thriving.’

63 Allen, J. (2022). See also: Gunter, T. and Makinson, L. (2023) who state that ‘policy.makers must do more to examine the root causes of absence and build the evidence base on what works to reduce it’, and suggest that areas for further research are ‘Getting to the root causes of absence and understanding what works in reducing it. Policymakers must interrogate the huge volume of data available and build the evidence base on the effectiveness of attendance-based interventions, which is currently relatively weak. Getting to the root causes should include building our understanding of pupils’ and parents’ attitudes towards school; it is clear that attitudes towards physical attendance have changed, but little detail is known about the reasons pupils and parents have for absence.’

64 Sim, A. (2025).

65 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023 p.127) ask ‘can meetings be held in...neutral territory so that parents feel more at ease?’ See also: Sim, A. (2025); Department for Education (2024). *Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance.*

Disadvantaged inclusion

1. Indicators from national datasets

- Fair share of FSM eligible pupils

The percentage of pupils FSM eligible⁶⁶ at any point in the last six years (FSM6) within a school is the first metric in this section of the scorecard.⁶⁷ It is important to provide this context when assessing a school's performance. Put simply, it is not fair to compare the attainment measures of a school with very few students who have been eligible at any point in the last six years for Free School Meals (FSM6), to one with a much higher percentage of the pupil population who are FSM6. Schools which often perform well against traditional performance measures, for instance when comparing GCSE outcomes, tend to have very low proportions of FSM6 pupils.⁶⁸ Additionally, schools with a high proportion of FSM students are known to have a higher teacher attrition rate than schools with smaller FSM populations.⁶⁹ Pupil populations and demographics should be acknowledged in school performance, but equally not used as a vehicle to lower standards. Whilst we acknowledge that many state schools do not have full control over their admissions, this metric is about recognising that some schools may have more challenging contexts than others.

- Off-rolling practices for FSM eligible pupils

According to Ofsted (2019), 'off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil.'⁷⁰ This generally happens during exam years (10 and 11).

Using the percentage of non-mobile pupils who are FSM eligible is an imperfect measure of off-rolling practices, but nonetheless a useful proxy to understand whether such pupils are leaving school during their exam years.

The Department for Education defines pupil mobility as 'the influx then exit of children at often random points during the school year'.⁷¹ For Ofsted, before an inspection, this data is analysed to assess if 'a school has exceptional levels of pupils leaving the school in years 10 and 11'.⁷² They acknowledge that, whilst this does not always mean that off-rolling is happening, it allows their inspectors to 'explore the possibility' during an inspection.

Pupil mobility is higher for pupils who are FSM eligible. By measuring the percentage of non-mobile pupils who are eligible for FSM in Years 10 and 11, we have a view to how many pupils are leaving a school, and as such, can contextualise our assessment of a school and potentially highlight any cases where this number is exceptionally high.

- Suspensions for FSM eligible pupils
- Permanent exclusions for FSM eligible pupils

Rates of exclusions and suspensions, specifically for FSM eligible pupils, should be measured as part of school accountability metrics, to put disadvantage and community at the centre of work in schools. Exclusions and suspensions are another area where FSM eligible pupils are disproportionately affected. Data from the Department of Education show that the suspension rate for pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) is more than three times that for their non-FSM eligible counterparts. Meanwhile, in the autumn term of 2022/23 the permanent exclusion rate for FSM eligible pupils was 0.07, compared to 0.01 for non-FSM pupils.⁷³

66 The Department for Education website (2024) states that 'Children may be eligible for free school meals if parents/carers get any of the following:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)'.

67 Treadaway (2014 p3), found that the proportion of time for which a pupil is FSM eligible throughout their time in school is likely to be a good indicator of the potential impact of disadvantage upon attainment and progress.

68 See for example: Selective Comprehensives 2024, Sutton Trust (2024).

69 Department for Education (2019) 'Teacher recruitment and retention strategy', states that 'schools in disadvantaged areas face the biggest problems: this wider challenge is most acute in schools serving areas of disadvantage, who face higher levels of turnover and can have particular problems in attracting subject specialists in some subjects.'

70 Owen, D. (2019).

71 Department for Education (2011 p.6).

72 Ibid.

73 Data available: [Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, Autumn term 2022/23 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-](#)

By measuring suspensions and permanent exclusions, we can assess the extent to which schools are ensuring they include all the pupils in their communities.

2. Survey questions

Parent/carer, staff and pupil

Survey questions linked to this section are as follows:

Parents/carers:

5	My child is safe at school. **
6	I feel confident that my child will get what they need from this school to be successful in life.
7	My child can access and participate in activities and clubs provided by the school. **
8	There is a good range of subjects available to my child at this school. **

These questions seek to assess the extent to which parents/carers believe that their children are included in the school community, covering issues such as curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Staff:

5	The school gives me sufficient, useful and relevant training and development opportunities to best support pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.
6	The careers provision at this school is accessible to all pupils, particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds.
7	This school maintains an inclusive behaviour policy and supports staff in effectively managing pupil behaviour. **
8	This school enables all pupils to access a broad curriculum.

9	The school enables pupils from under-resourced backgrounds to access opportunities outside of their lessons.
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These questions assess staff opinion about inclusion in their school, and the extent to which they feel able to be inclusive practitioners for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds and their families.

