



The drivers of academic success for 'bright' but disadvantaged students: A longitudinal study of AS and A-level outcomes in England

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Content of Presentation

- Background to the Sutton Trust Study and longitudinal EPPSE (3-16+) research programme
- Equity Differences in Students' Advanced Level attainment at age 17/18
- Study following up higher attaining disadvantaged children
- Findings on the 'drivers' of success
- Limitations and Implications
- Conclusions
- Implications & Recommendations

Background (1)

- Evidence of an educational equity gap across all phases of the English educational system and that the effects of disadvantage are cumulative so the gap tends to increase as children grow older (Sutton Trust, 2011).
 Such equity gaps in educational outcomes are also evident in many other countries.
- In England the most advantaged young people are seven times more likely to attend the most selective universities as the least advantaged (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013).
- Gender, low income, SES and ethnic origin remain important factors associated with educational inequalities.
 - higher levels of educational inequalities tend to be shaped simultaneously by the combination of gender, ethnicity and disadvantage Strand (2014)

Background (2)

- Few studies have investigated children's attainment and progress from earlier phases of education until entry to higher education by simultaneously examining the influences of child and family background, neighbourhood characteristics and educational experiences within a longitudinal design).
- The Sutton Trust research addresses this deficit. It provides a longitudinal perspective on equity differences in children's attainment outcomes across different phases of education in England. In contrast to much previous educational research with an equity focus, it highlights factors that help disadvantaged children to succeed as they move through different phases of education, not just those that put such children at greater risk of poor outcomes.
- Drawing on the Educational Effectiveness Research (EER) knowledge base and methodological approaches (Sammons, Davis & Gray 2016). It adopted an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) in modelling potential influences on students' AS/A-level success. This first identified child and family influences (viewed as more 'proximal to the child, including the home learning environment), before testing other features of educational experiences from pre-school, then primary and later secondary school.

The Sutton Trust Research (1)

- The Sutton Trust is an independent charity seeking to promote educational equity and support better outcomes for disadvantaged children & young people.
- Research commissioned to provide a longitudinal perspective on equity differences in children's attainment outcomes across different phases of education in England.
- After identifying a group of high attaining disadvantaged children at age 11 it followed this group up to age 18 to see whether they continued to experience relative academic success or fall behind similarly high attaining but less disadvantaged peers.
- The study provides new evidence to inform approaches to the evaluation of equity in education and the development of foci for future interventions.

Sutton Trust Research(2)

Sutton Trust Report 1

Sammons, P., Toth, K. & Sylva, K. (2015a) Subject to Background: What promotes better achievement for bright but disadvantaged students? Sutton Trust (2015). http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/subject-to-background/

Sutton Trust Report 2

Sammons, P., Toth, K. & Sylva, K. (2015b) Background to Success: Differences in A-level entries by ethnicity, neighbourhood and gender

http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/background-to-success/

Linked Article

Sammons, P., Toth, K., & Sylva, K. (2017) The Drivers of Academic Success for 'Bright' but Disadvantaged Students: A Longitudinal study of AS and A-Level Outcomes in England, Studies in Educational Evaluation https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2017.10.004

Sutton Trust Report 3

Sammons, P., Toth, K., & Sylva, K. (2016) Believing in Better How Aspirations and Academic Self-Concept Shape Young People's Outcomes, London: Sutton Trust.

http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/EPPSE-final-Believing-in-Better.pdf

Objectives of Sub-Study on Drivers of Success

To illuminate the 'drivers' of long term academic success by:

- analysing the later AS/A-level attainment of 'bright' children (defined as
 those who achieved above average results in national assessments at age
 11) from disadvantaged families as they moved through secondary
 education and comparing their outcomes to those of other 'bright' children
 (above average attainers at age 11) who were more advantaged;
- exploring the characteristics of students who gained 'good enough' A-level qualifications for university entrance at ages 17/18 years and identifying barriers or facilitators for obtaining good AS/A-level results for disadvantaged students;
- establishing what educational experiences enhance or reduce the later academic success of such 'bright' but disadvantaged students in secondary school.

