

Section A		
Institution: Durham University		
Unit of Assessment: 23 Education		
Title of case study: Defending and improving schooling for disadvantaged pupils		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: April 2013 to December 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Stephen Gorard Nadia Siddiqui Beng Huat See	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Education Associate Professor, Education Associate Professor, Education	Period employed by submitting HEI: April 2013 onwards September 2013 onwards September 2013 onwards
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Between August 2013 and December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
Section B		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Our work on understanding/overcoming educational disadvantage has made a difference to assessing disadvantaged school intakes, and attainment, for policy-makers, pressure groups, schools and individuals. Our work is a key go-to source for politicians/organisations debating policies on educational disadvantage. This widespread engagement has then been a factor in policy and practice decisions. We have helped individuals and schools defend themselves, creating a fairer education system. Policy-makers have halted plans for Forced Academisation, plans for widespread grammar school expansion have not materialised, and the Social Mobility Commission and others have defended schools and pupils in the North East, all in line with our findings addressing the education of disadvantaged pupils. Over 1,400 UK schools now use and cite our research directly in helping them decide how best to address the disadvantage gap.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Our work on educational disadvantage has been widely taken up by governments, practitioner bodies, and school stakeholders, and our evidence has been deployed by schools to help reduce the poverty attainment gap. We are concerned with the secure identification of the most disadvantaged students in schools in England, how targeted funding is best spent by schools on improvements for these disadvantaged students in the Pupil Premium era, and how these issues are linked with concurrent policies on school diversification, and regional differences in attainment. We look at where disadvantaged students are being educated, and how best to improve their education, qualifications and subsequent participation. This led us to re-consider policy claims that disadvantaged students were doing especially well/badly in some areas or types of schools.</p> <p>We monitored between-school segregation over time [R2, Section B3], and looked at the impact of new kinds of schools, like Academies. The 2010 Coalition government moved to increase the number of academies in England, perhaps making all schools into academies. Using national school data, we showed that academies were linked to higher social segregation of pupils between schools, with no clear gain in attainment [R1]. We looked at the planned expansion of older school types like selective grammars [R4]. In the 2017 UK election, there were manifesto proposals from the Conservative Party to expand the number of places at grammar schools, and the number of such schools, in England. In 2017, we published an early view open access article based on re-analysis of the National Pupil Database, showing no clear benefits from a grammar school system [R4], which had immediate wide readership <u>beyond academia with 21,942 downloads</u>, the most read piece in all 40 years of the British Journal of Sociology of Education. The results were immediately taken up by a variety of relevant stakeholders to argue against expansion. We re-examined regional disparities such as the purported underachievement of schools in North East England [R5]. We developed more targeted ways of assessing disadvantage using the idea of a ‘trajectory’ of individual indicators evidenced from administrative data, considering how long each pupil has been labelled as disadvantaged, at any point in their school career [R6]. This has helped stakeholders to defend the performance of schools and teachers in the North, and to petition for greater resources to deal with the higher proportion of long-term disadvantage there. These improved measures have shown that the relative ‘failure’ of schools in the NE is an illusion, and that increasing diversity of and selection to schools has no clear benefit. It is dangerous for social equality. The work has promoted better understanding of all these issues, and so defends the schooling of disadvantaged students, and identifies improvements to help make better policy for the future.</p>		

Using randomised trials, we evaluated school interventions intended to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners [R3]. Of these several have been listed by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and others as “promising”, including Accelerated Reader, Switch-On Reading, Philosophy for Children, and Children’s University. Over 1,000 UK schools are now using these interventions and citing our evaluations on their websites as their reason for spending Catch-up/Pupil Premium funding on the chosen interventions, and are reporting successes for disadvantaged pupils.

3. References to the research

All outputs are gold open access and/or listed in REF2. R1,2,4,6 are published in respected journals with rigorous peer review processes.