Pupils:

4	I enjoy learning at this school. **
5	I understand how my education at school will help me later in life.
6	I feel positive about my future after school.
7	My school helps me to feel confident.
8	The behaviour of other pupils in my lessons and around school is good. **
9	I take part in school activities outside of lessons, like clubs, sports, music and art. **
10	My school provides me with information about my next steps. **

These questions seek to understand whether pupils feel included in their school communities: do they feel able to broadly take part in school and related activities, and do they believe that they have the knowledge, skills and experience to succeed in life?

3. Checklist

Disadvantaged inclusion checklist:

- 1 Does the school offer a broad and balanced curriculum that caters to the diverse needs and interests of all students, including pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, and prepares them for future education and career opportunities?**

Good Bets:

 1. Designing all curricula with pupils from under-resourced backgrounds in mind at every point. This will include planning to ensure all pupils, and especially those from under-resourced backgrounds, can study a broad range of subjects, supporting them to gain knowledge and cultural capital which could be valuable in subsequent stages of their lives. Ensure that, where possible, pupils study all subjects available so that, as per Ofsted's curriculum research (2020), they 'do not miss out on opportunities to...gain knowledge that could be valuable in later stages of education'. Consider also the use of resources from sources outside of what is traditionally considered 'middle class' – for example, being 'explicit about the countless examples of working-class inventors, artists, and leaders who have contributed to our shared knowledge.'⁷⁴
 2. Celebrating all subjects, for example by ensuring that staff speak positively to all pupils about all subjects and protecting time in the school calendar for arts and sports and other activities that not all pupils will have access to outside the classroom.⁷⁵
 3. Offering guidance to all pupils around their GCSE choices and post-16 education/ employment opportunities. Ensure that pupils receive unbiased guidance that is balanced between academic and technical options at key transition points. Train staff to improve knowledge of technical pathways (including T levels, apprenticeships and BTECs) and promote these equally alongside academic routes to all pupils.

Have You Tried?

 1. Conducting partnership work and consultation with families, universities, local businesses and others to inform curriculum design and planning.⁷⁶
 2. Rewarding pupils who exhibit school values, not only those who achieve highly in academia, sports or music. Consider the achievements of pupils you celebrate at the end of the school year – does this include vocational and creative accomplishments alongside academic and sporting ones, and are you celebrating the values you espouse as a school such as generosity to others?⁷⁷
 3. Appointing 'pupil advocates'. Incorporating pupil advocates within schools, where middle and senior leaders act as corporate or 'pushy parents' can help ensure decisions made about a child's education are in their best interest. These advocates act as informed supporters, holding teachers accountable for the information which they provide to students.⁷⁸
- 2 Are pupils from under-resourced backgrounds provided with opportunities and appropriate support for extra-curricular activities, educational trips and enrichment programmes?**

Good Bets:

 1. Considering how to include pupils from under-resourced backgrounds at the point of planning any extra-curricular activities, educational trips and enrichment programmes, for example by providing subsidies that support participation at low or no cost.⁷⁹
 2. Nominating a key figure within school to prioritise the provision of extra-curricular activities and access or creating an 'extra-curricular and cultural capital programme'. This should encompass a range of activities spanning different types of cultural experiences that reflect the communities you serve.⁸⁰
 3. Partnering with local third-sector initiatives to allow young people from under-resourced backgrounds to try out different activities and see which they like.⁸¹

74 Department for Education (2017). See also: Ofsted and Spielman, A. (2017) who state that: 'It is a risk to social mobility if pupils miss out on opportunities to study subjects and gain knowledge that could be valuable in subsequent stages of education or in later life. Restricted subject choice for low-attaining pupils disproportionately affects pupils from low-income backgrounds.' See also: Harford, S. (2020); Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023 p.83).

75 Participation in arts and sports activities have important educational value in themselves. They are associated with improved socio-emotional skills from increased self-confidence and wellbeing, to enhanced social interaction and leadership skills (Elliot Major, L. & Higgins, S. 2019). See also: Times Education Supplement (2020); Frenzel, AC., Daniels, L., Buric, I. (2021).

76 Yemini, M., Engel, L. & Ben Simon, A. (2022). See also: Dell, S. (2024). An example of this type of work is Cowes Enterprise College's work embedding maritime learning into the curriculum, given its location on the Isle of Wight.

77 Elliot Major & Briant (2023, p.101) suggest that teachers should 'value a learner's talents that are not specifically linked to [your] subject or discipline'.

78 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023).

79 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023 p.132).

80 Wrangles, M. (2024). See also: Social Mobility Commission (2019).

81 Social Mobility Commission (2019 p.63).

Have You Tried?

1. Collecting data on extra-curricular activities such as what is offered, participation and soft skills gained for analysis and comparison with other schools.⁸²
2. Coordinating with other schools within the local area to provide a wider range of extra-curricular activities by preventing duplication of activities.⁸³
3. Using pupil voice, for example by surveying or interviewing pupils from under-resourced backgrounds about their favourite subjects and clubs, to identify pupils who may not be well-integrated in their school community, then suggesting activities for them to join.⁸⁴

3 Is the school assessing and managing the pastoral care and well-being of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds?**Good Bets:**

1. Measuring well-being through indicators such as self-reporting, counselling sessions, and behavioral incidents with a specific lens on pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.⁸⁵
2. Offering and promoting on-site counselling sessions for all pupils. This will especially benefit pupils from under-resourced backgrounds because they may be more likely to have experienced adverse childhood experiences. Being based on the school site makes services more universally accessible.⁸⁶

Have You Tried?