Design & Methods

Research drew on the Effective Pre-school Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE 3-16+) Project sample. Original EPPSE sample 3172 children assessed at the start of pre-school, and their development monitored across primary school into adolescence. Children assessed at key points (ages 3, 5, 7, 11, 14, 16). In addition their post 16 educational, training and employment choices were surveyed.

The Sutton study tracked them through AS and A-levels taken in years 12 and 13 at school/college (age17+ to18+). Data available for 2812 students tracked up to GCSE entry at age 16. GCSE and AS/A-level results matched in from Government's National Pupil Data base

Multilevel regression, multiple and logistic regression used for statistical analyses. Odds ratios (OR) calculated for logistic regression models to show effects of different predictors.

Outcomes studied included:

Attaining four or more AS levels

Attaining three or more A-Levels

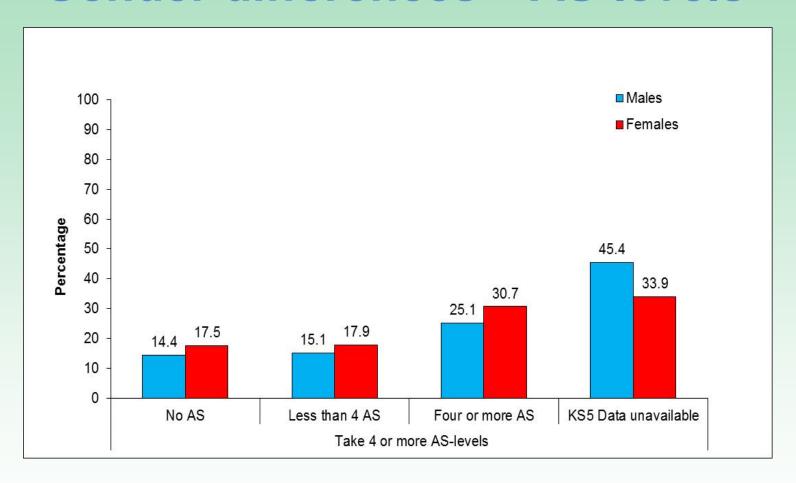
Entering 'facilitating' subjects at Advanced level

Overall Patterns of AS/A-level Attainment

RESULTS FROM SUTTON REPORT 2

BACKGROUND TO SUCCESS Differences in A-level entries by ethnicity, neighbourhood and gender

