

School Standards and Achievement Annual Report 2024-2025

For decision For discussion For information

SUMMARY

This is the annual report on school standards and achievement for the academic year 2024-2025.

The purpose of this report is to set out the current standards and outcomes for Reading schools.

OWNER

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Introduction

- This report provides a comprehensive overview of the educational performance and standards achieved in Reading schools during the academic year 2024-2025. The report outlines the trends observed, and the impact of school leaders on raising standards. The report highlights key trends, achievements, and areas for improvement across all educational stages, from early years to post-sixteen.
- The report supports leaders across the system to evaluate and revise Reading's education strategic priorities, so that consistent evidence-based improvement approaches can be agreed, commissioned, and implemented.

Executive Summary- School Standards and System Priorities 2024–2025

This report confirms that Reading's education system continues to demonstrate many areas of strength, particularly in Early Years improvement, phonics recovery by the end of Key Stage 1, strong KS4 outcomes at local authority level, and high participation in post-sixteen education. However, it also highlights inequalities for vulnerable children.


Standards and Outcomes

Outcomes across Reading show positive momentum at key transition points, most notably in Early Years, where Good Level of Development (GLD) continues to rise, reflecting the impact of early intervention, workforce development and partnership working. KS4 outcomes remain a key strength of the authority, with attainment above national averages across Attainment 8, EBacc APS, and English and Maths. However, this headline success masks substantial variation between schools and pupil groups, with persistent gaps for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), and those experiencing poor attendance. At KS5, A-level performance is highly variable, with strong outcomes concentrated in a small number of academically advantaged settings and weaker outcomes in sixth forms serving more complex cohorts, reinforcing the importance of earlier intervention.

Equity, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), and Inclusion

The data shows that Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is a driver of variation in outcomes at every phase. Children without SEND in most schools perform at or above national benchmarks, indicating that core curriculum and teaching quality is benefiting many children in many schools. However, pupils with SEND—particularly those on SEN Support and with EHCPs—continue to experience significantly weaker outcomes and higher absence and suspensions than their peers. Many of these children fail to secure foundational learning knowledge by the end of KS1. Strategic focus on providing children with the best start in life and reforming SEND and school organisation are essential if we are to drive change in these outcomes.

Attainment varies across ethnic groups, with headline outcomes ranging widely and differences significantly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. When focusing on the Not SEND cohort, attainment increases across all groups, in some cases substantially, indicating that SEND distribution



has a strong impact on overall outcomes and can distort direct comparisons. The highest performing groups remain consistent, with Chinese and Indian pupils achieving well above the national benchmark, alongside other Asian and White groups. Larger cohorts, particularly White British pupils, also perform securely above national when SEND is excluded, providing a more stable indicator of system performance.

Some groups continue to underperform relative to national expectations even without SEND, including Black Caribbean children, some mixed heritage pupil groups, and Irish Traveller pupils, indicating that factors beyond SEND contribute to these gaps. Overall, the data suggests that while improving SEND provision remains important, there is also a need to address persistent ethnic disparities that are evident within the non-SEND population.

Attendance and Vulnerability

Attendance remains a key limiting factor on attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Elevated levels of persistent absence are disproportionately concentrated in highly inclusive schools that serve our communities most impacted by disadvantage and intersectional vulnerability. Poor attendance is strongly correlated with weaker KS2 and KS4 outcomes and higher post-sixteen disengagement. The data reinforces that attendance challenges are often structural and contextual, linked to poverty, health, housing instability, and unmet need, rather than school practice alone. Improving attendance for vulnerable groups therefore requires integrated, multi-agency responses, rather than punitive or school-only solutions.

Post-16 Participation and Progression

Most young people in Reading continue into post-sixteen education, and the authority performs well against national benchmarks for participation and the September Guarantee. However, retention and progression to Level 3 qualifications remain significant challenges for vulnerable learners. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are far more likely to leave school-based sixth forms at 16 and enter FE or become NEET. This reflects earlier attainment gaps, limited access to academic pathways, and insufficient preparation for adulthood. The findings reinforce that post-16 outcomes are shaped well before Year 11, requiring stronger KS3 foundations and clearer vocational and technical pathways that include all children, aligned to the national White Paper reform ambitions.

Strategic Priorities for the Next Phase

The evidence in this report points clearly to the need for a continued movement from individual school-level improvement activities to coordinated system leadership, with the following priorities:

- Deliver the SEND reforms and local area SEND Strategy at pace, focusing on early identification, adaptive teaching, attendance, and Preparation for Adulthood across all phases.
- Continue to prioritise the Best Start in Life strategy, recognising Early Years as the most effective lever for long-term improvement and equity.
- Use White Paper opportunities to strengthen MAT-LA collaboration, rationalise provision, and co-design inclusive pathways across KS4 and post-sixteen.
- Proactive school place planning and financial modelling and management to promote sustainability.



- Protect leadership capacity and wellbeing, recognising that people, not structures, drive improvement and ensure that support to schools and settings support workload reduction, quality improvement and reduces system risks and inequalities.


Taken together, this report shows a system with strong foundations but limited headroom, where future success will depend on early intervention, inclusive practice, strategic collaboration, and courageous system leadership.

The local system

Table showing the numbers of schools by type in each education phase and sector in Reading 2024-2025

School Type	Nursery	Primary	Alternative Provision Academy	Secondary	Special	Total
Academy Converter				2	1	3
Multi-Academy Trust		13	1	8	2	24
Community School	5	22			1	28
Voluntary Aided School		5		1		6
Total	5	40	1	11	4	61

- Reading schools and settings include those that are LA-maintained, converter academies, Multi-Academy Trust sponsored, selective Grammar and Independent schools.
- School effectiveness activities are focused on locally maintained schools where Reading Borough Council has statutory duties, powers, and direct influence. All schools and settings can purchase school improvement support through the School Effectiveness SLA.
- Intelligence about all schools is collected as part of LA duties under the School Effectiveness Framework. School visits, data analysis, and monthly multi-agency school effectiveness meetings identify risks to schools and pupils and identify mitigation and escalation actions. This has enabled officers to make well-evidenced enquiries and take timely action to support children, families, and schools.
- In 2024-25, all academy partners were offered CEO meetings and a local headteacher “keeping in touch” meeting to identify local issues and barriers to improvement and identify opportunities for local school improvement partnerships.
- All school types are represented by Headteacher Association and Cluster leads on the Education Partnership Board and all schools are invited to cluster meetings, Headteacher Briefings, and engagement groups. All Schools contribute to the review of strategic policy including the Reading wide Education Strategy.
- Annual Quality Assurance Visits are in place for all schools with LA-funded Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPS) and all schools access the Local RISE service.

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- All schools are required to submit safeguarding self-audits (S 175 Safeguarding Audit) as part of Safeguarding Partnership arrangements. Audits are analysed and reported. All locally maintained schools receive an annual safeguarding audit led by the School Effectiveness Team.
 - The school effectiveness team conducts KS1 Phonics Screening Check monitoring, KS2 writing moderation and KS2 SATS monitoring visits as part of LA statutory duties. In 2026 The School Effectiveness team are leading DfE funded engagement events to support Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Assessment.

School Standards 2025-26

Operational Context

The new Ofsted framework places greater emphasis on curriculum coherence, foundational learning, inclusion, attendance, and sustained progress for vulnerable groups, raising the bar for what is considered good or better provision.

To support schools meet these raised standards the DfE has introduced a range of national support programmes—such as National RISE led training, South East area Curriculum Hubs, targeted training, and recovery-focused intervention, however, access to these is often limited to schools meeting specific eligibility thresholds, meaning that many schools that would benefit from support outside formal intervention are not always able to receive it.

Despite challenges, the LA's strong commitment to inclusive practice remains a notable strength. Schools continue to champion approaches that align closely with the principles set out in the SEND reforms and the wider Education White Paper, focusing on early identification, high-quality teaching, and a graduated approach to meeting needs. Our well developed and high quality Additional Resourced provisions (ARPS) continue to provide excellent support for SEND children within their local mainstream school and our specialist schools continue to work with the LA to create additional provision and support Mainstream inclusion. This provides a secure foundation for improvement through the SEND Recovery Plan and Gold Programme and reflects a shared ethos that prioritises equity, access, and ambition for all pupils, even in the face of significant operational pressures.

Primary School Standards

Primary School Context

Outcomes by school for the academic year 2024-2025 sit within a context of significant variation in cohort complexity across Reading's primary schools. Schools in the borough do not serve uniform or comparable populations; instead, there is a marked spread in levels of disadvantage, SEND, EHCPs, mobility and persistent absence.

The NFER report *High-SEND schools: Patterns and pressures in mainstream provision* (2026) demonstrates that SEND concentration is a structural feature of the system, creating unequal pressures across schools. The Sutton Trust's report *Double Disadvantage?* (2025) adds that cohort composition—particularly the intersection of SEND and socioeconomic disadvantage—has a decisive impact on outcomes, reinforcing inequities in attainment and access to support. Ofsted's latest

reporting and reforms, as reflected in the *Annual Report 2024/25 (Education, Children's Services and Skills)* and associated inspection changes, increasingly recognise these realities, highlighting the importance of context, inclusion, and vulnerability in understanding school performance.

This national picture is reflected locally, with variability in outcomes across Reading borough's primary schools aligning closely to differences in cohort composition, particularly levels of SEND and disadvantage. Some schools have small proportions of pupils with SEND or disadvantage and therefore operate with comparatively fewer barriers to learning, while others educate cohorts with elevated levels of need against national comparators. Ofsted plans to launch benchmarking against "similar schools" in its Inspection Data Summary Reports (IDSR) from Autumn 2026 to enable more precise self-evaluation.

Current cohort distribution in Reading has an effect on headline outcomes, particularly for combined RWM, where SEND and disadvantage typically exert the greatest downward pressure. As a result, variations in attainment across Reading cannot be interpreted without reference to the differing levels of contextual challenge that schools face.

When SEND is removed from the analysis, many schools demonstrate strong and secure outcomes, often exceeding national non-SEND attainment benchmarks in Early Years, Phonics, the Multiplication check and at the end of KS2 in Reading, Writing and Maths. This pattern strongly suggests that, in many settings, the core curriculum and teaching for many pupils is effective, with pupils without additional needs achieving highly.

However, the uplift between all-pupil outcomes and non-SEND outcomes in schools which carry disproportionate levels of SEND and complex need, reveals the extent to which overall results mask the quality of provision. In these schools the attainment gap is driven primarily by the concentration of high-need pupils rather than weaker classroom practice or curriculum design.

The data also shows that a small group of schools have cohorts that are not representative of the local areas they serve. In some cases, schools with very high attainment figures also have very low levels of SEND, EHCPs and pupil disadvantage, creating a profile that differs significantly from the mixed-needs composition of their surrounding neighbourhoods.

Conversely, there are schools whose cohorts reflect higher-than-average levels of disadvantage, SEND, persistent absence, or mid-phase admissions, meaning they are educating pupils with needs that exceed those seen in their immediate catchment area. These factors shape the trajectory of attainment and progress and underline the importance of interpreting school performance within its specific demographic context.

The distribution of complexity aligns closely with DfE and Ofsted guidance, which emphasises that outcomes must never be considered in isolation. Inspectors are required to evaluate the extent to which leaders are meeting the needs of the pupils they serve, rather than comparing schools without reference to SEND, disadvantage or absence profiles.

Reading's 2024-2025 data demonstrates clearly that headline attainment does not tell the full story about school effectiveness with some schools facing significant challenges to securing strong attainment.



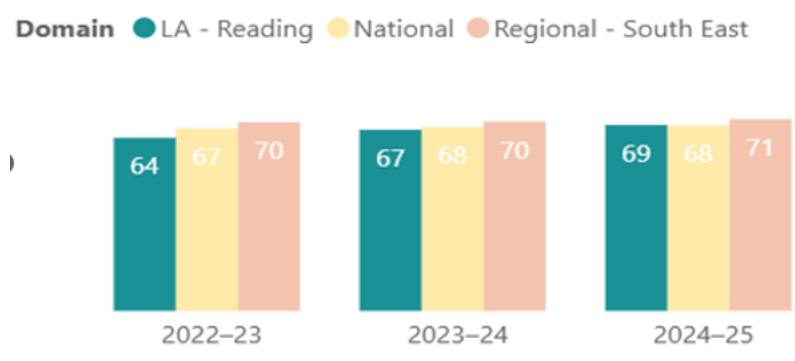
Taken together, the data highlights the need for a differentiated school-improvement approach. Schools with low-complexity cohorts and strong outcomes should be challenged to show depth, stretch, and ambition in their curriculum. Schools with high contextual need should receive proportionate support focused on SEND inclusion, foundational learning in early language and literacy, and focus on attendance. This includes the allocation of Experts at Hand resources outlined in the SEND reform plan.