1. Ensuring that every pupil from an under-resourced background has a key staff member responsible for the oversight of their wellbeing and to measure the impact of any interventions.⁸⁷
2. Ensuring all staff spend time engaging in informal conversations about pupils' interests, hobbies and challenges outside of school. Nurture relationships based on mutual respect and connection, not just on how they are performing academically.⁸⁸
3. Providing access to activities inside school which are not traditional subjects, such as crafts, in a neutral space, where pupils and their families can take part and access staff associated with wellbeing.⁸⁹

4 Does the school have inclusive policies that promote a positive and supportive environment for all pupils, addressing diverse needs and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion? Do these cater for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds?**Good Bets:**

1. Considering the Sutton Trust's free consultation service for schools looking to make their admissions more socio-economically inclusive. Schools can sign up to a fair admissions pledge allowing them to access templates, model admissions policies, and online CPD. They can also connect with other schools for collaboration and peer support.⁹⁰
2. Making expectations around behaviour explicit to learners from under-resourced backgrounds. Prior knowledge of what is deemed to be 'acceptable behaviour' should not be assumed.⁹¹
3. Monitoring the continuum of exclusions – from permanent exclusions and suspensions, to managed moves, to elective home education and persistent absence – with a specific lens on pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, to better understand patterns of exclusion and how to address these.⁹²

82 Sim, A. (2025). See also: Wrangles, M. (2024)

83 Social Mobility Commission (2019 p.33)

84 ImpactEd (2024 p.18)

85 Improving children's wellbeing is likely to have many positive impacts on learning. See: Gregson Family Foundation (2019). See also: Evidence Based Practice Unit (2024)

86 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2023)

87 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023 p.39)

88 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023)

89 National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (2022). *Developing a Behaviour Management Policy*

90 The Sutton Trust (2024)

91 Education Endowment Foundation (2019) state that using simple approaches as part of a regular routine are a proactive way in which to improve behaviour in schools. A key part of this is that 'school leaders should ensure the school behaviour policy is clear and consistently applied'. See also: Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023), who argue that, when it comes to pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, teachers should be 'explicitly teaching them how you expect them to behave rather than assuming they should just know.'

92 Gill, K., Brown, S., O'Brien, C., Graham, J. & Poku-Amanfo, E. (2024)

Have You Tried?

- 1. Conducting outreach work with local primary schools to diversify your admissions.
- 2. Training staff to ensure that they do not assume that pupils from under-resourced backgrounds have poor behaviour. Consider implementing de-escalation and restorative practice.⁹³
- 3. Joining a regional or national network focused on disadvantage network, to share practice, learnings and resources with other schools and trusts.⁹⁴

Community engagement

2. Survey questions

Parents’/carers’ evening attendance:
FSM eligible pupils

- This metric is intended to gauge parental engagement with school as well as encourage schools to involve parents/carers more in their children’s education. Although not currently measured in official statistics, we believe it is something that schools will be able to track relatively easily. Attendance at parents’/carers’ evenings has been found to be associated with better academic results, with 11-year-olds scoring three more points as a median average in verbal reasoning tests if their parent attended, as one example of its significance.⁹⁵ Furthermore, reviews of research find that improved parental engagement in general can have an impact of up to four months’ additional progress for pupils.⁹⁶ We aim to use the percentage annual attendance at parents’/carers’ evenings of parents of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds across all year groups as the metric.
 - Survey completion rates
- Survey completion rates (overall %) are a means of gauging the level of community engagement with the school. Higher completion rates also help to ensure that the opinion data collected is reliable and representative of a school community.

We recommend recording survey completion rates as opposed to response rates, as we want to know how many respondents completed all required questions. This is to ensure that survey responses are a reliable source of data. Furthermore, in the first iteration of this scorecard, this metric is useful as it may help to identify how easy the survey is to take, and therefore can inform future improvements.

- Opinion score

Survey questions linked to this section are as follows:

Parent/carer

9	I feel part of the school community.
10	The school communicates with me in a clear and helpful way.
11	I would recommend this school to another parent/ carer.**
12	My child enjoys coming to this school.*
13	I am a part of my child’s education, and the school helps me to understand how my child is doing.*
14	The school provides access to and information about high quality, regular and dependable care for my child outside of school hours.

These questions assess the extent to which parents/carers and their children/child feel part of the school community. Broadly, these questions ask parents if they feel that the school is helping them and their children/child.

Staff

10	I am proud to be a member of staff at this school.**
11	I understand the local community context of this school and am able to use this in my work.
12	This school works with the local community to provide relevant opportunities for its pupils.
13	This school is an active part of the local community.
14	I am supported to engage with parents/carers as part of my work.
15	I feel confident engaging with parents/carers, especially those of children from under-resourced backgrounds, as part of my work.

These questions measure the extent to which staff feel

93 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023) suggest a ‘workshop with teachers and staff...to reflect on what biases and stereotypes may be present in...classroom and school practices.’ On restorative practice, see: Warin, J., & Hibbin, R. (2020) and Education and Training Foundation (2021).

94 South West Disadvantage Network (2024).

95 Social Market Foundation (2016).

96 Education Endowment Foundation ‘Social and emotional learning’ (2021).

that they are part of the school community and their broader understanding of the community which they serve.