Gender differences – AS-levels

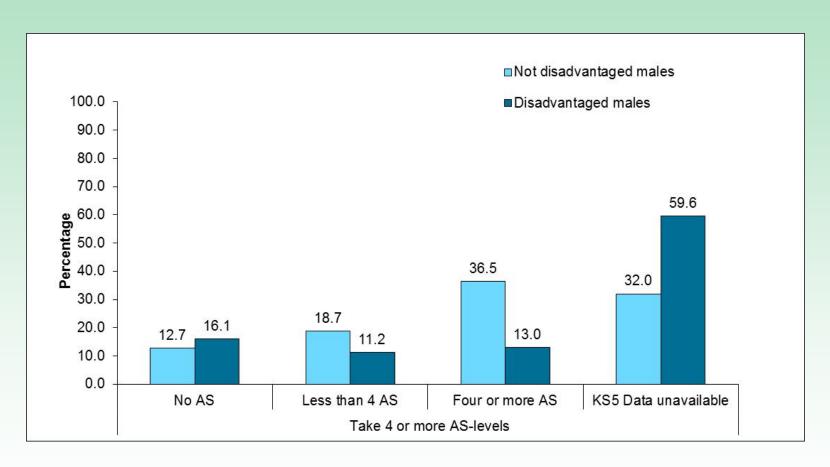


Gender differences – A-levels

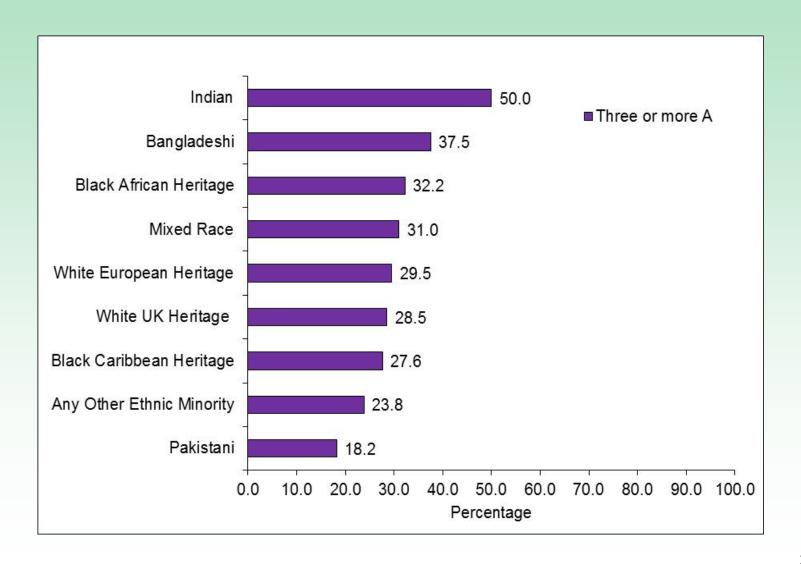
				Take	3 or m	ore A-le	vels			
Gender	No	Α	Less th	an 3 A	Thre mo	e or re A		Data iilable	То	tal
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boy	321	21.9	118	8	361	24.6	666	45.4	1466	100
Girl	324	24.1	123	9.1	443	32.9	456	33.9	1346	100
Total	645	22.9	241	8.6	804	28.6	1122	39.9	2812	100
						Pea	rson ch	i2(3) = 3	9.11, p	= 0.000

Note: 2812 EPPSE sample tracked to GCSE at age 16.

Gender and social disadvantage – AS-levels



Ethnicity



Gender, ethnicity, social disadvantage and place poverty

	Missing KS5 data?							
White UK disadvantaged boys from poor neighbourhoods	N	0		⁄es	Total			
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
No	37	45.1	45	54.9	82	100		
Yes	40	29.4	96	70.6	136	100		
Total	77	35.3	141	64.7	218	100		
			F	Pearson chi2	(1) = 5.5267	Pr = 0.019		

NOTE:

Missing KS5 data record for whether student entered academic route (AS or A levels) post 16 a key indicator of lack of progression after age 16

Influences on AS/A-Level Attainment for the 'Bright but Poor' Group

RESULTS FROM SUTTON REPORT 1

Subject to Background: What promotes better achievement for bright but disadvantaged students?

Sammons, P., Toth, K., & Sylva, K. (2017) The Drivers of Academic Success for 'Bright' but Disadvantaged Students: A Longitudinal study of AS and A-Level Outcomes in England, Studies in Educational Evaluation https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2017.10.004

Identifying the Disadvantaged Group in Primary School (1)

Used data on individual Child, Family, Neighbourhood characteristics known to be significant predictors of academic and social-behaviour outcomes.

Multiple measures: Free School Meal (FSM) status, family Socio-economic Status (SES), parents' salary, parents' educational level, parents' employment status, and neighbourhood disadvantage indicators based on child's postcode.

Includes person, family and 'place' drivers of educational outcomes.

Also an earlier *multiple disadvantage* index (see table box below) created as a summary measure of the extent of disadvantage that increases the risk of low attainment in pre-school and beyond.

This summary measure predicted the likelihood of later SEN identification and poorer educational outcomes across different phases of education up to age 16

Identifying the Disadvantaged Group in Primary School (2)

Measures in EPPSE Multiple Disadvantage Index at Entry to Pre-school

Child v	ariables
•	First language: English as an additional language (EAL)
•	Large family: 3 or more siblings
•	Pre-maturity / low birth weight
Parent	variables
•	Mother's highest qualification level: no qualifications
•	Social class of father's occupation: Semi-skilled, unskilled, never worked, absent father
•	Father not employed
•	Young Mother (Age 13-17 at birth of EPPE child)
•	Lone parent
•	Mother not working / unemployed
•	Low Early years Home learning (HLE)

Identifying the Disadvantaged Group in Primary School (3)

In total 49% (n=1550) of the original EPPSE sample were identified as 'disadvantaged' based on the combination of criteria.