A small number of schools with both low all-pupil and low non-SEND outcomes represent a priority for targeted, intensive support, as their data indicates that underlying weaknesses in curriculum, teaching or leadership are compounding the challenges created by cohort complexity.

Early Years Foundation Stage: Good Level of Development

Benchmark

Graph showing the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Reading 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.



Performance

In 2024/25, 68.5% of pupils in Reading schools achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) in the Early Years Foundation Stage, representing 1,241 pupils from a cohort of 1,813.

This marks a continued upward trajectory for the local authority, with the GLD rate increasing by 1.7 percentage points from 66.8% in 2023/24. This improvement is equivalent to approximately thirty additional pupils achieving a good level of development compared with last year. The average total points score across all GLD goals also remains strong at 21.8 out of twenty-four, indicating broad and secure development across the early learning goals.

This sustained positive trend demonstrates the ongoing impact of early years practice across the system including strengths in PVI and Nursery School Provision, targeted early intervention, and strengthened collaboration across Reading schools.

Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, Reading improved its national ranking, rising eight percentile places, from the 60th to the 52nd percentile. Local performance now sits comfortably within the national



mid-range. When compared with the national picture, Reading’s 2024/25 GLD rate of 68.5% sits 0.2 percentage points above the national average of 68.3%. Although this is a modest margin—equivalent to around three more pupils achieving GLD than would be expected if Reading were performing at exactly the national level.

It is important to note that the relative rate of improvement has slowed: the local authority’s improvement rate has reduced from +2.5% in 2023/24 to +1.1% in 2024/25, primarily because national outcomes also rose during this period, albeit more modestly. Nationally, results have risen from 67.2% to 68.3% during the same period—a smaller rate of improvement than that seen locally.

Table showing DfE Targets for proportions of children achieving GLD by 2028: Source Best Start in Life Strategy RBC.

MEASURE	CURRENT (2024/25)	TARGET (2028)
GLD Overall	68.4%	75.9%
GLD FSM Eligible	49.8%	64.9%
GLD Non-FSM	72.5%	Maintain ≥75%
SEND GLD	26%	Significant improvement
FSM Gap	22.7%	<15%

The LA will need to make 2.5% progress in GLD each year, for the next three years, to achieve the GLD target set by the DfE for Reading.

The Best start in Life strategy aims to support this ambitious goal. The strategy focuses on ensuring that every child benefits from strong early development, consistent support, and a smooth transition into school. A core priority is creating a Smooth Journey to School, enabling children to enter Reception with good attendance, readiness to learn, growing independence, and secure emotional regulation. Many schools note that too few children are “ready” for school on admission to reception. Best Start Family Hubs will provide an integrated, place-based offer that connects universal and targeted support such as mental health services, SEND guidance, and home learning outreach, ensuring families can access help early and locally.

These strands are strengthened by stronger partnerships across health, education, and the voluntary sector, delivering coordinated information and support so that families with diverse needs experience consistent pathways from birth through the early years. It is hoped this will relieve pressure on schools to intervene at point of entry as fewer children start school without being ready.

The strategy also aims to support further consistency in early years provision, with an emphasis on high-quality childcare, a skilled and confident workforce, and strong curriculum leadership.

In schools the strategy will coordinate work with partners, including the Local Early Years Hub, to provide school improvement capacity across nursery and reception to further establish high quality




curriculum and pedagogy. Securing foundational learning for all children remains a barrier to children achieving GLD and being successful as they move through school.

Vulnerable Pupil Groups

Table showing the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Reading 2024-2025 by pupil group compared to National and Regional Averages for that group. Table shows the relative % improvement for the group compared to National and Regional improvement rate and the LA National Centile Ranking (1 being high) Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

		Good Level of Development - EYFSP				
Domain	Pupil Group	Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	National Gap (DfE)	Cohort
National:	All Pupils	68%	1%			584360
South East		71%	1%			96540
LA: Reading		69%	2%	52	0%	1813
National:	Disadvantaged	52%	0%			89270
South East		50%	0%			11640
LA: Reading		50%	-4%	58	-21%	236
National:	Non-Disadvantaged	71%	1%			472000
South East		74%	1%			84900
LA: Reading		71%	2%	52	0%	1577
National:	SEN No Recorded Provision	77%	1%			488450
South East		78%	1%			81380
LA: Reading		78%	1%	48	9%	1457
National:	SEN Support	26%	1%			58910
South East		28%	2%			8590
LA: Reading		28%	0%	43	-40%	240
National:	SEN EHCP	4%	0%			20360
South East		5%	0%			3310
LA: Reading		7%	7%	20	-61%	28
National:	SEN Support & EHCP	21%	1%			79280
South East		22%	2%			11900
LA: Reading		26%	3%	16	-43%	268
National:	World Majority Ethnicity	67%	1%			217360
South East		69%	2%			29900
LA: Reading		69%	2%	33	0%	1116
National:	Other than World Majority Ethnicity	69%	1%			367000
South East		72%	1%			66640
LA: Reading		68%	1%	59	0%	697
National:	EAL	65%	1%			125830
South East		67%	3%			16510
LA: Reading		70%	3%	17	1%	655
National:	Non-EAL	70%	0%			436870
South East		72%	0%			75950
LA: Reading		70%	0%	54	2%	1044



Performance across key pupil groups in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) highlights both areas of strength and persistent gaps that require continued strategic focus.

Underperforming children often have intersectional vulnerabilities and foundational knowledge gaps.

The school Effectiveness service has focused visits this year on supporting leaders to identify equalities issues within their schools, identify barriers and make effective interventions at the earliest stage. Officers have identified a need for leaders to refine curriculum sequences and classroom activities to ensure more time is focused on ensuring all children secure the foundational knowledge they need to be successful in Reception.

Among disadvantaged pupils, 50.0% achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD), with 118 out of 236 pupils meeting expectations. This is 1.5 percentage points below the national disadvantaged average and outcomes remain significantly lower than for non-disadvantaged pupils locally and nationally. The gap between disadvantaged pupils in Reading and the national non-disadvantaged cohort stands at 21.3 percentage points, mirroring the local attainment gap with Reading's non-disadvantaged pupils.

This cohort sits in the 58th percentile nationally, indicating performance below the midpoint and reinforcing the importance of sustained targeted support to narrow the gap. Attendance significantly impacts outcomes for this group. Children in this group without SEND achieve 2% lower than their peers nationally. This highlights the need to focus on ensuring every child achieves the foundational knowledge necessary to progress through the curriculum.

Pupils who do not have SEND as a whole group continue to demonstrate comparatively strong outcomes. In 2024/25, 77.5% of these pupils achieved GLD (1,129 out of 1,457), performing slightly above national outcomes for this group with a national percentile ranking of 48th.

For pupils receiving SEN Support, 27.9% of the cohort achieved GLD (67 out of 240 pupils). Positioned in the 43rd percentile, Reading performs above national levels by 1.5 percentage points when compared to the national SEN Support cohort indicating relatively strong performance and suggesting our Consistent approaches to inclusion are having impact.

This groups performance is 40.4 percentage points below the national all-pupils average and 40.6 points below local outcomes for all pupils. This means that children with SEND are going to need ongoing, high-quality support and intervention to achieve improved outcomes.

This cohort continues to require strengthened early identification, adaptive practice, and robust intervention in the first one thousand days of life to address substantial barriers to early learning and gaps on entry to school. Many schools tell us they are often the first statutory service to identify needs like Speech and Language and other developmental delays that could have been identified much earlier. The Best start in Life Strategy is in place to address this issue over time.

Pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans) represent the group facing the greatest challenges in achieving early learning outcomes at the same pace as their peers. In 2024/25, 7.1% of pupils with an EHC Plan achieved GLD (2 out of twenty-eight pupils). Reading performs 3.2 percentage points above national outcomes for pupils with EHC Plans though small cohorts' skew comparisons and should be considered with caution. This outcome is 61.4 percentage points below the LA's overall GLD rate and 61.2 points below the national all-pupil average emphasising the



importance of continued investment in high-quality early intervention, specialist support, and effective multi-agency coordination.

Ethnic Group Performance

Table showing the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Reading 2022-2025 (3-year average) by pupil group. Source Power BI. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places. Cohort size should be considered in interpreting variance between groups.

Ethnicity	All Pupils Cohort	All Pupils %GLD	Disadvant aged Cohort	Disadvant aged %GLD	Not SEN Cohort	Not SEN %GLD	variance to National Average 68%
Chinese	63	82.5%			60	85.0%	14.5%
Indian	556	73.6%	3	66.7%	489	79.6%	5.6%
Any Other White Background	549	72.5%	11	81.8%	493	77.1%	4.5%
Any Other Asian Background	314	71.0%	7	71.4%	275	77.8%	3.0%
White and Asian	140	70.0%	3	66.7%	124	75.0%	2.0%
White - British	1652	69.9%	83	41.0%	1426	77.1%	1.9%
White - Irish	13	69.2%	1		9	66.7%	1.2%
Gypsy / Roma	3	66.7%			2	100.0%	-1.3%
Any Other Mixed Background	229	62.0%	10	30.0%	193	68.9%	-6.0%
Refused	118	61.9%	6	66.7%	106	65.1%	-6.1%
Pakistani	368	61.4%	12	58.3%	321	67.9%	-6.6%
White and Black African	71	60.6%	5	60.0%	63	65.1%	-7.4%
Black - African	349	60.2%	9	44.4%	285	70.5%	-7.8%
White and Black Caribbean	222	58.6%	29	48.3%	176	68.2%	-9.4%
Black Caribbean	43	58.1%	7	71.4%	37	64.9%	-9.9%
Bangladeshi	47	57.4%	1	100.0%	36	69.4%	-10.6%
Any Other Black Background	54	57.4%	3	33.3%	42	66.7%	-10.6%
Any Other Ethnic Group	143	57.3%	11	63.6%	118	66.9%	-10.7%
Information Not Yet Obtained	519	54.9%	6	66.7%	517	54.7%	-13.1%
Irish Traveller	7	28.6%	2	50.0%	6	33.3%	-39.4%

Attainment varies across ethnic groups, with headline outcomes ranging widely; however, these differences are significantly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. When focusing on the Not SEN cohort, attainment increases across all groups, in some cases substantially, indicating that SEND distribution has a strong impact on overall outcomes and can distort direct comparisons. The highest performing groups remain consistent, with Chinese and Indian pupils achieving well above the national benchmark, alongside other Asian and White groups. Larger cohorts, particularly White British pupils, also perform securely above national when SEND is excluded, providing a more stable indicator of system performance.

Despite this uplift, some groups continue to underperform relative to national expectations even without SEND, including Black Caribbean, some mixed heritage groups, and Irish Traveller pupils, indicating that factors beyond SEND contribute to these gaps. Overall, the data suggests that while improving SEND provision remains important, there is also a need to address persistent ethnic disparities that are evident within the non-SEND population.



School Performance

School Outcomes are impacted by population complexity, cohort size, and mobility. School Outcomes should not be directly compared.

22/38 (58%) of school's results are above national average and 27/38 (71%) when statistically significant SEND cohorts are accounted for.

In the sixteen schools below, national average SEND significantly skewed outcomes in four schools. School Effectiveness officers have identified areas for development in curriculum sequencing and teaching across this year group. Targeted school improvement support will be offered as part of the Best Start in Life Strategy.

This School improvement support will be important to maintain momentum and further accelerate progress for learners so that fewer schools perform below average year on year.

Attendance

Table showing the impact of Attendance on children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Reading 2024-2025 Source Power BI/ DfE IDAMS. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

		EYFSP GLD %		
Cohort		All pupils	Disadvantaged	SEND
	National Average	68%	52%	26%
	Local average	69%	50%	28%
	Attendance category			
986	95%+ (good attendance)	75%	62%	37%
366	Persistently Absent	45%	35%	19%
11	Severley Absent	0%	0%	0%

The relationship between attendance and Early Years outcomes is strongly evident in the 2024/25 EYFSP data.

Children with good attendance (95%+) achieve markedly higher outcomes, with 75% of all pupils attaining a Good Level of Development (GLD), rising to 62% for disadvantaged pupils and 37% for those on SEN Support—well above national GLD attainment averages for these groups.

In contrast, pupils who are persistently absent show significantly lower outcomes, with only 45% of all pupils achieving GLD, falling further to 35% for disadvantaged pupils and 19% for SEN Support pupils.