Pupil

11	I am part of the school community.
12	I would recommend this school to a friend moving to the area.**

These questions ask pupils if they feel that they are part of the school community.

3. Checklist

Community engagement checklist

1	Does the school have a good working knowledge of the school community and wider local community, and does it incorporate relevant community views into its practices? Good Bets: 1. Reviewing how the school works with its community, including parents, businesses and local service providers.⁹⁷ 2. Establishing feedback mechanisms to ensure that the school community can submit their views so the school can use these to inform practice. This may include conducting listening activities with different parts of your community, such as parents/carers, pupils, residents and community organisations. ‘Deep listening’ approaches that ensure people feel acknowledged and heard can be especially helpful in surfacing community views beyond what the school expects or wants to hear. These approaches can also build community engagement and help schools to identify members of the community who will campaign on behalf of the community, ensuring that any initiatives are ‘done with’ and not ‘done to’ the community.⁹⁸ Have You Tried? 1. Carrying out home visits to build relationships with families in the school community. Home visits are helpful to make an initial connection with the parents/carers of new pupils in an environment in which they are more likely to feel comfortable, helping staff to gain a deeper understanding of pupils’ backgrounds and challenge any prior assumptions.⁹⁹ 2. Training staff to develop an understanding of the implications of community disadvantage and the specifics of disadvantage in your school’s context. Sharing amongst the whole staff body the knowledge gained from data gathering or community listening activities – such as local income, employment and health data, and community concerns around for example transport access or childcare provision. This can help teachers and other staff to better understand the everyday challenges their pupils and families are encountering and adapt their practice accordingly.¹⁰⁰
2	Does the school establish and maintain effective parent/carer partnerships? Good Bets: 1. Co-developing and delivering a ‘parent partnership plan...to equip all parents to engage with their children’s education’ – for example, equipping parents with questions they might want to ask staff at parents’ evenings. Evaluate the impact of parental involvement and engagement on a range of outcomes for pupils and use information to focus further improvements. Consider specific training for teachers on parental engagement, in particular considerations around engaging parents/carers from backgrounds that may be different to teachers’ own backgrounds.¹⁰¹ 2. Ensuring that all communications are easily digestible for all parents and carers, avoiding acronyms, jargon and overly formal language. Consider personalising communications where appropriate.¹⁰² 3. Considering text messaging parents, as a low-cost approach for encouraging improved school attendance and engagement with their child’s progress at school.¹⁰³

97 Van Poortvliet, M., Axford, N. and Lloyd, J. (2018).

98 Sim, A. (2025). See also: Ofsted (2019). *Ofsted Parent View: toolkit for schools*.

99 Elliot Major, L. & Briant, E. (2023 p.115). See also: HFL education (2024); McKie, A., Terziev, J., & Gill, B. (2021).

100 Sim, A. (2025).

101 Elliot Major, L. and Briant, E. (2023). Jones, C., Sideropoulos, V. and Palikara, O. (2024) found in their study of almost 2000 qualified teachers in England that most had received no training in how to conduct effective parental engagement.

102 Ofsted (2011 p.6).

103 Stokes, L., Dawson, A., Williams, C., Alexander, K., Akehurst, G., Manzoni, C., Runge, J. and Xu, L. (2022).

Have You Tried?

1. Creating volunteering opportunities for parents/carers and former pupils. For example, appointing 'community champions' comprised of parents/carers or former pupils, who can serve as powerful bridges between local communities and schools. They can act as powerful advocates for schools and provide insights into the barriers faced by some families (for example, when children aren't consistently attending school). They understand local cultural needs and can offer non-judgemental support to other parents.¹⁰⁴
2. Considering changing parent-teacher meetings to make them more impactful for parents and their children. First meetings could be about parents sharing insights about their child. Older students can also chair meetings giving them a sense of ownership.¹⁰⁵
3. Providing flexible communications (e.g. short drop-in sessions at flexible times) to create opportunities for parents of older pupils to engage with the school.¹⁰⁶

3 Does the school engage and partner with local community partners, including FE/ HE institutions, the local authority and local businesses, for the benefit of their students?**Good Bets:**

1. Developing sustainable school-university, school-employer, school-FE partnerships to raise aspirations and tackle stereotyping. Research studies shows that school activities like careers talks and workplace visits that involve people from workplaces are often linked with better employment outcomes. Having repeated and sustained touchpoints is vital to supporting pupils from under-resourced backgrounds as they may be less likely to have encountered further or higher education or particular careers pathways outside of school. One-off, non-sustained opportunities are more likely to favour pupils who are 'in the know'.¹⁰⁷
2. Increasing your use of destinations data to give a better understanding of where former students go and what they do after leaving school. Consider partnering with organisations like Future First to develop alumni networks that help you to understand the full range of careers that students may pursue, not just those entering academic pathways. Alumni can be drawn upon to talk with current pupils about options and pathways, acting as role models and mentors.¹⁰⁸

Have You Tried?