Background characteristics of disadvantaged sample (n=1550):

- 89% of parents no family earned income at age 7 or parents' salary was 'low' defined as below £15000
- 60% had 3 or more disadvantages in the early years (measured by multiple disadvantage index)
- 55% were low SES status (semi-skilled, not working or unemployed) at age 7
- 52% were boys
- 38% were of ethnic minority heritage

Distribution of 'high achievers' at primary school at age 11: main EPPSE sample

		High achievers							
Disadvantaged	No	0	Ye	S	Total				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
No	901	56.2	702	43.8	1603	100			
Yes	1201	77.5	349	22.5	1550	100			
Total	2102	66.7	1051	33.3	3153	100			

Pearson chi2(1) = 160.5331

Pr = 0.000

'High achievers' defined as children obtaining Level 5+ in National Assessments in one or more of core subjects (English, maths, science) at age 11 representing a total of 1058 (33% of original sample of 3172).

40% (n=422) obtained Level 5 or more on all three subjects, 29% (n=311) on two subjects and 31% (n=325) on one subject only.

Olnly 22.5% (349) of 1550 children in the disadvantaged group were classified as high achievers at the end of Year 6 compared with 43.8% of non-disadvantaged.

Characteristics predicting higher attainment at age 11 for disadvantaged group Table (cont.)

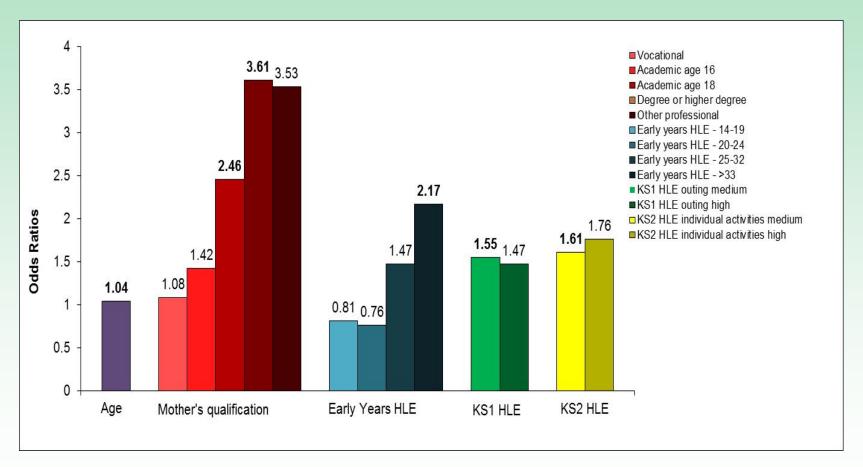
KS1 home learning interaction (compared to low)				
KS1 home learning interaction medium	0.05	0.20	1.05	
KS1 home learning interaction high	-0.59	0.30	0.55	
KS1 home learning outing (compared to low)				
KS1 home learning outing medium	0.44	0.20	1.55	*
KS1 home learning outing high	0.39	0.35	1.47	
KS2 home learning (compared to low)				
KS2 home learning medium	-0.30	0.24	0.74	
KS2 home learning high	-0.29	0.36	0.75	
KS2 home learning individual activities (compared to low)				
KS2 home learning individual activities medium	0.47	0.23	1.61	*
KS2 home learning individual activities high	0.57	0.37	1.76	
Intercept	-1.50	0.28		***
Variance-school level	0.65	0.25		
Number of students	1436			
Number of schools	641			

Characteristics predicting being in higher attainer category at age 11 for disadvantaged group