The most concerning outcomes are among the severely absent group, where none of the 11 pupils achieved GLD. Notably, 7 out of 11 (64%) severely absent pupils have SEND, including one with an EHCP, and SEND pupils are disproportionately represented in persistent absence figures: 38% of pupils on SEN Support and 57% of pupils with an EHCP are persistently absent, compared with only 17% of non-SEND pupils.

This pattern highlights the substantial impact of attendance on early learning and underscores the need for strengthened inclusive practice and attendance support for families, particularly for



disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, to mitigate widening gaps in early outcomes. Children that do not gain foundational knowledge due to missing school will struggle to access the curriculum in the following year. This can see them lose confidence and further compound patterns of poor attendance and behaviour.

It can also lead to children being identified as SEND when in reality they have gaps in their foundational learning. This can lead to children going on to need EHCPs when early intervention at this stage could have prevented the need for assessment.

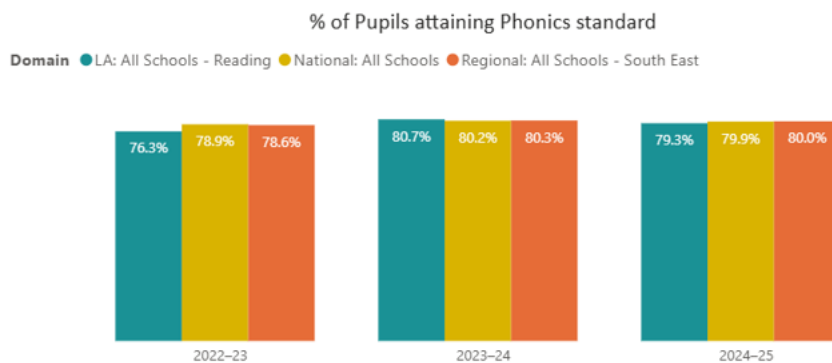
Interventions in schools work best when they occur daily for short periods of time. Children who miss school also miss the impactful implementation of interventions. Schools have worked tirelessly in recent years to address attendance issues, and this is shown in data improvements, however, more needs to be done to secure parental and care giver understanding of the vital role of regular attendance in Early Years and to ensure schools have the staffing capacity and knowledge to implement effective early intervention.

Phonics

Benchmark

Graph showing the proportion of children meeting the standard in phonics screening at the end of Year one in Reading 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

Year 1



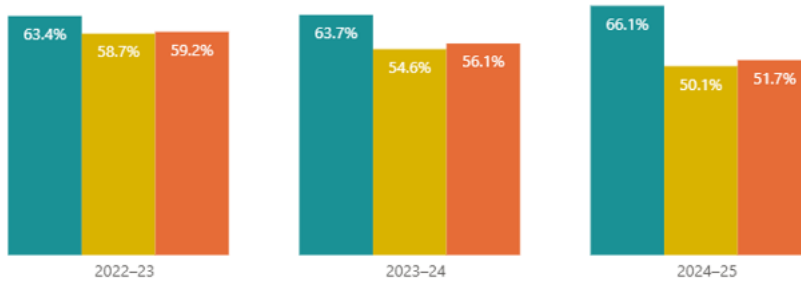
Graph showing the proportion of children meeting the standard in phonics screening at the end of Year two in Reading 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

Year 2 retake



% of Pupils attaining Phonics standard

Domain ● LA: All Schools - Reading ● National: All Schools ● Regional: All Schools - South East



Performance

In 2024/25, 79.2% of Year 1 pupils in the local authority achieved the expected standard in phonics, equivalent to 1,370 pupils meeting the benchmark score of 32. The average point score for the cohort was 33.2, indicating generally secure performance among the majority of pupils who achieved the expected standard. However, overall attainment represents a decline compared with the previous academic year.

The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard has fallen by 1.5 percentage points from 80.7% in 2023/24 to 79.2% in 2024/25. This decrease equates to approximately twenty-five fewer pupils meeting the expected standard compared with the previous year.

Across the last three academic years, the LA’s average Year 1 phonics performance stands at 78.7%, showing relatively stable—but slightly fluctuating—attainment patterns over time.

At 79.2%, the LA’s 2024/25 phonics outcomes sit 0.7 percentage points below the national average of 79.9%. This difference is the equivalent of around eleven additional pupils who would have needed to meet the standard for the LA to be in line with national outcomes.

While the LA’s attainment declined by 1.5 percentage points between 2023/24 and 2024/25, the national average fell by only 0.3 percentage points, suggesting a sharper decrease locally than that seen nationally. This change largely reflects cohort levels of SEND.

Performance trends over the last three academic years show improvement followed by slight decline. National performance followed a similar pattern but with smaller shifts.

In 2024/25, the LA ranked in the 58th percentile nationally for Year 1 phonics expected standard attainment. This positions the LA within the same decile as LAs achieving between 79.0% and 79.9%. The percentile ranking represents a decline of thirteen places from 2023/24, when the LA was positioned at the 45th percentile. Looking over the longer term, the LA has dropped from the 36th percentile in 2022/23 to the 58th percentile in 2024/25, showing reduced relative performance despite relatively stable absolute attainment.

The strong performance of Year 2 pupils in phonics reflects the effectiveness of school’s approach to supporting SEND pupils and those who start school not yet school-ready to catch up. Outcomes have risen to 66.2% in 2024/25, an increase of 2.5 percentage points from the previous year and the

equivalent of twelve more pupils meeting the expected standard. This improvement stands in sharp contrast to the national picture, where outcomes fell by 4.5 percentage points, positioning the LA 16.1 percentage points above the national average—equivalent to seventy-eight more pupils achieving the standard than would be expected nationally.

Consistently high performance over the last three years, with the LA outperforming the national average each year and improving its relative standing to +7.0% in 2024/25, demonstrates the impact of strong early identification, targeted intervention, and high-quality inclusive teaching.

The LA’s rise to the fourth percentile nationally further highlights the success of long-term strategic focus on early support for reading, ensuring that vulnerable learners rapidly catch up and achieve strong outcomes by the end of Year 2.

Vulnerable groups

Table showing the proportion of children achieving the standard in Phonics at the end of Year one, in Reading 2024-2025, by pupil group compared to National and Regional Averages for that group. Table shows the relative % improvement trend for the group compared to National and Regional improvement rate and the LA National Centile Ranking (1 being high) Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

Domain	Pupil Group	Expected Standard (Year 1) - Phonics				
		Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	National Gap (DfE)	Cohort
National:	All Pupils	80%	0%			601000
South East		80%	0%			98700
LA: Reading		79%	-2%	58	-1%	1729
National	Disadvantaged	67%	-2%			134700
South East		63%	-1%			17910
LA: Reading		68%	-6%	46	-16%	335
National	Non-Disadvantaged	84%	0%			443840
South East		84%	0%			80790
LA: Reading		82%	0%	66	-2%	1394
National	SEN No Recorded Provision	88%	0%			487530
South East		88%	1%			80710
LA: Reading		88%	0%	53	9%	1372
National	SEN Support	52%	1%			77120
South East		50%	0%			11930
LA: Reading		53%	-2%	49	-27%	251
National	SEN EHCP	20%	0%			28040
South East		21%	0%			4370
LA: Reading		13%	-10%	83	-67%	75
National	World Majority Ethnicity	80%	0%			225990
South East		81%	0%			31250
LA: Reading		80%	-3%	52	0%	1103
National	other than World Majority Ethnicity	80%	-1%			375010
South East		80%	0%			67450
LA: Reading		78%	1%	65	-2%	626
National	EAL	80%	0%			133460
South East		80%	-1%			17400
LA: Reading		79%	-5%	57	-1%	645

In 2024/25, phonics outcomes for disadvantaged pupils declined in both Year 1 and Year 2. In Year 1, 67.5% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard, which is 226 pupils out of 335. This is a drop from 73.7% last year. The gap between disadvantaged pupils in the LA and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally has widened, increasing from -9.8% to -16.1%. Despite this, disadvantaged pupils in the LA are still performing slightly better than disadvantaged pupils nationally. Overall, the LA sits in the 46th percentile for Year 1, meaning performance is around the middle nationally.

It is also of note that 81% of Disadvantaged children without SEND achieved the phonics standard. This is in line with non-disadvantaged children. There is still a 7% gap for this group with the non-SEND group overall, but these outcomes demonstrate the success of schools in targeting this group. Discussions with Heads through standards visits has identified that Poor attendance in Reception and Year one often accounts for underachievement in this group. Visits to Locally Maintained schools show consistent fidelity to high quality schemes and in year progress from starting points for the majority.

In Year 1, 53.4% of pupils on SEN Support achieved the expected standard in phonics, which is 134 pupils out of 251. This is a small decrease from last year and is 26.5% lower than the national figure for all pupils. However, pupils on SEN Support in the LA are performing slightly better than SEN Support pupils nationally. Overall, the LA sits in the 49th percentile for this group, meaning performance is around average compared with other local authorities. These results show that while some pupils on SEN Support are making progress, this remains a priority group requiring continued targeted intervention in Year 1.

In Year 2, 48.8% of pupils on SEN Support achieved the expected standard in phonics, which is sixty-one pupils out of 125. The group is placed in the 27th percentile nationally, showing that outcomes remain strong compared with other local authorities. However, this represents a decrease from the previous year and suggests that, overall, pupils on SEN Support are not fully catching up by the end of Year 2. Although their outcomes are only 1.3% below the national figure for all pupils, the drop from Year 1 and the fall in performance compared with last year indicate that many pupils continue to struggle with securing the phonics skills needed.

Only 13.3% of pupils with an EHCP achieved the expected standard in phonics (10 out of seventy-five pupils). This is a decrease from last year and places the group 66.6% below the national figure for all pupils. Outcomes also fell by 9.5 percentage points from 22.8% in 2023/24, showing that many pupils with the highest level of need continue to struggle with early phonics skills. The group sits in the 83rd percentile nationally, meaning outcomes are low compared with other local authorities, however, mainstream inclusion within SLD ARPS may be skewing data as standards visits have not identified concerns about the quality of provision in phonics for this group of children.

The lower EHCP phonics outcomes for this cohort reflect inclusive assessment practice. Of the seventy-two pupils with EHCPs recorded in test outcomes, nine achieved the expected standard, with a further five receiving scores between 15–30, indicating emerging decoding skills. However, a sizeable proportion of pupils (20) scored zero. These pupils were able to access the check and attempt it but demonstrated no secure grapheme–phoneme correspondence or blending ability at the time of assessment. In line with STA guidance, they were not disapplied as they could engage with the task. Arguably the outcome does not provide valuable diagnostic information about their current stage of development. Pupil by pupil results show variability between settings and in some

settings cohorts with similar needs may have been disapplied, resulting in a higher reported school average.

With this in mind it is possible local data reflects a high level of inclusion in assessment of pupils with complex cognition and learning and/or speech and language needs, rather than weaker provision. The school Effectiveness team are investigating to ensure local consistency in line with national guidance.

In Year 2, 15.4% of pupils with an EHCP achieved the expected standard, a slight improvement in the national gap but still indicating that most pupils with EHCPs do not catch up by the end of Key Stage 1, again this may reflect a relatively high proportion of children with significant learning difficulties and complex SEND attending mainstream schools compared with the national picture though issues require further analysis.

Across other pupil groups, outcomes in Year 1 show a mixed picture. Non-disadvantaged pupils performed below expectations, with 82% achieving the expected standard, slightly below the national figure and placing the LA in the 66th percentile.

Pupils with no recorded SEN achieved good outcomes, matching the national figure at 88% and sitting around the midpoint nationally. In terms of ethnicity, pupils from World Majority Heritage achieved 80%, matching national outcomes.

Ethnic Group Performance

Table showing the proportion of children achieving the phonics standard in Reading 2022-2025 (3-year average) by pupil group. Source Power BI. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places. Cohort size should be considered in interpreting variance between groups.