1. Contacting community leaders in your local area including local authority representatives and inviting them to regular (e.g. monthly) get-togethers to help establish and strengthen links between the school and community organisations/ services, as well as the links between community organisations themselves.¹⁰⁹
2. Establishing outreach and mentoring programmes with local businesses or universities, with a particular focus on careers guidance and insight for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.¹¹⁰

4 Does the school ensure that a variety of groups are able to use school facilities?**Good Bets:**

1. Reviewing the processes for booking/using school spaces, ensuring that they are simple, accessible and easy to understand.¹¹¹
2. Tracking patterns for use and using qualitative feedback opportunities to identify who is not using school spaces, and why that might be.¹¹²
3. Considering how wraparound care can be offered on the school site. Promoting and supporting government subsidies for childcare where relevant.¹¹³

¹⁰⁴ Elliot Major, L. and Briant, E. (2023)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Ofsted (2011 p.10) 'The parents and school staff whom inspectors met continued to value face-to-face meetings.'

¹⁰⁷ Education and Employers (2019 p.4). See also: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2024); Jones, M., Hobbs, L., Kenny, J., Campbell, C., Chittleborough, Gilbert, A., Herbert, S., Redman, C. (2016); Social Mobility Commission (2020)

¹⁰⁸ Department for Education (2018 p.8)

¹⁰⁹ Reach Foundation (2024)

¹¹⁰ For example, the Career Ready Impact Report (2023 p.20) states that '89% felt more confident than they did before the programme, with 62% saying this was 'mostly' or 'entirely' down to Career Ready.'

¹¹¹ Department of Education Northern Ireland (2024)

¹¹² Sport England (2024). *Use our school*

¹¹³ Department for Education (2024). *Wraparound childcare: guidance for schools and trusts in England*

Have You Tried?

1. Auditing the needs of the community and defining what the purpose of community use of facilities means to them, before creating a strategy and tracking use.¹¹⁴
2. Bringing multiple services together on the school site for the community to access and use – for example, a food bank and the school nurse being available in the same place at the same time.¹¹⁵
3. Offering incentives for community use, such as free trials or referral programmes to increase uptake.¹¹⁶

114 Public Policy Institute for Wales (2016). See also: Armstrong, P. (2015)

115 Sim, A. (2025). See also: Public Policy Institute for Wales (2016)

116 Sport England (2024). Use our school. See also: Sport England (2024). *Use Our School – Measuring Success Tool*

Conclusion

Next Steps

We are trialling the scorecard with schools and trusts in the South-West peninsula to gather feedback and fine-tune the approach.

To reduce the workload for schools, we are working to develop an automated tool for data collection and calculation. This tool will streamline the process for collecting and analysing the publicly available data elements of the scorecard and ensure consistency of analysis. Alongside this, schools will have access to an online community of practice for discussion and collaboration.

We are also considering a scorecard for primary schools. Whilst recommendations would remain broadly similar, the criteria involved would need adjusting to be more appropriate for younger pupils. Instead of measuring GCSE performance and KS4 destinations, Year 1 phonics scores and combined Key Stage 2 Statutory Assessment Test (SATs) scores could be included in their place.

Final words

Our ultimate aim for this work is to:

- Advocate for an accountability scorecard to be used regionally and nationally as a more realistic and contextualised measure of school performance.
- Introduce stronger incentives for schools to focus on the outcomes and progress of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.
- Promote community engagement and collaboration between schools with a drive towards continuous improvement and improved educational outcomes regionally and nationally for all pupils.



Appendix

Surveys in full

Parent/carer:

1	My child receives Free School Meals.
2	I am happy with the education that my child is receiving.
3	The school has high expectations for my child. **
4	My child and I are supported to ensure that they attend school.
5	My child is safe at school. **
6	I feel confident that my child will get what they need from this school to be successful in life
7	My child can access and participate in activities and clubs provided by the school. **
8	There is a good range of subjects available to my child at this school. **
9	I feel part of the school community.
10	The school communicates with me in a clear and helpful way.
11	I would recommend this school to another parent/carer. **
12	My child enjoys coming to this school. **
13	I am a part of my child's education, and the school helps me to understand how my child is doing. **
14	The school provides access to and information about high quality, regular and dependable care for my child outside of school hours.
15	Would you like to make any further comments about this school? If so, please write them below:

Staff:

1	The school challenges all students to make good progress across all subjects. **
2	This school provides appropriate support for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, even in difficult circumstances.
3	This school provides appropriate academic interventions for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds who need them.
4	This school provides a clear strategy to help me support the attendance of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.
5	The school gives me sufficient, useful and relevant training and development opportunities to best support pupils from under-resourced backgrounds.
6	The careers provision at this school is accessible to all pupils, particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds.
7	This school maintains an inclusive behaviour policy and supports staff in effectively managing pupil behaviour. **
8	This school enables all pupils to access a broad curriculum.
9	The school enables pupils from under-resourced backgrounds to access opportunities outside of their lessons.
10	I am proud to be a member of staff at this school. **
11	I understand the local community context of this school and am able to use this in my work.
12	This school works with the local community to provide relevant opportunities for its students.
13	This school is an active part of the local community.
14	I am supported to engage with parents/carers as part of my work.
15	I feel confident engaging with parents/carers, especially those of children from under-resourced backgrounds, as part of my work.
16	Would you like to make any further comments about this school? If so, please write them below:

Pupil:

1	I get free school meals.
2	I enjoy my lessons.
3	I understand why it is important to come to school.
4	I enjoy learning at this school. **
5	I understand how my education at school will help me later in life.
6	I feel positive about my future after school.
7	My school helps me to feel confident.
8	The behaviour of other pupils in my lessons and around school is good. **
9	I take part in school activities outside of lessons, like clubs, sports, music and art. **
10	My school provides me with information about my next steps. **
11	I am part of the school community.
12	I would recommend this school to a friend moving to the area. **
13	Would you like to make any further comments about this school? If so, please write them below:

Checklists in full

Disadvantaged outcomes checklist:

1	Is the school effectively utilising staff to ensure the best outcomes for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds? Good Bets: 1. Ensuring that pupils are taught by subject specialist teachers throughout their secondary education. Assign the most effective teachers to the lowest sets if setting in a subject. Also keep a close watch on which pupils have been served by supply teachers. 2. Facilitating a timetable in which staff are teaching classes who will be best supported by their skill set – allocating the best teachers to children from under-resourced backgrounds. Ensure that support staff are highly trained and have a clear understanding of their role in helping pupils to achieve. This may involve specific ‘equity’ training. 3. Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers to teach pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. Are the school’s staff retention rates in line with national averages? Policies at school level such as managing workload and working conditions, induction support, coaching and mentoring, and collaboration with colleagues can all be effective in staff retention and recruitment. Have You Tried? 1. Conducting a skills audit of each member of support staff, surveying them to assess where they may have specialisms or interests to create teams of staff to be deployed to best support pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. 2. Considering how you can diversify your school workforce so that it is more representative of the local communities you serve. Can you consider apprenticeship routes? Teachers can also be parents and community members: they bring their lived experience and integration with the community beyond the bounds of the school day. 3. In parallel, considering how to recruit parent governors from across your community, by assessing how you work as governors. Do you need to work in the formal style that is so off-putting to many people unused to making their views known in committees?
2	Does the school ensure that effective teaching and learning practices are consistently high quality and inclusive of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds? Good Bets: 1. Ensuring that inclusive teaching and learning practices are made explicit to staff. Focus on providing and receiving effective feedback that moves learning on; encouraging independent learning through metacognitive or ‘thinking about thinking’ strategies; providing one-to-one (or indeed two-to-one or three-to-one) tuition for children falling behind their peers. Setting children by perceived ability can lead to widening educational inequities, particularly when delivered in an inflexible way with little movement of pupils between groupings. 2. Ensuring that pupils from under-resourced backgrounds have access to both stretch and challenge activities and, where necessary, academic support to address any underachievement. 3. Providing alternative and context-specific interventions such as peer tutoring or intervention groups in maths and English. Have You Tried? 1. Reviewing curricula to include resources from a wide range of backgrounds across all subjects. All learners deserve to feel connected and represented in the curriculum; leaders and teachers should draw on the ‘rich cultural assets of working-class communities’ into the curriculum by incorporating stories, achievements, and contributions from diverse cultural backgrounds. Be explicit about the countless examples of working-class inventors, artists and leaders who have contributed to our shared knowledge. We should celebrate all the great minds who have graced and shaped our world wherever they come from. 2. Providing specific training in unconscious bias to support staff, so that they are well equipped in supporting pupils from under resourced backgrounds and reflecting on their biases. Ideally this should be accompanied by mitigating strategies such as anonymising assessment or implementing standardised protocols and identifying any ‘hidden learners’ in the classroom. This also involves facilitating strong teamwork between teachers and support staff by providing time for them to plan and work together. 3. Developing strength-based or equity language within your school. Developing a shared, non-deficit language guide setting out consistent respectful terminology for how you talk about children and families, particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds. Strength-based language aims to avoid the labels that may stigmatise pupils and parents and lead to unconscious biases and lower expectations. For example, this may look like replacing the term ‘disadvantaged students’ with ‘children from under-resourced backgrounds’ and avoiding terms such as ‘hard to reach’ families.

3 Does the school understand how its pupils from under-resourced backgrounds are performing from the start of their time at school until they leave?

Good Bets:

1. Providing a clear, continuous assessment policy for staff to be able to identify need and make any necessary interventions, early. Develop staff skills in assessment and data literacy to help them identify and clearly highlight instances of student underperformance. Train staff around key strengths and limitations of standardised assessments such as SATs and CAT tests. Ensure that there is an individualised approach to addressing barriers to learning, rather than providing access to generic support or focusing on pupils nearing their end-of-key-stage assessments.
2. Considering your practices to support transition, given that education transition points are a vulnerable time for all pupils and particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds. You could appoint a transition officer to visit local feeder schools and feed back key information to relevant staff members about each pupil's extra support needs and motivations, for example. You could also consider establishing pre-transition shared activities with local feeder schools to familiarise children and parents with secondary school. Develop a curriculum transition plan to reinforce KS2 learnings and ensure that pupils have the critical prior knowledge for the secondary curriculum.

Have You Tried?

1. Using a 'vulnerabilities index' as a tool to identify, prioritise and track vulnerable pupils across a range of indicators. For example: cypsomersethealth.org/resources/MHTK/Behaviour_and_Vulnerability_Profile_Tool.pdf
2. Assessing the attitudes of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds as well as their assessment scores. This may involve schools developing their own trackers by interviewing and surveying pupils, asking them to self-report on their progress to gain qualitative data to support quantitative attainment data.
3. Tracking through the data of pupils who are underperforming and using this to create an understanding of what pupil disadvantage might look like in your specific community context. Rather than basing ideas of disadvantage around standard measures such as receipt of pupil premium, this method of looking at underperforming pupils and common characteristics - such as specific postcodes or family circumstances - can help you develop a more nuanced understanding of disadvantage for your context, and how to address it.