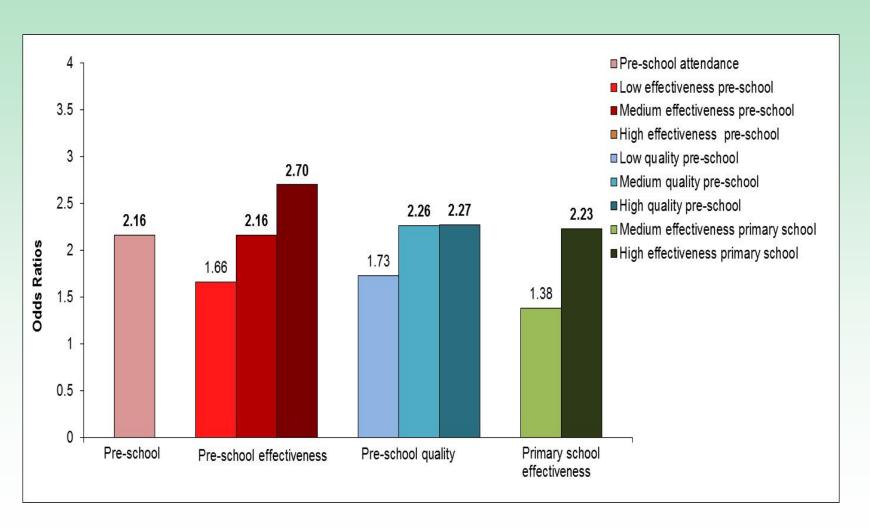
Greater likelihood of being in the high achieving group for disadvantaged children from multilevel logistic regression:

- Older (in months for their year group)
- Female
- Not being in a large family (3+ siblings)
- Having a mother with academic qualifications at age 18, a degree or higher degree qualification.
- Good quality parent-child interactions and home learning activities in the early years (early HLE measure).
- Continuing to have outings and enrichment experiences with parents during primary school & engaging in individual activities like painting, reading and dancing (primary age HLE).
- Attending any pre-school (compared to the no pre-school 'home' group). The likelihood of being a high attainer at 11 was improved further if child had attended a highly effective or high quality pre-school.
- Attending a primary school identified as highly academically effective rather than attending a low effective primary school (measured using contextualised value added analyses of three years of national data for all primary schools in England).

Odds ratios for individual and family factors that predict being in the high achieving group at the end of Year 6 primary age 11 for children in the disadvantaged sub-sample



Odds ratios for pre-school and school measures that predict being in the high achieving at the end of Year 6 primary age 11 for children in the disadvantaged sub-sample



GCSE Results at Age 16 Year 11 Secondary Schooling

- Obtaining 'good' GCSE results in public examinations is an important pre-requisite for progression into Advanced level studies in England (Sammons et al, 2014). Students in the main EPPSE sample were followed up to age 16 (at that time the final year of compulsory schooling in England) and multilevel analyses explored the impact of child, family, HLE and pre-school, primary and secondary school influences on academic outcomes.
- Additional analyses for the 349 high attaining disadvantaged group demonstrate that 'good' educational experiences predicted better GCSE outcomes (Sammons, Toth & Sylva, 2015a).
- Many schools and colleges required students to have achieved success in terms of benchmark '5A*-C GCSE grades including at least Grade C in English and mathematics to enter AS studies, thus obtaining GCSE benchmarks were important pre-conditions for full A-level study.

Number of AS/A-Levels obtained by High achiever students comparing Disadvantaged (n=349) & Non-disadvantaged (n=702) groups at ages 17+/ 18+

		Attained 4 or more AS-levels?									
High achiever disadvantaged children	No	AS	Less t A	_	Four o		KS5 E unavai		Tot	al	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
No	60	8.5	137	19.5	426	60.7	79	11.3	702	100	
Yes	47	13.5	81	23.2	126	36.1	95	27.2	349	100	
Total	107	10.2	218	20.7	552	52.5	174	16.6	1051	100	