Ethnicity	All Pupils Cohort	All Pupils %WA	Disadvantaged Cohort	Disadvantaged %WA	No SEN Cohort	No SEN %WA	variance to National Average 80 %
Chinese	82	86.6%			79	86.1%	6.6%
Indian	625	86.6%	14	85.7%	566	90.5%	6.6%
Bangladeshi	44	86.4%	8	87.5%	38	92.1%	6.4%
Any Other Ethnic Group	137	81.8%	8	87.5%	123	83.7%	1.8%
Any Other Mixed Background	240	81.3%	49	73.5%	196	87.2%	1.3%
White and Black African	85	81.2%	24	87.5%	72	87.5%	1.2%
Any Other White Background	605	81.2%	63	69.8%	522	87.0%	1.2%
Black - African	395	78.7%	51	66.7%	306	86.9%	-1.3%
White and Asian	171	78.4%	27	66.7%	148	83.8%	-1.6%
Any Other Asian Background	397	78.1%	37	81.1%	346	85.8%	-1.9%
Any Other Black Background	59	78.0%	9	77.8%	47	87.2%	-2.0%
White - British	1751	77.7%	372	62.9%	1436	85.1%	-2.3%
Black Caribbean	53	77.4%	12	58.3%	38	86.8%	-2.6%
White - Irish	13	76.9%	5	40.0%	11	81.8%	-3.1%
Pakistani	416	76.7%	66	83.3%	348	83.3%	-3.3%
White and Black Caribbean	242	73.6%	112	77.7%	192	78.6%	-6.4%
Refused	101	71.3%	14	64.3%	83	79.5%	-8.7%
Information Not Yet Obtained	110	52.7%	8	87.5%	97	54.6%	-27.3%
Irish Traveller	8	37.5%	3		6	50.0%	-42.5%
Gypsy/ Roma	3	33.3%	1		2	50.0%	-46.7%



Phonics outcomes by ethnic group show variation in attainment; however, this is significantly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. Consistent with wider patterns, performance improves across most groups when focusing on the non-SEN cohort, indicating that SEND has a substantial impact on headline outcomes and can distort comparisons between ethnicities. Higher attaining groups remain broadly similar even when SEND is excluded, while several groups move closer to the national benchmark of 80%, suggesting that some gaps are partly explained by differences in SEND prevalence and outcomes rather than ethnicity alone.

Despite this, some variation persists between ethnic groups within the non-SEN cohort, indicating underlying differences that are not solely attributable to SEND.

Out of thirty-two mainstream primary schools with data available, eighteen schools (56%) are performing at or above the national average, while fourteen schools (44%) fall below it. The variation between schools is wide, ranging from 54% to over 95%. When pupils with SEND are removed, almost every school shows a substantial increase in attainment, and the majority of schools' No-SEN outcomes rise well above 85%, with many exceeding 90%.

This pattern shows that much of the variation between schools is driven by differences in the proportion and needs of SEND pupils, rather than the overall quality of phonics provision. The stronger and more consistent outcomes in the No-SEN column indicate that most schools have secure phonics teaching for pupils without additional needs, while the presence of higher-need cohorts has a notable impact on whole-school averages.

Key Stage Two

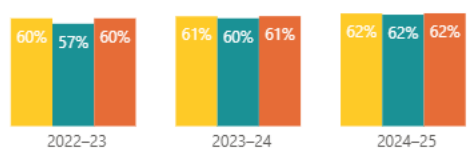
Benchmark

Graph showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard and greater depth in Reading, writing and Maths at the end of KS2 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

RWM

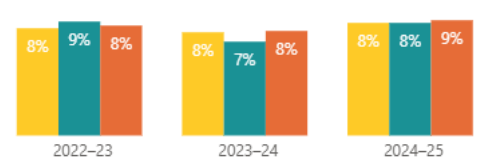
Expected standard

RWM
Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



Greater Depth

RWM
Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



Performance

At the end of Key Stage 2, 61.6% of pupils in the LA achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths, representing 1,164 pupils from a cohort of 1,891. This marks a



two-percentage-point improvement on the previous year and is equivalent to thirty-seven more pupils meeting the benchmark compared with 2023/24.

For combined KS2 Reading Writing and Mathematics results, disadvantaged pupils have made strong and ahead of target progress. Performance for disadvantaged pupils remains well below that of their peers and there are significant variations between groups; therefore removing the achievement gap remains a key priority.

Over the past three years, performance has remained broadly stable, with a three-year average of 59.3%, indicating steady upward movement overall. Although outcomes have improved, the LA remains 0.7 percentage points below the national average of 62.3%, which equates to around fourteen fewer pupils achieving the expected standard than would be expected if national performance were matched.

The authority has moved up in the national rankings, rising from the 65th to the 61st percentile, showing modest but positive improvement in position relative to other local authorities.

Performance at the higher standard also shows encouraging progress. In 2024/25, 8.4% of pupils achieved the greater-depth benchmark in RWM, equivalent to 158 pupils, representing a 1.4-percentage-point increase and approximately twenty-six additional pupils reaching this level compared with the previous year. This places the LA in line with the national average, which also stands at 8.4%, and reflects the strongest relative performance seen in recent years.

Over a three-year period, the LA’s average for higher-standard attainment stands at 7.9%. The relative change compared with national trends has improved significantly, moving from –1.2% in 2023/24 to +0.7% in 2024/25. The LA also rose from the 64th to the 59th percentile, indicating improved standing nationally for higher-attaining pupils.

Although the overall results show improvement at both the expected and higher standards, the distribution of outcomes demonstrates ongoing variation across groups, with 318 pupils (16.8%) scoring below the expected standard threshold (scaled score <100). The authority sits within a decile of local areas achieving between 60.1% and 61.7% at the expected standard, placing it in the middle of the national range.

Scores are impacted by outcomes in writing and though improvement is being secured further work is needed to secure consistently strong outcomes across all groups by securing foundational knowledge for all children at the end of KS1.

Reading

Graph showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard and greater depth in reading at the end of KS2 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

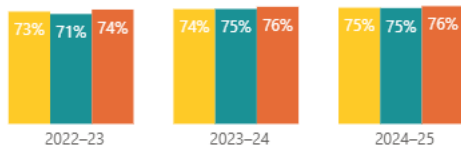
Expected standard

Greater Depth



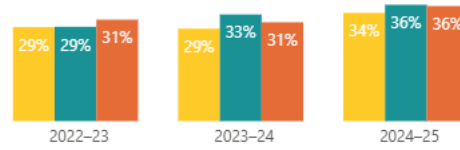
Reading

Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



Reading

Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



At the end of Key Stage 2, 75.1% of pupils in the LA achieved the expected standard in Reading, representing 1,420 pupils from a cohort of 1,892. This marks a 0.6-percentage-point improvement compared with 2023/24 and reflects around ten additional pupils meeting the standard this year. Over the last three years, the LA’s performance has shown steady upward movement, with a three-year average of 73.6%. Despite this improvement, outcomes remain slightly below the national average, with the LA performing 0.2 percentage points lower than the national figure of 75.3%, equivalent to approximately five fewer pupils meeting the expected standard compared with national performance. The LA has been above the national average once in the last three years, and while both local and national results improved this year, the national rate of improvement was marginally faster. As a result, the LA’s relative position declined from +1.7% to –0.3% and its national percentile rank shifted from 58th to 64th, placing it within the band of authorities where between 74.4% and 75.5% of pupils meet the expected standard.

Higher-standard outcomes in Reading present a positive picture. In 2024/25, 36.0% of pupils achieved the greater-depth standard, totalling 682 pupils. This is a three-percentage-point increase on the previous year and represents fifty-eight additional pupils reaching a high level of reading proficiency. Over a three-year period, the LA averages 32.7% at this higher standard. Importantly, the LA now performs above the national average, which stands at 33.5%, meaning around forty-eight more pupils reached the higher standard locally than would have been expected if outcomes matched national performance.

The LA has exceeded national outcomes in all three of the last three years for this measure indicating strong curriculum impact. However, the national rate of improvement this year was faster than the LA’s, leading to a decrease in relative standing—from +4.3% to –1.9%—and a drop in percentile ranking from 30th to 38th nationally. Nevertheless, the LA remains within a decile of strong-performing authorities, where between 35.5% and 37.5% of pupils reach the higher standard.

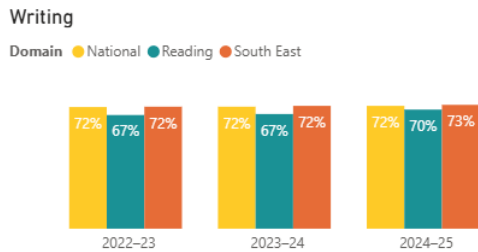
Taken together, the results highlight a steady and positive improvement trajectory in KS2 Reading. Attainment at the expected standard continues to rise gradually, narrowing the gap with national performance, while outcomes at the higher standard remain a notable strength for the LA. Although the LA’s national percentile rankings have shifted slightly downward due to stronger national gains this year, the overall profile reflects secure performance, with increasing proportions of pupils achieving both expected and higher standards. These improvements indicate strong curriculum delivery in reading and a growing proportion of pupils demonstrating advanced comprehension and analytical skills by the end of Key Stage 2.

Writing



Graph showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard and greater depth in writing at the end of KS2 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

Expected Standard



Greater Depth



At the end of Key Stage 2, 70.0% of pupils in the LA achieved the expected standard in Writing, representing 1,323 pupils from a cohort of 1,891. This reflects a 2.6-percentage-point increase from the previous year and the equivalent of forty-eight additional pupils meeting the expected standard.

Performance has risen consistently over the past three years, bringing the three-year average to 68.0%. However, despite this improvement, outcomes remain 2.2 percentage points below the national average of 72.2%, meaning around forty-two fewer pupils reached the expected standard compared with national performance.

Although the LA has not exceeded national outcomes for the expected standard in Writing in the past three years, its relative position has improved as the increase locally has been greater than the national rate of improvement. The LA’s percentile rank has risen significantly, moving from the 90th to the 75th percentile, placing it within a group of authorities achieving between 69.3% and 70.7% at this measure. This indicates a positive shift in Writing achievement, even while the overall gap with national performance remains.

High-standard performance in Writing shows a similar pattern of steady improvement. In 2024/25, 10.5% of pupils achieved greater depth, a total of 199 pupils, which represents a 0.8-percentage-point increase and around sixteen additional pupils reaching this standard compared with the previous year. This improvement places the LA close to its three-year average of 10.5%. Nevertheless, outcomes remain below the national average, which stands at 12.8%, equivalent to forty-three fewer pupils achieving greater depth locally than would be expected if the LA matched national performance.

Although the LA has not exceeded national outcomes for greater depth in Writing in the past three years, the relative change compared with national performance has improved, and the LA has risen five percentile places to the 72nd percentile, reflecting gradual strengthening despite the ongoing gap.

Significant work with the school Effectiveness team has identified gaps in foundational knowledge in writing. The team have worked with LA maintained schools to support them to review research on foundational learning and to implement findings from the DfE’s writing research and writing framework. This has helped schools refine and simplify curriculum content in reception and KS1 to



secure foundational writing skills. This work is impacting on outcomes at the end of each year group and will over the next three years continue to raise standards.

In Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GPS), 73.0% of pupils achieved the expected standard, which is 1.5 percentage points higher than last year and represents 1,382 pupils. This marks an improvement equivalent to twenty-nine additional pupils meeting the standard compared with 2023/24. The LA’s three-year average now stands at 71.9%.

GPS performance sits slightly above the national average, outperforming the national figure of 72.7% by 0.3 percentage points, equivalent to roughly seven additional pupils achieving the expected standard. The LA has exceeded national outcomes in one of the last three years in this measure and has made positive relative gains, moving from +0.3% to +1.1% against national performance. This improvement is reflected in a rise of thirteen percentile places, moving the LA from the 69th to the 56th percentile nationally.

At the higher standard in GPS, 33.6% of pupils achieved a scaled score of 110 or above, representing 635 pupils. This is a 2.3-percentage-point decrease from the previous year and equates to forty-four fewer pupils achieving this standard.

However, despite the decline, the LA continues to perform well above the national average, which stands at 29.6%, meaning around seventy-five more pupils met the higher standard locally than would be expected if performance matched national levels. The LA has been above national outcomes for the higher standard in GPS for all of the last three years.

While its relative advantage narrowed slightly this year, from +1.9% to +0.1%, the percentage of pupils achieving the higher standard remains comparatively strong. The LA’s percentile position declined modestly from 36th to 38th, but it remains within a high-performing band of authorities achieving between 32.9% and 35.1% at this level.

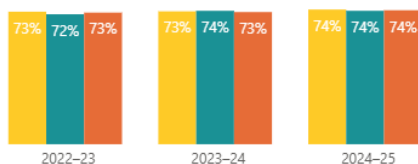
Maths

Graph showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard and greater depth in Maths at the end of KS2 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

Expected standard

Maths

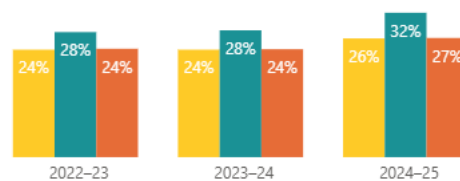
Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



Greater Depth

Maths

Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East



At the end of Key Stage 2, 73.5% of pupils in the LA achieved the expected standard in Maths, representing 1,391 pupils from a cohort of 1,892. This figure is unchanged from the previous year, indicating that performance has been maintained but not improved.