4 Do pupils from under-resourced backgrounds have equitable access to resources to support their learning, including technology and online resources?

Good Bets:

1. Using a wide range of data and information to give equitable access to pupils. For instance, asking pupils and families what they have and what they need, not making assumptions.
2. Running a homework club to provide a space and relevant support for pupils with homework and revision.
3. Providing students with extra targeted academic interventions, if they would not otherwise have access to these, such as small group tutoring where needed.

Have You Tried?

1. Considering a 'poverty proofing' service, supporting schools to understand and mitigate the impact of poverty. For example, schools may reduce hidden costs by offering free breakfast clubs, affordable uniforms, or covering costs for trips and extra-curricular activities.
2. Considering how the school can signpost parents to support services that exist in the local area, such as local food banks, wraparound care and citizens advice. This might involve school staff conducting an 'asset mapping' activity to understand local authority and third sector provision available locally.
3. Creating mentorship opportunities for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds where a need has been identified.

5 Does the school have and regularly review an attendance improvement plan, with specific support for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds?

Good Bets:

1. Having a clear policy and protocols, including rapid response systems in place to address poor attendance patterns when they first begin. Review existing attendance plans and policies post-COVID. Consider appointing an existing member of staff as an attendance mentor to monitor and oversee the attendance of all pupils.
2. Working to establish the root causes of persistent absence. One manner of doing so may be interviewing pupils to try and establish the reasons for their absence by asking questions such as 'what is your experience of lunch/break times?', 'is it easy or difficult for you to get to school in the mornings?'.

Have You Tried?

1. Rather than focusing on attendance as a negative outcome, schools could try having more open-ended discussions with parents/carers about the pressures they may be facing and how the school could help support parents/carers with these pressures, as a means of addressing the root causes of absence over the longer term. Schools are more likely to be able to help support pupil attendance by working together with parents/carers, and this relies on forging stronger relationships of trust with them.
2. Reviewing where and how you conduct meetings between teachers and parents/carers related to attendance. This could involve establishing a neutral space in which to conduct meetings, in order to put parents/carers at ease when having these conversations.

Disadvantaged inclusion checklist:

1	Does the school offer a broad and balanced curriculum that caters to the diverse needs and interests of all students, including pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, and prepares them for future education and career opportunities? Good Bets: 1. Designing all curricula with pupils from under-resourced backgrounds in mind at every point. This will include planning to ensure all pupils, and especially those from under-resourced backgrounds, can study a broad range of subjects, supporting them to gain knowledge and cultural capital which could be valuable in subsequent stages of their lives. Ensure that, where possible, all pupils study all subjects available so that, as per Ofsted's curriculum research (2020), they 'do not miss out on opportunities to...gain knowledge that could be valuable in later stages of education'. Consider also the use of resources from sources outside of what is traditionally considered 'middle class' – for example, being 'explicit about the countless examples of working-class inventors, artists, and leaders who have contributed to our shared knowledge.' 2. Celebrating all subjects, for example by ensuring that staff speak positively to all pupils about all subjects and protecting time in the school calendar for arts and sports and other activities that not all pupils will have access to outside the classroom. 3. Offering guidance to all pupils around their GCSE choices and post-16 education/ employment opportunities. Ensure that pupils receive unbiased guidance that is balanced between academic and technical options at key transition points. Train staff to improve knowledge of technical pathways (including T levels, apprenticeships and BTECs) and promote these equally alongside academic routes to all pupils. Have You Tried? 1. Conducting partnership work and consultation with families, universities, local businesses and others to inform curriculum design and planning. 2. Rewarding pupils who exhibit school values, not only those who achieve highly in academia, sports or music. Consider the achievements of pupils you celebrate at the end of the school year – does this include vocational and creative accomplishments alongside academic and sporting ones, and are you celebrating the values you espouse as a school such as generosity to others? 3. Appointing 'pupil advocates'. Incorporating pupil advocates within schools, where middle and senior leaders act as corporate or 'pushy parents' can help ensure decisions made about a child's education are in their best interest. These advocates act as informed supporters, holding teachers accountable for the information which they provide to students.
2	Are pupils from under-resourced backgrounds provided with opportunities and appropriate support for extra-curricular activities, educational trips and enrichment programmes? Good Bets: 1. Considering how to include pupils from under-resourced backgrounds at the point of planning any extracurricular activities, educational trips and enrichment programmes, for example by providing subsidies that support participation at low or no cost. 2. Nominating a key figure within school to prioritise the provision of extra-curricular activities and access or creating an 'extra-curricular and cultural capital programme'. This should encompass a range of activities spanning different types of cultural experiences that reflect the communities you serve. 3. Partnering with local third-sector initiatives to allow young people from under-resourced backgrounds to try out different activities and see which they like. Have You Tried? 1. Collecting data on extra-curricular activities such as what is offered, participation and soft skills gained for analysis and comparison with other schools. 2. Coordinating with other schools within the local area to provide a wider range of extra-curricular activities by preventing duplication of activities. 3. Using pupil voice, for example by surveying or interviewing pupils from under-resourced backgrounds about their favourite subjects and clubs, to identify pupils who may not be well-integrated in their school community, then suggesting activities for them to join.
3	Is the school assessing and managing the pastoral care and well-being of pupils from under-resourced backgrounds? Good Bets: 1. Measuring well-being through indicators such as self-reporting, counselling sessions, and behavioral incidents with a specific lens on pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. 2. Offering and promoting on-site counselling sessions for all pupils. This will especially benefit pupils from under-resourced backgrounds because they may be more likely to have experienced adverse childhood experiences. Being based on the school site makes services more universally accessible.