Pearson chi2(3) = 69.7901 Pr = 0.000

		Attained three or more A-levels?									
High achiever disadvantaged students	No A		Less than 3 A- levels		Three or more A- levels		KS5 Data unavailable		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
No	122	17.4	79	11.3	422	60.1	79	11.3	702	100	
Yes	92	26.4	39	11.2	123	35.2	95	27.2	349	100	
Total	214	20.4	118	11.2	545	51.9	174	16.6	1051	100	

Pearson chi2(3) = 72.9408 Pr = 0.000

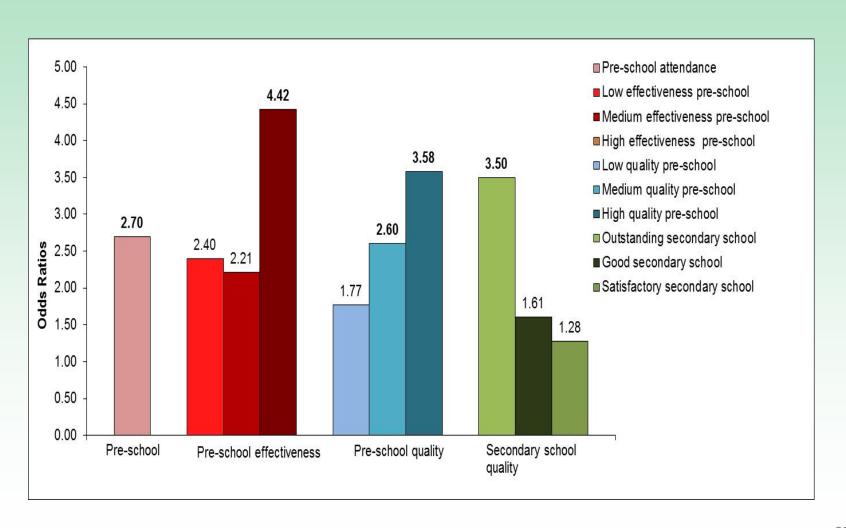
Factors predicting better AS-level results at age 17+

Disadvantaged students identified as high achievers at age 11 were significantly less likely to achieve four or more AS-levels compared to their more advantaged peers (36% versus 61%).

Nonetheless, such students were significantly more likely to go on to attain four or more AS-levels when:

- They had attended any pre-school, especially one that was highly effective in ensuring that children had an early grasp of numbers
- They had engaged in academic enrichment activities, such as visits to museums and galleries, between the ages of 11 and 14.
- They had attended a secondary school identified by the national inspection agency Ofsted as outstanding for quality of pupils' learning.
- They had better experiences at secondary school in terms of their self reports of a good relationships between students and teachers, with trust, respect and fairness, a high level of monitoring of their work by teachers and greater levels of teachers giving feedback on their work

Odds ratios for pre-school and school measures that predict attaining four or more AS-levels



Factor predicting better A-level results at age 18+

Only 35% of the disadvantaged students identified as high achievers at age 11 went on to attain three or more A-Levels.

Such students were significantly more likely to go on to attain three or more A-levels when:

- They attended a secondary school rated outstanding by Ofsted inspection for the quality of its pupils' learning
- They experienced average or good levels of academic enrichment at home (reading for pleasure, taken on educational trips and visits) during KS3 (age 14).
- They reported that they spent significant amounts of time on homework daily in Year 11, with the strongest positive effects found for completing 2-3 hours of homework a night during their GCSE studies.

Facilitating Subjects at AS/A-Level

- In England, entry to higher education, especially for more prestigious universities and courses is strongly influenced by the individual choice of subjects for AS and later A-level and the grades obtained in these exams. Certain subjects provide an advantage for higher education entry; these are known as *facilitating subjects*.
- High achiever but disadvantaged students were significantly less likely to take one or more AS-level exams in facilitating subjects like maths (21% vs. 33%), English (14% vs. 19%), physics (10% vs. 16%), biology (17% vs. 27%), chemistry (13% vs. 21%), geography (5% vs. 11%), history (10% vs. 21%), modern languages (4% vs. 9%) than the more advantaged students identified as high achievers at age 11.
- Overall, high achieving but disadvantaged students were significantly less likely to take one or more of any of these facilitating subjects when compared to high achieving but more advantaged students (44% vs. 67%),