The outcome remains 0.7 percentage points below the national average of 74.2%, equivalent to around thirteen fewer pupils meeting the benchmark compared with national performance.

Despite performance holding steady, the national rate rose by 1.0 percentage point over the same period, resulting in a relative decline. Over the past three years, the LA's average performance stands at 72.9%, reflecting stability but limited upward trajectory.

The LA's percentile ranking for expected standard Maths fell from the 54th to the 64th percentile, placing it within a group of local areas achieving between 72.9% and 74.0% at this measure. This shift reflects stronger improvements nationally and suggests that further focus is needed to raise outcomes, particularly among pupils at risk of not reaching the expected standard; 26.5% of pupils (501 pupils) scored below one hundred, highlighting a significant cohort requiring targeted support across KS2.

The picture is more positive at the higher standard. In 2024/25, 32.1% of pupils achieved the greater-depth threshold in Maths, equivalent to 608 pupils. This represents a 3.9-percentage-point increase on the previous year—one of the strongest year-on-year improvements across subjects—and equates to seventy-four additional pupils reaching the higher standard.

This places the LA well above the national average of 26.4%, meaning around 109 more pupils reached this higher level locally than would be expected if performance matched the national rate. The LA has exceeded national outcomes for the higher standard in all of the past three years, and this year's relative position improved from +0.4% to +1.4%. The LA also rose from the 34th to the 26th percentile, placing it within a high-performing group of authorities achieving between 31.2% and 33.5% of pupils at the higher standard. This indicates strong provision for higher-attaining pupils in Maths.

Closing the gap at the expected standard—particularly for the 501 pupils not yet meeting the benchmark—will be key to improving overall Maths performance and strengthening the LA's national standing.

Vulnerable Groups

Table showing the proportion of children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (RWM) in Reading 2024-2025, by pupil group compared to National and Regional Averages for that group. Table shows the relative % improvement trend for the group compared to National and Regional improvement rate and the LA National Centile Ranking (1 being high) Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

		RWM Expected Standard - Key Stage 2					Reading Expected Standard - Key Stage 2		Writing Expected Standard - Key Stage 2		Maths Expected Standard - Key Stage 2		GPS Expected Standard - Key Stage 2	
Domain	Pupil Group	Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	National Gap (DfE)	Cohort	Value	Value Trend	Value	Value Trend	Value	Value Trend	Value	Value Trend
National	All Pupils	62%	2%			650550	75%	1%	72%	1%	74%	1%	73%	0%
South East		62%	2%			104190	76%	0%	73%	1%	74%	1%	72%	1%
LA: Reading		62%	2%	61	-1%	1891	75%	1%	70%	3%	74%	0%	73%	2%
National	Disadvantaged	48%	2%			204220	63%	1%	59%	1%	61%	2%	60%	1%
South East		43%	2%			26820	61%	1%	56%	1%	56%	2%	54%	1%
LA: Reading		45%	3%	61	-25%	566	61%	-1%	57%	6%	56%	0%	58%	4%
National	Non-Disadvantaged	69%	2%			439800	81%	1%	78%	1%	81%	1%	79%	1%
South East		69%	2%			77370	82%	1%	79%	1%	80%	1%	78%	1%
LA: Reading		69%	3%	59	0%	1325	81%	2%	76%	2%	81%	1%	80%	2%
National	SEN No Recorded Provision	74%	2%			502060	85%	1%	84%	1%	84%	1%	84%	1%
South East		74%	2%			80540	86%	1%	85%	1%	84%	1%	83%	1%
LA: Reading		76%	5%	46	13%	1386	87%	2%	84%	5%	86%	2%	86%	3%
National	SEN Support	29%	3%			109210	50%	2%	39%	3%	47%	3%	42%	3%
South East		28%	3%			17250	50%	2%	38%	3%	46%	3%	39%	3%
LA: Reading		27%	-4%	66	-36%	399	49%	-2%	35%	-2%	45%	-5%	43%	-1%
National	SEN EHCP	9%	1%			37160	20%	0%	13%	1%	18%	1%	17%	0%
South East		9%	1%			6150	21%	0%	14%	1%	18%	1%	17%	1%
LA: Reading		6%	-1%	85	-56%	99	14%	-3%	13%	4%	13%	1%	16%	3%
National	World Majority Ethnicity	65%	2%			239370	76%	2%	74%	1%	77%	1%	77%	0%
South East		67%	2%			32340	78%	1%	76%	1%	79%	0%	78%	0%
LA: Reading		67%	4%	46	5%	1183	79%	2%	75%	4%	79%	1%	80%	3%
National	Other than World Majority Ethnicity	61%	1%			400350	75%	0%	71%	0%	73%	1%	71%	1%
South East		60%	2%			70780	76%	0%	72%	0%	72%	1%	69%	0%
LA: Reading		53%	-2%	97	-10%	701	69%	-4%	62%	-1%	65%	-3%	62%	-3%
National	EAL	64%	2%			149110	74%	2%	73%	1%	78%	1%	76%	0%
South East		67%	2%			18450	77%	1%	76%	1%	80%	0%	78%	0%
LA: Reading		67%	2%	40	5%	761	78%	2%	76%	3%	81%	0%	81%	2%

Attainment across vulnerable groups at KS2 continues to show wide variation, with disadvantaged pupils, pupils on SEN Support, and those with an EHCP achieving markedly lower outcomes than their peers.

For disadvantaged pupils, 44.7% reached the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM), an improvement on last year but still 24.5 percentage points below the national non-disadvantaged benchmark. Although gaps narrowed slightly in Writing and GPS, outcomes in Reading and Maths remain significantly behind national comparators.

In Reading, 60.5% of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard, and in Maths 56.3% were successful, both representing large gaps to national non-disadvantaged pupils. Writing showed the strongest improvement, rising by 6.4 percentage points, yet the group remains more than twenty percentage points below the national non-disadvantaged figure.

Across subjects, disadvantaged pupils sit between the 61st and 77th percentiles, showing that, although progress is being made, performance for this group remains well below that of their peers and limits overall LA attainment.

Outcomes for pupils from non-World Majority Ethnic backgrounds (WBRI) also require focus. Pupils in this group tend to perform below those from World Majority Ethnic backgrounds, particularly in reading and GPS. Across the authority, performance patterns suggest that pupils from this group

remain disproportionately represented among those not achieving expected standards, reinforcing the need for culturally responsive teaching approaches and targeted support for early communication and language acquisition.

Pupils on SEN Support show particularly low attainment across all KS2 measures. Only 26.6% met the expected standard in RWM, a fall from the previous year and 35.7 percentage points below the national all-pupils' figure.

Outcomes were similarly low across individual subjects, with 48.9% achieving the expected standard in Reading, 34.8% in Writing, 45.1% in Maths, and 42.9% in GPS. These results place the group between the 50th and 73rd percentiles, highlighting that while their performance mirrors national trends for high-needs pupils, the scale of underachievement remains a significant challenge for the LA. The consistently lower outcomes across subjects indicate that core literacy and numeracy interventions need further strengthening for this group, particularly in Writing and GPS, where gaps to national performance are widest.

Pupils with EHCPs face the greatest barriers to attainment, with only 6.1% meeting the expected standard in RWM. Outcomes at individual subject level remain low, with 14.0% achieving the expected standard in Reading, 13.1% in Writing, 13.0% in Maths, and 16.0% in GPS. While small improvements are visible in Writing, Maths and GPS, the group continues to sit between the 57th and 87th percentiles, indicating that outcomes remain well below those seen nationally for pupils in this category. These findings underline the importance of specialist provision, high-quality adaptive teaching, and access to appropriate therapies and interventions to support more meaningful progress.

In contrast, outcomes for pupils with no recorded SEN remain strong and consistently above national averages. 75.6% achieved the expected standard in RWM, with even stronger results across individual subjects—86.9% met the standard in Reading, 84.2% in Writing, 86.1% in Maths and 85.9% in GPS. This group outperforms national all-pupil averages by more than eleven percentage points in every subject, demonstrating secure provision for learners that do not need additional support. These strong outcomes help stabilise overall LA performance but also highlight the widening gap between pupils with and without SEND.

Across all groups, the data highlights a clear pattern: while the LA maintains strong outcomes for pupils without additional needs, vulnerable groups—particularly disadvantaged pupils, pupils from WBRI backgrounds, and those on SEN Support or with EHCPs—continue to experience widespread and persistent gaps across Reading, Writing, GPS, Maths and combined RWM. Strengthening early identification, targeted intervention, culturally responsive practice, and high-quality adaptive teaching will remain central to improving outcomes and reducing inequalities at Key Stage 2.

Consistency in curriculum implementation is a vital part of securing disadvantaged and SEND outcomes improvement. School improvement resources are needed to secure consistent approaches. These are well understood by school leaders but difficult to implement due to school improvement capacity and resourcing issues.



Ethnic Group Performance

Table showing the proportion of children achieving expected standard in RWM at KS2 Reading 2022-2025 (3-year average) by pupil group. Source Power BI. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places. Cohort size should be considered in interpreting variance between groups.

Sub- Category	All Pupils Cohort	All Pupils %RWM	Disadvantaged Cohort	Disadvantaged %RWM	No SEN Cohort	No SEN %RWM	variance to National Average 62 %
Indian	616	78.1%	33	51.5%	553	83.9%	16.1%
Chinese	110	71.8%	1	100.0%	98	74.5%	9.8%
White and Asian	138	71.0%	32	50.0%	113	78.8%	9.0%
Any Other Asian Background	374	66.0%	43	58.1%	316	74.4%	4.0%
Bangladeshi	64	64.1%	21	71.4%	49	77.6%	2.1%
Any Other White Background	536	64.0%	76	52.6%	440	72.5%	2.0%
Any Other Ethnic Group	121	63.6%	28	46.4%	103	71.8%	1.6%
Pakistani	408	62.0%	113	52.2%	337	70.0%	0.0%
Black - African	425	58.8%	107	55.1%	347	67.4%	-3.2%
Refused	115	58.3%	32	50.0%	95	69.5%	-3.7%
Any Other Mixed Background	281	56.9%	84	45.2%	209	68.4%	-5.1%
White and Black African	74	55.4%	34	55.9%	53	69.8%	-6.6%
White - British	2095	53.9%	643	32.7%	1388	69.6%	-8.1%
Any Other Black Background	59	49.2%	26	30.8%	43	62.8%	-12.8%
Information Not Yet Obtained	106	40.6%	21	33.3%	74	50.0%	-21.4%
White and Black Caribbean	226	39.8%	135	34.1%	146	52.7%	-22.2%
Black Caribbean	67	38.8%	44	36.4%	47	48.9%	-23.2%
Gypsy/ Roma	5	20.0%	2		4	25.0%	-42.0%
White - Irish	9	11.1%	4	25.0%	4	25.0%	-50.9%
Irish Traveller	7		7		1		-62.0%

KS2 outcomes in reading, writing and maths (RWM) show considerable variation between ethnic groups; however, these differences are strongly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. Across nearly all groups, attainment increases markedly when focusing on the Non-SEN cohort, in some cases by over 10 percentage points (e.g. White British 53.9% to 69.6%, Black African 58.8% to 67.4%). This indicates that SEND has a substantial impact on headline attainment and can distort direct comparisons between ethnicities. When SEND is excluded, several groups perform well above the national average of 62%, including Indian (83.9%), White and Asian (78.8%), and Chinese (74.5%), while others move closer to national expectations, suggesting that part of the variation is attributable to differences in SEND prevalence and outcomes.

Despite this, some gaps persist within the Non-SEN cohort, particularly for Black Caribbean (48.9%), White and Black Caribbean (52.7%), and pupils with unknown ethnicity (50.0%), indicating underlying differences beyond SEND.

Across the authority, thirty-nine schools have published KS2 RWM outcomes for 2025. When compared with the national average for all pupils, eighteen schools (46%) are performing at or above national standards, while twenty-one schools (54%) fall below the national benchmark. However, the pattern changes considerably when SEND is removed and outcomes are compared against the

national non-SEND expected standard of 74%. On this measure, twenty-nine schools (74%) have no-SEND attainment at or above national levels, while ten schools (26%) remain below the 74% benchmark for pupils without SEND.

This shift shows that many schools with lower all-pupil averages demonstrate much stronger performance once inclusion is accounted for, reflecting the impact of high-need cohorts on headline measures.