Have You Tried?

1. Ensuring that every pupil from an under-resourced background has a key staff member responsible for the oversight of their wellbeing and to measure the impact of any interventions.
2. Ensuring all staff spend time engaging in informal conversations about pupils' interests, hobbies and challenges outside of school. Nurture relationships based on mutual respect and connection, not just on how they are performing academically.
3. Providing access to activities inside school which are not traditional subjects, such as crafts, in a neutral space, where pupils and their families can take part and access staff associated with wellbeing.

4 Does the school have inclusive policies that promote a positive and supportive environment for all pupils, addressing diverse needs and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion? Do these cater for pupils from under-resourced backgrounds?

Good Bets:

1. Considering the Sutton Trust's free consultation service for schools looking to make their admissions more socio-economically inclusive. Schools can sign up to a fair admissions pledge allowing them to access templates, model admissions policies, and online CPD. They can also connect with other schools for collaboration and peer support.
2. Making expectations around behaviour explicit to learners from under-resourced backgrounds. Prior knowledge of what is deemed to be 'acceptable behaviour' should not be assumed.
3. Monitoring the continuum of exclusions – from permanent exclusions and suspensions, to managed moves, to elective home education and persistent absence – with a specific lens on pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, to better understand patterns of exclusion and how to address these.

Have You Tried?

1. Doing outreach with local primary schools to diversify your admissions.
2. Training staff to ensure that they do not assume that pupils from under-resourced backgrounds have poor behaviour. Consider implementing de-escalation and restorative practice.
3. Joining a regional or national disadvantaged network, to share practice, learnings and resources with other schools and trusts.

Community engagement checklist

1 Does the school have a good working knowledge of the school community and wider local community, and does it incorporate relevant community views into its practices?

Good Bets:

1. Reviewing how the school works with its community, including parents, businesses and local service providers.
2. Establishing feedback mechanisms to ensure that the school community can submit their views so the school can use these to inform practice. This may include conducting listening activities with different parts of your community, such as parents/carers, pupils, residents and community organisations. 'Deep listening' approaches that ensure people feel acknowledged and heard can be especially helpful in surfacing community views beyond what the school expects or wants to hear. These approaches can also build community engagement and help schools to identify members of the community who will campaign on behalf of the community, ensuring that any initiatives are 'done with' and not 'done to' the community.

Have You Tried?

1. Carrying out home visits to build relationships with families in the school community. Home visits are helpful to make an initial connection with the parents/carers of new pupils in an environment in which they are more likely to feel comfortable, helping staff to gain a deeper understanding of pupils' backgrounds and challenge any prior assumptions.
2. Training staff to develop an understanding of the implications of community disadvantage and the specifics of disadvantage in your school's context. Sharing amongst the whole staff body the knowledge gained from data gathering or community listening activities – such as local income, employment and health data, and community concerns around for example transport access or childcare provision. This can help teachers and other staff to better understand the everyday challenges their pupils and families are encountering and adapt their practice accordingly.

2 Does the school establish and maintain effective parent/carer partnerships?**Good Bets:**

1. Co-developing and delivering a 'parent partnership plan...to equip all parents to engage with their children's education' – for example, equipping parents with questions they might want to ask staff at parents' evenings. Evaluate the impact of parental involvement and engagement on a range of outcomes for pupils and use information to focus further improvements. Consider specific training for teachers on parental engagement, in particular considerations around engaging parents/carers from backgrounds that may be different to teachers' own backgrounds.
2. Ensuring that all communications are easily digestible for all parents and carers, avoiding acronyms, jargon and overly formal language. Consider personalising communications where appropriate.
3. Considering text messaging parents, as a low-cost approach for encouraging improved school attendance and engagement with their child's progress at school.

Have You Tried?

1. Creating volunteering opportunities for parents/carers and former pupils. For example, appointing 'community champions' comprised of parents/carers or former pupils, who can serve as powerful bridges between local communities and schools. They can act as powerful advocates for schools and provide insights into the barriers faced by some families (for example, when children aren't consistently attending school). They understand local cultural needs and can offer non-judgemental support to other parents.
2. Considering changing parent-teacher meetings to make them more impactful for parents and their children. First meetings could be about parents sharing insights about their child. Older students can also chair meetings giving them a sense of ownership.
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Have You Tried?

1. Contacting community leaders in your local area including local authority representatives and inviting them to regular (e.g. monthly) get-togethers to help establish and strengthen links between the school and community organisations/ services, as well as the links between community organisations themselves.
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1. Reviewing the processes for booking/using school spaces, ensuring that they are simple, accessible and easy to understand.
2. Tracking patterns for use and using qualitative feedback opportunities to identify who is not using school spaces, and why that might be.
3. Considering how wraparound care can be offered on the school site. Promoting and supporting government subsidies for childcare where relevant.

Have You Tried?

1. Auditing the needs of the community and defining what the purpose of community use of facilities means to them, before creating a strategy and tracking use.
2. Bringing multiple services together on the school site for the community to access and use – for example, a food bank and the school nurse being available in the same place at the same time.
3. Offering incentives for community use, such as free trials or referral programmes to increase uptake.

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