Numbers of AS and A-Levels in facilitating subjects obtained by the high achieving students comparing disadvantaged and nondisadvantaged groups

		Numb	er of AS	S-levels	in facili	itating s	ubjects	with g	rades	A*, A a	nd B	
High achiever disadvantaged students	No	ne	0	ne	Ţ	wo	Th	ree	Fo	our	Tot	al
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	404	57.5	123	17.5	88	12.5	62	8.8	25	3.6	702	100
Yes	280	80.2	37	10.6	17	4.9	10	2.9	5	1.4	349	100
Total	684	65.1	160	15.2	105	10	72	6.9	30	2.9	1051	100

Pearson chi2(4) = 55.2763 Pr = 0.000

				Numbe	r of A-le	evels in	facilitat	ing sub	ects			
High achiever disadvantaged students	No	ne	O	ne	T	wo	Th	iree	Fo	our	Tot	al
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	294	41.9	133	18.9	167	23.8	100	14.2	8	1.1	702	100
Yes	233	66.8	50	14.3	39	11.2	25	7.2	2	0.6	349	100
Total	527	50.1	183	17.4	206	19.6	125	11.9	10	1	1051	100

Pearson chi2(4) = 61.1787 Pr = 0.000

Limitations & Strengths

- The main EPPSE study was designed to test pre-school effects and the sample was of modest size (n=3172), although broadly representative of children in England
- The numbers of children meeting the criteria for inclusion in the disadvantaged group represented approx. half the EPPSE sample but the number of high attainers in the disadvantaged sample was relatively small (n=349) in comparison with the size of high attainer non-disadvantaged group (n=702)
- It is not and RCT so it is not possible to draw causal inferences, rather to identify patterns, significant associations and predictors of academic outcomes
- The rich longitudinal EPPSE data set provides a range of measures on child, family, neighbourhood characteristics and measures of potential educational influences (pre-school, primary and secondary phases) at different ages in non-experimental 'real life' conditions.
- The availability of examination results at GCSE (age 16+), AS & A-level (ages 17+, 18+) in the NPD provided further indicators of high stakes academic outcomes of relevance to progression to Higher Education

Conclusions

- The research provides new evidence on promoting equity in education
- It focussed on identifying the drivers of academic success from pre-school to upper secondary (age17+/18+)
- Even though they did relatively well at end of primary age 11, the high achieving disadvantaged group remained at risk of lower achievement in the longer term
- Girls and most ethnic minority students in the high achieving disadvantaged group did better at AS/A-level than boys. White working class boys living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods showed particularly poor outcomes.
- Higher quality pre-school and primary school experiences increased the chances of a disadvantaged child being in the high achiever group
- Better HLE experiences in pre-school, primary and lower secondary school also predicted outcomes at GCSE and AS level
- Higher quality learning experiences both at home and in pre-school may serve as protective influences & foster resilience by boosting the attainment of disadvantaged children across different phases of education
- Going to a better secondary school (judged by inspectors) and better experiences in secondary school (measured by self-report) also predicted long term academic outcomes at GCSE, AS and A-level
- These findings accord with EER theoretical models and point to the relevance of teaching quality (see review by Muijs et al 2014) for supporting better outcomes.

Implications & Recommendations

For Schools:

- Support to encourage reading for pleasure, educational trips and out-ofschool studying opportunities should be provided to promote attainment for disadvantaged students at all ages.
- Schools should monitor and guide option choices to ensure 'bright' but disadvantaged students maximise their potential to enter higher education, especially the best universities and more prestigious courses.

Disadvantaged students should:

- have more opportunities to go to the best schools those rated outstanding by Ofsted & those identified as more academically effective
- be given the opportunity to attend high quality pre-school settings with qualified staff.
- have additional encouragement and support to enable them to engage in self-directed study, do sufficient homework and read more books, the activities that provide extra academic dividends. Schools should provide such opportunities where they are unlikely to be available at home

Implications & Recommendations (cont.)