There is a smaller group of seven schools where both all-pupil RWM outcomes and no-SEND outcomes remain below national standards. These schools do not show the uplift typically seen when inclusion is accounted for, suggesting that lower performance cannot be explained solely by cohort complexity.

School effectiveness visits have identified underlying weaknesses across the system in core provision that would benefit from more targeted school improvement support, including strengthened curriculum sequencing, improved early intervention strategies, and sharper approaches to SEND inclusion and adaptive teaching. These schools represent a priority group for focused monitoring, leadership support, and system-level collaboration to secure improvement.

When school non-SEND outcomes are compared with the national non-SEND benchmarks (85% Reading, 84% Writing, 84% Maths), performance improves sharply: twenty-nine schools (75%) move to at or above national non-SEND standards. This reveals that in most schools, core teaching and curriculum provision are strong for the majority of pupils, and that lower whole-school averages are often driven by the distribution and complexity of SEND need.

One Year Improvement trends add further insight. Based on RWM trend data, twenty-seven schools (69%) show an improving trajectory for all pupils, while twelve schools show a declining pattern. When SEND is removed, the picture strengthens: thirty-one schools show improving RWM trends for non-SEND pupils (80%), with only eight schools showing no improvement. This wider uplift suggests that curriculum implementation and teaching quality are strengthening across many settings, but that these gains are not yet reaching all vulnerable learners.

Attendance

Attendance across Reading's primary schools varies widely. Roughly a third of schools perform above national attendance levels, a third sit around the national average, and a third fall below.

Schools serving higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, and pupils with high mobility tend to have the greatest attendance challenges, including higher persistent absence.

While some schools are improving—especially in FSM and SEND attendance—others show attendance that is static or declining. Year 6 attendance also varies significantly, with some schools with over 94% of pupils attending regularly, while others drop as low as 66%.

There are positive signs that many schools are improving attendance for disadvantaged and SEND pupils. However, many schools continue to struggle, particularly with persistent absence. In settings already facing high levels of complexity, attendance difficulties often reflect structural and contextual pressures—such as health needs, poverty, transport issues, and housing instability—rather than school-level factors alone.

School Effectiveness focused visits have identified that schools are applying research informed approaches to improving attendance, are working collaboratively with the Attendance team and families and are working together to tackle this area in cluster groups.

Attendance influences KS2 outcomes. Schools with lower attendance, especially where persistent absence is high, tend to have lower KS2 RWM results. The seven lowest performing schools also appear in the attendance analysis, each showing weaker attendance patterns that align with their lower attainment. Likewise, schools with particularly strong attendance often have the highest KS2 outcomes, highlighting the close link between regular attendance and achievement.

Attendance remains a key factor behind the variation in KS2 outcomes across Reading. Improving attendance, particularly for vulnerable groups, will be central to raising standards in the schools with the lowest outcomes. At the same time, schools with high contextual need require additional support rather than increased pressure, as their attendance patterns reflect wider social and economic challenges. The role of Family Hubs will be a crucial lever improving attendance in these communities.

KS4

The Department for Education designs key Stage 4 (KS4) headline measures to give an overview of how well pupils achieve across a broad and balanced curriculum with a strong academic core. These measures include, the percentage achieving grade 5 or above in both English and maths (a strong GCSE), and the proportion of children gaining a grade 4 in English and Maths at GCSE. This is the gateway qualification for most Level three courses and many jobs.

Attainment eight measures how well pupils perform across up to eight qualifications, including English and maths (double weighted), EBacc subjects, and open or vocational qualifications. It provides a broad picture of achievement across the curriculum and reflects how effectively a school enables pupils of all abilities to succeed across a mix of academic and applied subjects.

EBacc APS looks only at attainment across the five EBacc pillars: English, maths, sciences, a language, and history or geography. It records the average point score across all five pillars, giving a clearer indication of how securely pupils achieve in traditional academic subjects.

Progress eight is not published for 2024/25 or 2025/26 due to the absence of KS2 baseline data following COVID-nineteen disruption, and there is no replacement measure during this period.

Improvement has been made in line with target to reduce KS4 attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils. As with KS2 achievement, performance for disadvantaged pupils remains well below that of their peers and there are significant variations between groups; therefore removing the achievement gap remains a key priority.

When interpreting KS4 outcomes, it is important to note that recent results are affected by changes to grading approaches following the pandemic. As a result, year-on-year comparisons should be treated with caution, with greater emphasis placed on curriculum breadth, attainment patterns, and changes in outcomes for different pupil groups rather than headline trends alone.

Context

Secondary schools in Reading operate within a highly varied and complex local context, with significant differences in pupil intake, levels of disadvantage, SEND, EAL, stability and deprivation across the borough. There is no single or typical profile for a Reading secondary school. Instead, schools serve markedly different communities, which has a substantial influence on attendance, behaviour, engagement, and headline attainment outcomes at Key Stage 4 and in sixth forms.

The data shows wide variation in FSM eligibility, SEN Support and EHCP prevalence, with some schools serving cohorts with well above-average levels of additional need, including children in need (CIN) and pupils experiencing deprivation both at pupil-base and local area level. These schools often face greater challenges linked to attendance, stability, mental health, and post-pandemic recovery, all of which impact learning and progress. In contrast, a smaller number of schools operate in comparatively lower-complexity contexts, with significantly lower FSM and SEND rates and more stable pupil populations. These differences create an uneven distribution of challenge across the secondary system.

In several cases, school intakes are not fully representative of the communities in which schools are located. Some schools admit far fewer disadvantaged or SEND pupils than would be expected based on local demographics, while others educate cohorts with complexity levels that exceed those of their immediate catchment areas. These patterns reflect a combination of parental choice, school specialisms, faith or selective characteristics, historic admissions arrangements, and post-sixteen recruitment factors. As a result, some schools carry a disproportionately high share of vulnerable pupils, while others benefit from intakes with fewer barriers to learning.

In Reading, schools serving fewer complex cohorts tend to achieve stronger headline outcomes, while those serving the most vulnerable pupils face sustained pressures that are not always visible in raw attainment measures alone.

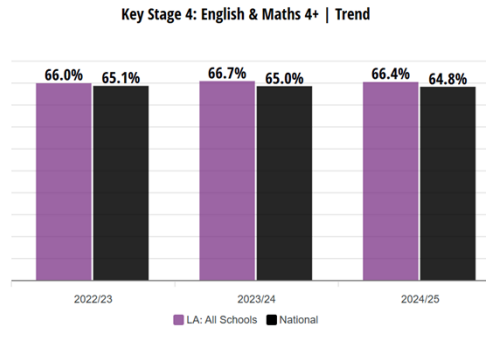
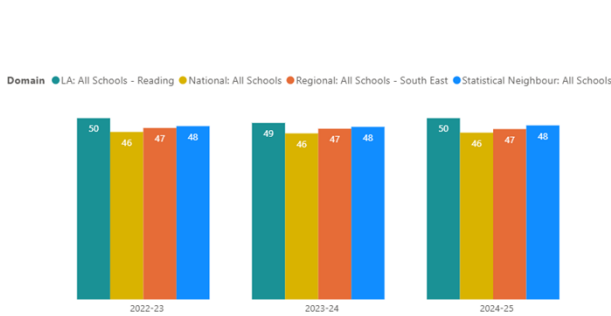
The removal of Progress 8 for 2024/25 and 2025/26 further increases the importance of contextual interpretation. In line with DfE and Ofsted guidance, secondary school performance in Reading must be evaluated by considering how effectively schools meet the needs of the pupils they serve, rather than through direct comparison of headline measures in isolation. Factors such as SEND prevalence, deprivation, attendance, stability, and pupil mobility are essential to understanding variation in KS4 outcomes and to informing proportionate, differentiated support across the borough.

Benchmark

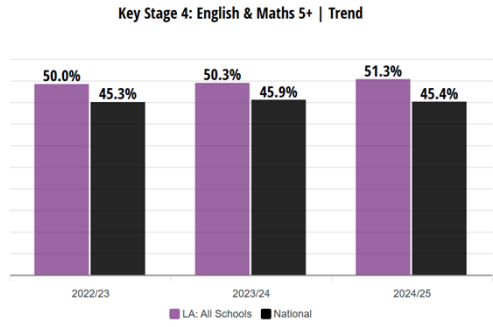
Graphs showing headline attainment measures at the end of KS4 in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks 2023-2025. Source NCER Nexus. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

Attainment 8

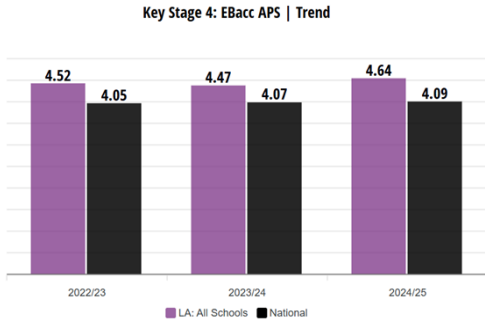
GCSE English and Maths 4+



English and Maths GCSE 5



EBacc APS



Performance

Outcomes at Key Stage 4 in 2024/25 show a positive picture for the local authority, with performance above national averages across the main headline measures. The average Attainment 8 score is 50.2, based on a cohort of 1,652 pupils. This represents an improvement of 1.4 points from the previous year and places the LA 4.2 points above the national average.

Attainment eight has now been above national levels for three consecutive years, and the LA’s relative position improved in 2024/25, moving to the 28th percentile nationally.

Performance in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) also continues to strengthen. The LA achieved an EBacc Average Point Score (APS) of 4.64, an increase on the previous year and 0.55 points above the national average. Just over 53% of pupils were entered for the EBacc, with nearly three in ten pupils achieving a grade 5 or above across the full EBacc suite. The LA’s relative standing improved significantly, rising to the 18th percentile nationally, reflecting stronger academic attainment across EBacc subjects.

Outcomes in English and Maths remain a particular strength. In 2024/25, 51.3% of pupils achieved grade 5 or above in both English and Maths, an increase on last year and 5.9 percentage points higher than the national average. This equates to almost one hundred more pupils achieving the expected standard compared with national performance. The LA is ranked in the top quarter nationally on this measure. Achievement of grade 4 or above in both subjects stands at 66.4%, remaining above national levels, although this measure showed a slight decline from the previous year in line with national trends.

As Progress 8 is not available for this academic year, these headline measures provide the main indicators of KS4 performance.

Vulnerable Groups

Key Stage 4 outcomes for vulnerable groups in Reading continue to show significant and persistent attainment gaps, despite some improvement in average scores.

Overall performance at KS4 masks substantial differences between pupil groups, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

While incremental improvements are evident in some measures, these have not yet resulted in consistent improvements in key qualifications for the most vulnerable learners.

Disadvantaged pupils continue to achieve markedly lower outcomes across all KS4 measures when compared with non-disadvantaged peers. Although Attainment 8 and EBacc scores for disadvantaged pupils have improved slightly year-on-year, this progress has not translated into stronger outcomes in English and Maths, where fewer than a quarter of disadvantaged pupils achieve grade 5 or above, and fewer than two-fifths achieve grade 4 or above.

This indicates that gains in overall point scores are often being achieved through performance outside the core subjects most critical for post-sixteen progression.

Within this group, the data shows that disadvantaged pupils without SEND perform noticeably better than disadvantaged pupils with additional needs, achieving higher Attainment 8 and English and Maths outcomes than the disadvantaged cohort as a whole. However, despite this relative strength, their attainment remains significantly below non-disadvantaged pupils, particularly at the higher English and Maths threshold.

This demonstrates that economic disadvantage alone continues to be a strong barrier to achievement, even where pupils do not have identified additional needs. The pattern suggests the cumulative impact of weaker early literacy and numeracy foundations, attendance challenges, and reduced access to academic support across KS2 and KS3, rather than SEND as the sole driver of underachievement.

Outcomes for pupils with SEN Support are broadly in line with national SEN Support averages but show declining trends locally, particularly in Attainment 8 and English and Maths results. Proportions achieving both grade 5+ and grade 4+ in English and Maths have fallen compared with the previous year, indicating that pupils with moderate additional needs are not yet being consistently supported to sustain or accelerate progress through KS4.

Pupils with EHCPs have the lowest outcomes across all KS4 measures, with low Attainment 8 scores and only a small minority achieving passes in either English or Maths. Outcomes for this group have declined further this year, reflecting the complexity of need within the cohort. These results highlight the limitations of headline GCSE measures in capturing meaningful progress for pupils with EHCPs and underline the importance of personalised pathways and broader success measures for this group.

In contrast, non-disadvantaged pupils and pupils with no recorded SEND perform strongly across all KS4 measures, with Attainment 8 scores, EBacc APS, and English and Maths outcomes well above national averages. This confirms that Reading's secondary schools are enabling important levels of academic success for pupils without significant barriers to learning. However, the scale of the gap between these pupils and their disadvantaged or SEND peers remains the most significant issue in the data.



Overall, the evidence shows that KS4 outcomes improvement has not been experienced evenly across pupil groups. While average attainment continues to rise, especially for pupils without disadvantage or SEND, vulnerable learners—particularly disadvantaged pupils, including those without SEND—remain far less likely to secure the core qualifications needed for strong post-sixteen progression. T

his reinforces the need for earlier and more sustained intervention to ensure children secure foundational knowledge in KS3 if this has not been achieved in previous phases, this will require stronger transition and curriculum alignment between KS2 and KS3, and targeted academic and pastoral support throughout KS3 if long-standing attainment gaps at KS4 are to be reduced meaningfully.

Ethnic Group Performance

Table showing the proportion of children achieving expected standard in RWM at KS2 Reading 2022-2025 (3-year average) by pupil group. Source Power BI. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places. Cohort size should be considered in interpreting variance between groups

Ethnicity	Average Overall Progress8 Score	Average Overall Attainment8 Score	% GCSE Basics Achieved 5+	% GCSE Basics Achieved 4+	Overall Att8 Trend Indicator	Overall Basic5+ Trend Indicator	Overall Basic4+ Trend Indicator
Indian	1.07	73	86.5%	92.8%	↓	↓	↓
Chinese	1.17	72	82.4%	90.1%	↑	↑	↑
White and Asian	0.39	61	73.9%	82.9%	↑	↑	↑
Any Other Asian Background	0.55	56	64.3%	80.8%	↑	↑	↑
White - Irish	-0.18	53	53.8%	69.2%	↑	↑	↑
Any Other Ethnic Group	0.53	50	46.5%	64.6%	↑	↓	↑
Any Other White Background	0.37	49	44.3%	66.6%	↑	↑	↑
Bangladeshi	0.10	48	52.5%	67.5%	↓	↓	↓
Pakistani	0.03	45	43.9%	62.3%	↓	↓	↑
Any Other Mixed Background	-0.25	44	41.7%	59.3%	↑	↑	↑
Black - African	0.12	44	38.4%	56.9%	↑	↓	↓
White - British	-0.43	44	42.6%	58.8%	↓	↑	↑
Refused	-0.51	43	40.0%	63.6%	↑	↑	↓
White and Black African	-0.23	41	35.2%	46.5%	↑	↑	↑
Any Other Black Background	-0.02	40	36.8%	56.6%	↓	↓	↓
Irish Traveller	-1.13	39		100.0%	↓	↔	↓
Information Not Yet Obtained	-0.54	38	35.6%	49.2%	↓	↓	↑
White and Black Caribbean	-0.75	33	29.1%	41.7%	↓	↓	↓
Black Caribbean	-1.07	33	15.1%	41.5%	↑	↑	↑
Gypsy/ Roma		25			↑	↔	↔

KS4 outcomes show marked differences in attainment and progress between ethnic groups. The highest performing groups are consistently those of Asian heritage, with Chinese and Indian pupils achieving the strongest outcomes across both attainment and progress measures. Chinese pupils record the highest Progress 8 score (1.17) alongside high attainment (Attainment 8 score of 72), with improving trends across all indicators. Similarly, Indian pupils achieve the highest attainment (73) and very strong basics measures (86.5% achieving grade 5+, 92.8% grade 4+), although recent trends indicate some decline. Other Asian groups and White and Asian pupils also perform securely above average, with positive progress scores and improving trends, indicating strong and improving outcomes for these cohorts.

In contrast, outcomes are weaker for a number of White British, Black and dual heritage groups. White British pupils, the largest cohort, record negative progress (-0.43) despite modest improvements in basics measures, suggesting underperformance relative to prior attainment. More pronounced gaps are evident for Black Caribbean (-1.07) and White and Black Caribbean (-0.75) pupils, who have both low attainment (Attainment 8 scores of 33) and low proportions achieving grade 5+ in English and maths (15.1% and 29.1% respectively), despite some recent improvement in trend indicators.

Other groups, including pupils with unknown ethnicity and some dual and Black backgrounds, also perform below average across key measures. While some of these groups show signs of improvement, the overall picture indicates persistent disparities in outcomes

Relative differences in cohort size may impact average outcomes.

Key Stage 4 outcomes across secondary schools in the local authority show substantial variation in performance, reflecting significant differences in pupil intake and context.

When measured against national benchmarks using Attainment 8 and GCSE English and Maths outcomes, around half of schools perform at or above national averages for all pupils, while the remaining schools fall below national benchmarks.

A small number of schools achieve very strong outcomes, significantly exceeding national averages across Attainment 8 and GCSE English and Maths. These schools tend to be selective or serve relatively privileged cohorts in contrast, a group of schools sit well below national averages, often across multiple measures. These schools frequently serve cohorts with high levels of disadvantage, SEND, EHCPs, pupil mobility and attendance challenge, which has a pronounced impact on headline attainment figures. Some of these schools have had historic performance issues and are improving year-on-year.

When outcomes are considered by pupil group, the school-level picture becomes clearer. In a majority of schools, attainment for non-SEND and non-disadvantaged pupils is secure and often above national benchmarks, even where whole-school performance is below average. This strongly suggests that in many settings, core teaching and curriculum provision are effective, but overall outcomes are being depressed by the concentration of vulnerable pupils within the cohort.

Only a small number of schools show weak outcomes for all pupils and non-SEND pupils, indicating that for these schools, underperformance cannot be explained by cohort complexity alone and may point to deeper challenges in curriculum implementation, teaching quality, or leadership capacity.

Analysis of GCSE English and Maths threshold measures reinforces this pattern. While approximately two-thirds of schools achieve grade 4+ outcomes close to or above national levels, far fewer reach national benchmarks for grade 5+, particularly in schools with higher levels of disadvantage and SEND. Disadvantaged pupils without SEND also underperform in many schools, confirming that economic disadvantage alone remains a significant barrier to securing higher-grade outcomes, even where SEND is not present. This limits progression opportunities for these pupils and contributes to wider attainment gaps.

Attendance

Attendance across Reading's secondary schools shows considerable variation, with schools distributed across above-average, average, and below-average attendance bandings when compared with national figures. Only a small number of schools sit consistently above national attendance benchmarks, while several fall below, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. This uneven pattern mirrors the broader variation seen in attainment and cohort complexity across the secondary system.

There is limited evidence of sustained improvement in attendance overall. While a few schools show improving trends relative to national figures, particularly for SEND attendance, the majority either show declining trends or remain static. Attendance for FSM pupils is weaker in most schools, with very few achieving above-average bandings, suggesting that economic disadvantage continues to be a major driver of absence. Schools should consider how well disadvantaged children feel they belong and are successful in their school community and how KS3 pastoral provision is securing attendance from the start of Yr 7.

Persistent absence remains a significant challenge in several schools, with a number performing above national levels for persistent absence, indicating worse outcomes for regular attendance and engagement.

The Year 11 attendance data shown in each school IDSR (percentage of pupils attending more than 90% of sessions) highlights further disparity. While some schools achieve strong levels of regular attendance in this important assessment year (around the mid-to-high 80% range), others fall considerably lower. Schools with lower proportions of pupils attending regularly are disproportionately those with higher levels of disadvantage, SEND and pupil instability, reinforcing the link between attendance and wider contextual factors.

When considered alongside achievement data, the relationship between attendance and outcomes is clear. Schools with stronger attendance profiles tend to be those achieving higher GCSE outcomes, particularly in English and Maths. Conversely, schools with weaker attendance and higher persistent absence consistently show lower KS4 attainment, especially for vulnerable pupils. Earlier analysis demonstrated a moderate positive correlation between attendance and KS4 RWM outcomes, confirming that attendance is a meaningful predictor of school performance.

Research is clear that children with foundational learning gaps have weaker attendance, poorer mental health and are more likely to be subject to suspension, suggesting they are less happy at school than their peers. Ensuring gaps are identified and addressed as early as possible remains a priority if more children are to thrive in secondary school.

Overall, the attendance data reinforces the need for contextual interpretation of school outcomes. While improving attendance remains a key priority for raising attainment, particularly in English and Maths, the evidence suggests that schools serving the most complex cohorts require additional, sustained support rather than simple comparison with national benchmarks.

Strengthening attendance strategies, alongside targeted academic and pastoral support for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, will be essential if attainment gaps across Reading secondary schools are to narrow meaningfully.

A Level

A-level outcomes across Reading in 2025 show a highly variable pattern, with performance linked to student intake, prior attainment, and the scale of sixth-form provision. Overall performance for Reading broadly aligns with national averages, but this masks significant internal variation between providers.

At the top end, a small number of sixth forms achieve remarkably high attainment and retention, with average grades above national benchmarks, exceptionally strong completion rates, and a high proportion of students achieving AAB or higher including two facilitating subjects. These outcomes reflect academically selective or lower-complexity cohorts.

In contrast, several providers show average to below-average progress scores, lower average grades and much smaller proportions of students achieving higher-grade outcomes.

Despite this, retention across most settings remains relatively high, indicating that students are largely sustained through their programmes even where attainment is weaker.

Taken together, the data indicates that strong A-level performance in Reading is concentrated in a small number of provisionally advantaged settings, while other sixth forms face ongoing challenges in improving attainment and progress for more diverse and vulnerable cohorts.

This reinforces wider findings that post-16 outcomes are strongly shaped by prior attainment and access to academic pathways at KS4, rather than sixth-form quality alone, and highlights the importance of early intervention, inclusive curriculum planning and targeted transition support if A-level success is to be widened across the system


Post sixteen pathways and destinations.

Analysis of post-16 pathways in Reading shows a consistent pattern across secondary schools: students with identified vulnerabilities, particularly those who are disadvantaged or have SEND, are significantly more likely to leave school-based sixth forms at the end of Year 11 and continue their education in Further Education (FE).

In every school reviewed, the proportion of FSM and SEND pupils was higher among those who left than among those who stayed into Year 12, with all Year 11 leavers having at least one special characteristic.

School-based sixth forms continue to provide strong academic A-level pathways, particularly for students progressing to higher education. However, these offers remain less accessible to lower-attaining and more vulnerable pupils, especially where GCSE English and maths outcomes do not meet entry criteria.

As a result, FE colleges—particularly Reading College—carry a disproportionately high share of disadvantaged and SEND learners, many requiring English and maths retakes or more applied pathways. Capacity pressures in FE and feedback from employers underline the need for better alignment between curriculum, skills development, and future employment.



Local heads highlight structural barriers to widening school-based post-sixteen provision, including staffing capacity, funding constraints, limited facilities for vocational courses, and variable student take-up. While schools offer some Level 2 retake opportunities, these are often tied to academic pathways, limiting options for students who would benefit from more applied or technical routes. Careers guidance is a critical issue, with sixth form leaders highlighting the need for earlier, more targeted support for FSM and SEND pupils, including clearer understanding of apprenticeships and alternative pathways.

These findings highlight the importance of early preparation for adulthood (PfA) for pupils with SEND, beginning in early KS2 and strengthened through KS3 and KS4, rather than being deferred until post-sixteen transition. Embedding PfA principles early—such as independence, communication, self-advocacy and understanding of future pathways—supports engagement, attendance, and resilience, particularly during KS3 where disengagement often emerges for vulnerable learners. Strong early PfA enables more realistic and aspirational pathway planning, smoother transitions post-sixteen and reduces the likelihood that SEND pupils leave school-based provision without adequate preparation.

Overall, the post-sixteen analysis reinforces that outcomes at age 16 and beyond are shaped well before Year 11. Improving post-sixteen participation and progression for vulnerable learners depends on earlier intervention, secure academic foundations, sustained careers education, and a coherent approach to preparation for adulthood.