- Recognition of the 'double disadvantage' experienced by disadvantaged pupils in the poorest communities through the funding system and support for schools serving more disadvantaged pupils
- Some groups of students, particularly white working class boys, may benefit from additional encouragement and support to enable them to engage in selfdirected study, do sufficient homework and read more books, the activities that provide extra academic dividends
- Support at key transition points especially post 16 and guidance on career and Higher education options targeted for disadvantaged groups to raise aspirations & provide information eg on the role of facilitating subjects plus access courses
- Targeted local programmes to support school improvement and raise school standards in the poorest neighbourhoods.

Selected References

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Multilevel logistic regression child, family & HLE measures predicting higher attainment at age 11 for disadvantaged group (1)

	Coet.	Std.	Odds	Sig.
		Error	Ratios	
Age	0.04	0.02	1.04	*
Gender	-0.41	0.15	0.66	**
Ethnic group (compared to White UK)				
White European Heritage	-1.24	0.50	0.29	*
Black Caribbean Heritage	0.79	0.32	2.21	*
Black African Heritage	-0.09	0.49	0.92	
Any Other Ethnic Minority	-0.02	0.38	0.98	
Indian	0.62	0.44	1.86	
Pakistani	0.46	0.31	1.58	
Bangladeshi	0.04	0.53	1.04	
Mixed Race	0.25	0.29	1.28	
Early developmental problems (compared to none)				
1+ Developmental problem	-0.23	0.22	0.80	
Early behavioural problems (compared to none)				
1+ Behavioural problem	-0.31	0.22	0.73	
Number of siblings at age 3/5(compared to none)				
1 sibling	-0.07	0.21	0.93	
2 siblings	-0.02	0.21	0.98	
3 + siblings	-0.38	0.24	0.68	
Missing	-0.51	0.67	0.60	
Mother's highest qualifications level at age 3/5 (compared to none)				
Vocational	0.08	0.24	1.08	
Academic age 16	0.35	0.18	1.42	
Academic age 18	0.90	0.33	2.46	**
Degree or higher degree	1.28	0.41	3.61	**
Other professional	1.26	0.70	3.53	
Missing	-0.20	0.52	0.82	
Early years home learning (compared to 0-13)				
14-19	-0.21	0.22	0.81	
20-24	-0.27	0.24	0.76	

Odds ratios for students' experiences of secondary school age 16 as predictors of attaining four or more AS-levels

	Coef.	Std. Error	Odds Ratios	Sig.
Teacher professional focus (continuous)	0.82	0.41	2.27	*
Positive relationships (continuous)	1.09	0.42	2.99	**
Monitoring students (continuous)	0.82	0.37	2.28	*
Formative feedback (continuous)	0.86	0.34	2.35	*

^{*} p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Teacher professional focus	Positive relat	ionships	Monitoring students		
If a pupil is bullied, they would feel	Teachers		I am set targets for my learning by my		
able to tell a teacher about it.	treat the pupils fair	ly	teachers which are individual to me and		
	are interested in m	e as a person	not for the whole class		
Teachers	school show respe	ct for the pupil			
spend all of the time in lessons	_		The school has rewards for pupils who		
teaching us or making sure we are	The teachers and pu	upils get on	work hard or make good progress even		
working	well		if they do not get high grades		
have the same rules about					
behaviour			A pupil who works hard or makes good		
come to their lessons on time			progress is noticed and praised		
mark and return homework					
promptly			Teachers notice those pupils who are		
make sure that it is quiet and			not working as well as they could and try		
orderly during lessons			to make them work harder		
believe that learning is important					
Cronbach=0.77	Cronbach	=0.79	Cronbach=0.69		
Formative feedback		Academic eth	nos		
Teachers		Most pupils			
help me when I am stuck		want to do well in exams			
make helpful comments on my wor		want to contir	nue their education after GCSEs		
tell me how to make my work bette	r	are interested in learning			
Cronbach=0.83	3		Cronbach=0.78		