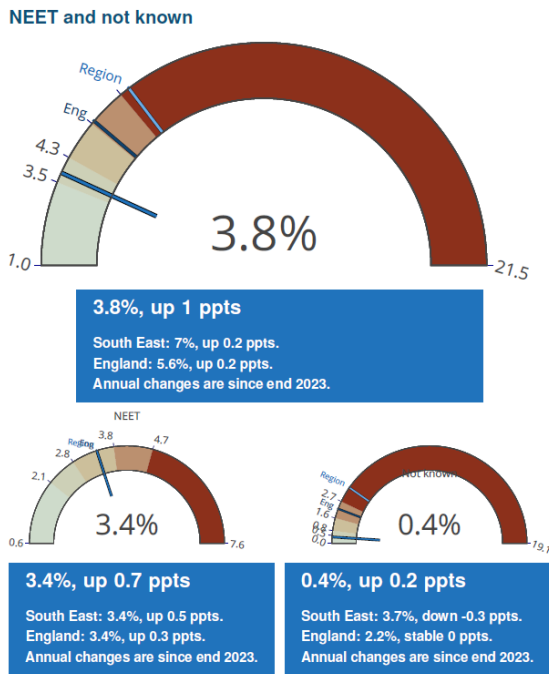
Schools and providers have made significant forward strides in developing partnership working, increasing Post 16 provision, and reducing competition between providers. Further strengthening of collaboration between secondary schools, FE providers, employers, and the local authority—aligned with the Reading Education Strategy—will be essential to widening pathways and improving long-term outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.



Graphic showing NEET figures in Reading compared to national and regional statistics 2024-2025.

Source DfE 1

. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.



The comparator scorecard shows that Reading’s overall participation in education and training post-sixteen remains broadly in line with national and regional benchmarks, although there has been a slight recent decline.

As of the most recent reporting point, 91.5% of young people in Reading are participating in education or training, which is comparable with the Southeast and England averages. This indicates that most young people continue into post-sixteen destinations, but the small downward trend suggests growing pressure on transition and retention, particularly for vulnerable groups.

The proportion of young people who are NEET or whose destination is not known stands at 3.8% in Reading, which is below the national rate (5.6%) but higher than some local comparators.

While this places Reading in a strong position overall, the data shows that NEET levels have increased since the previous year, mirroring national trends. This suggests that post-pandemic recovery remains uneven, and that additional targeted support is needed to prevent further increases in disengagement.

Analysis shows that vulnerability is a significant predictor of NEET status. Young people identified within vulnerable groups—including those with SEND, EHCPs, mental health needs, care experience, or alternative provision histories—are far more likely to be NEET or not known than their peers.

In Reading, over a quarter of young people from vulnerable groups fall into the NEET/not known category, which is higher than both the South-East and national averages. The data reinforces that post-sixteen disengagement is not evenly experienced, and that SEND and additional vulnerabilities significantly increase the risk of not sustaining education or training beyond age16.

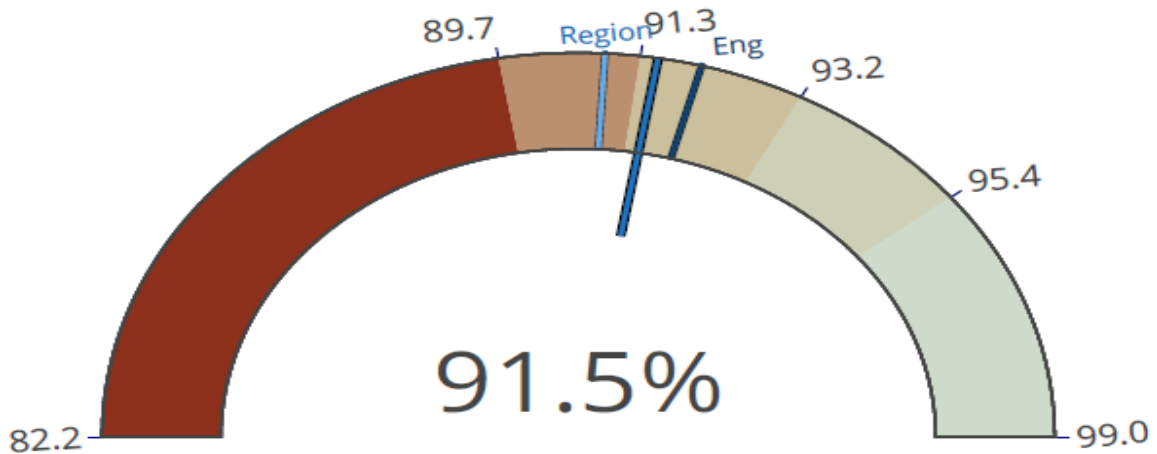


Young people with SEND, especially those with EHCPs or SEN Support, show elevated NEET rates compared with pupils without SEND. SEND learners are more likely to leave school-based provision at the end of Year 11 and require alternative pathways because they do not meet entry criteria for post sixteen courses.

Graphic showing participation figures in Reading compared to national and regional statistics 2024-2025. Source DfE. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

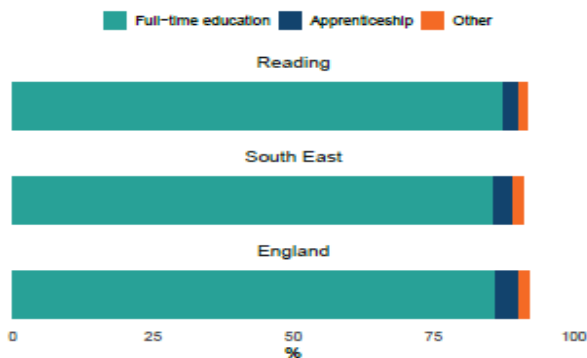
Participation

Participating in education and training



91.5%, down -0.1 ppts
 South East: 90.9%, down -0.2 ppts.
 England: 92%, down -0.1 ppts.
 Annual changes are since March 2024.

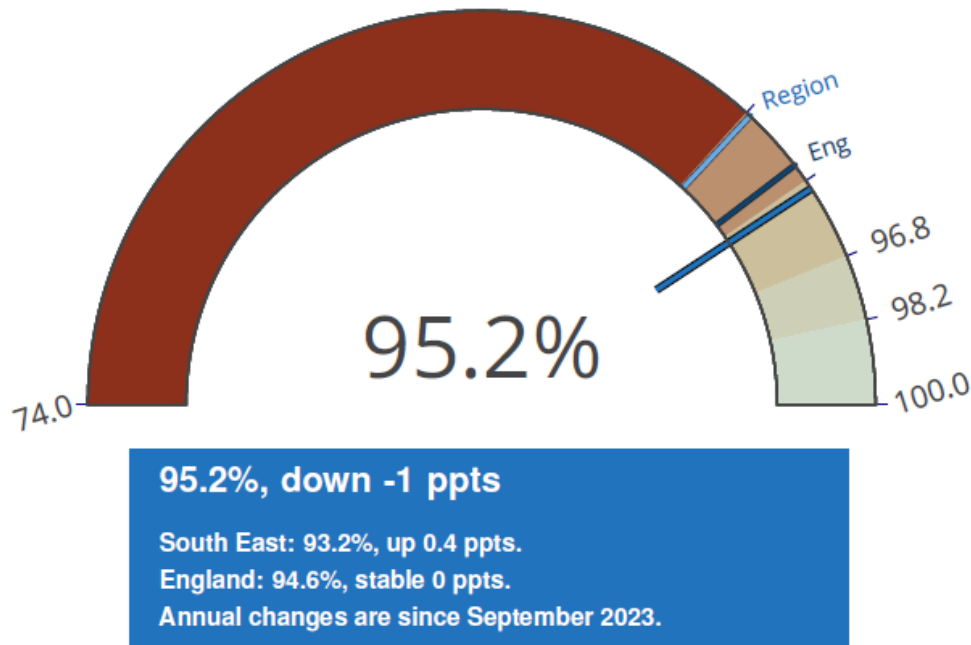
Type of education and training





Graphic showing the proportion of young people offered an education place in September of year 12 in Reading compared to national and regional statistics 2024-2025. Source DfE. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

September Guarantee: % offered an education place



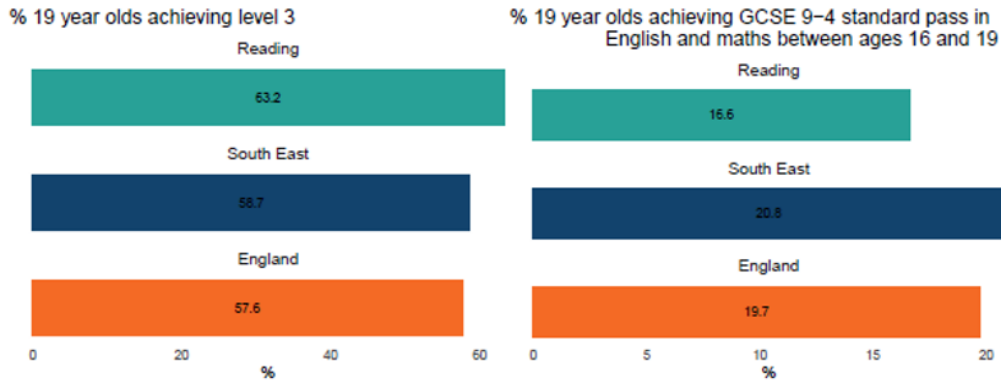
Reading performs strongly on the September Guarantee, with over 95% of young people offered a suitable post-16 education place. This is above the Southeast average and comparable to national performance, indicating that systems for securing an initial offer are effective. However, the gap between being offered a place and sustaining participation over time is evident when viewed alongside NEET figures, suggesting that retention rather than access is the key challenge.

This pattern reflects findings from post-sixteen analysis showing that many vulnerable young people do enter post-sixteen provision, particularly FE, but struggle to maintain engagement once there. The data therefore points to the importance of early identification, transition planning and ongoing pastoral and academic support, rather than focusing solely on initial destinations.



Graphic showing level 3 and level 2 attainment by the age of nineteen in Reading compared to national and regional statistics 2024-2025. Source DfE. There may be a slight difference to published outcomes due to rounding of Decimal Places.

Post 16 attainment



The contextual charts show that though Reading does well for young people who are on level 3 pathways, achievement for those that still need to secure English and Maths at level 2 is lower than both the Southeast and England averages.

Overall, the charts suggest that Reading's post-sixteen system performs well at a headline level, but that outcomes are far less positive for vulnerable young people, particularly those with SEND and additional needs. While most young people access post-sixteen provision and are offered places, sustained participation and outcomes remains a challenge for a significant minority.

The data reinforces earlier conclusions from Key Stage 4 (KS4) and post-sixteen analysis: improving post-sixteen outcomes depends on earlier intervention, including secure literacy and numeracy foundations, strong attendance, inclusive curriculum planning, and early preparation for adulthood, particularly for SEND learners.

There is also a need to ensure that Reading schools and Further Education Providers continue to work together to provide sufficiency across Without addressing these factors from Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage 3 (KS3) onwards, post-sixteen participation rates risk masking deeper inequalities in progression, retention, and long-term outcomes.

School effectiveness activity 2024-2025

- School Governing Boards, Trustees, and their Executive Leaders are accountable for the standards and achievement in their schools as outlined by the Department for Education.
- The roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority are to:
 - ✓ Act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who: are looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences institutional and societal discrimination, have a social worker, are a survivor of trauma and or have physical or mental health needs.



- ✓ Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress.
- ✓ Be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.
- ✓ Identify schools causing concern and to rapidly intervene where a school is at risk of decline or failing standards, working closely with the DfE regional director, diocese, and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve.
- ✓ Encourage maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools and enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.
- ✓ Exercise relevant powers to intervene in locally maintained schools causing concern and to work with the regional director where there are concerns about school effectiveness in academy schools and settings.
- The Strategic Framework for School Effectiveness sets out how Reading Borough Council discharges its duties, primarily through the School Effectiveness service. Work to influence the local system is based on research informed consistent approaches to inclusion that support schools to effectively implement research-based approaches in their schools.
- The framework recognises that school leaders have the expertise and experience to support school improvement, and that collaborative school-led partnerships are a key feature of local education provision with improvement being driven by local schools. Where the Local Authority needs to intervene in schools to bring about rapid improvement, it commissions and brokers school-to-school and Trust support wherever this is possible.
- Targeted support and school effectiveness projects are provided to support improvement in outcomes identified by data and through School Effectiveness activities across the academic year.
- Collaboration is ongoing between Reading Borough Council officers, schools, Trusts and Mobius Maths Hub to support school improvement.
- The School Effectiveness team collaborate with RISE and the EPS to ensure consistent approaches are implemented in schools and that advisory work is consistent, quality assured and focused on the key priorities for school improvement.
- School to school, and agency support has been brokered for schools causing concern to secure improvements identified by School leaders and School Effectiveness leads. This has been successful in achieving progress and in securing positive judgements in Ofsted inspections.
- The team also completed headteacher performance management for thirty schools and provided training for headteachers, subject leads, individual school staff teams, behaviour



leads, safeguarding leads, school business managers, and governors. Safeguarding audits take place in all Locally maintained schools annually.