R1. Gorard, S. (2014). The link between Academies in England, pupil outcomes and local patterns of socio-economic segregation between schools. *Research Papers in Education*, 29(3), 268-284. DOI: [10.1080/02671522.2014.885726](https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2014.885726) [Downloaded 3,858 times]

R2. Gorard, S. (2016). The complex determinants of school intake characteristics, England 1989 to 2014. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 46(1), 131-146 DOI: [10.1080/0305764X.2015.1045446](https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2015.1045446) [On-line June 2015]

R3. Gorard, S., See, BH., & Siddiqui, N. (2017). *The trials of evidence-based education*. London: Routledge [Summary of EEF reports dating back to 2014]. Hard copy available. ISSN/ISBN: [9781138209664](https://doi.org/9781138209664) (paperback), [9781138209657](https://doi.org/9781138209657) (hardback)

R4. Gorard, S., & Siddiqui, N. (2018). Grammar schools in England: a new analysis of social segregation and academic outcomes. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 39(7), 909-924 [Downloaded 21,943 times] DOI: [10.1080/01425692.2018.1443432](https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2018.1443432)

R5. Gorard, S. (2018). *Education policy: Evidence of equity and effectiveness*. Bristol: Policy Press. Hard copy available ISSN/ISBN: [9781447342144](https://doi.org/9781447342144) (hardback), [9781447342151](https://doi.org/9781447342151) (paperback), [9781447342182](https://doi.org/9781447342182) (e-book)

R6. Gorard, S., & Siddiqui, N. (2019). How trajectories of disadvantage help explain school attainment. *SAGE Open*, DOI: [10.1177/2158244018825171](https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018825171) [On-line December 2018] [Downloaded 6,069 times]

4. Details of the impact

Our model of ‘trajectories’ of disadvantage [R6] is used to consider the allocation and impact of the Pupil Premium [R5], the context for school performance measures [R1, R4], regional disparities in education, and measuring segregation [R2]. It has been widely taken up and espoused by governments [R5], practitioner bodies, and school stakeholders. Our findings have been linked to specific policy issues such as the withdrawal of a Bill to force all schools in England to become Academies, and affected public policy discourse on disadvantage in schools, including in relation to the expansion of grammar schools, and the North:South divide in education. Our research on reducing the poverty attainment gap [R3] has directly influenced the work of many schools and education providers in England. All of this impact is intended to promote better policy, funding and practice decisions that will reduce the impact of educational disadvantage.

Defending disadvantaged schools against forced Academisation: The proposed ‘Forced Conversion of Schools to Academies’ was opposed by an NUT newsletter to all 330,000+ members, and picked up by activists across England, saying “ Academies are creating greater segregation between pupils from rich and poor homes than community schools, according to research, led by Professor Stephen Gorard from the University of Durham” [E1.1]. R1 was reported in EDUFACTS (2014) “Analysis by Professor Stephen Gorard found no clear evidence that academies outperformed the schools which they replaced or similar local authority schools with equivalent intakes. He also found no evidence of any benefit for schools which are already performing well converting to academies” [E1.2]. A TUC briefing cited R2 saying “Gorard and his collaborators are amongst the foremost researchers of school segregation. They have used a national pupil database with data from 1989 onwards covering all state-funded primary and secondary schools in England... There was an even greater link between higher segregation and a higher proportion of converter academies” [E1.3]. These widely-read union briefings also led to greater awareness of our evidence among Parliamentarians.

This was illustrated in the Education and Adoption Bill 8th Sitting. For example, Kevin Brennan MP, the Shadow Minister for Education said, “Professor Stephen Gorard of Durham University pointed out in his written evidence that we should be very careful about that fragmentation and ensure it does not cause socioeconomic divides and issues around special needs, which we spoke about

earlier. On that basis, I ask my hon. Friends to join me in opposing clause 7 [forced academisation] stand part” [E1.4]. This debate cites evidence submitted by us based on R1 [E1.5], and Brennan again referred to this evidence when discussing coasting schools, in Clause 1 of the Education and Adoption Bill 9th Sitting [E1.5]. Following pressure from opposition and activists like the TUC and NUT who all quoted our work as the underpinning evidence, the government reversed the announcement that all schools in England would become academies.

Our evidence was used in more direct local campaigning against forced Academisation, such as opposition to the Sedgehill and Prendergast Academy 2015 plans: “Converter Academies, on average, take far less than their fair share of disadvantaged pupils. They aren’t helping increase social justice in education... [according to] Professor Gorard, listed in Governors’ own report” [E1.6]. The Socialist Party (formerly Militant) picked up this campaign, using the same evidence in ‘Save our schools’ [E1.7]. Sedgehill and Prendergast have not been forced to become Academies.

Defending the integration of disadvantaged pupils against grammar school expansion: In the build-up to the 2017 election, grammar school expansion was opposed by political and pressure groups, such as Liberal Democrat Voice and Left Futures, using our evidence R4 and R6 [E2.1-2.2]. Our work forms a substantial part of two Full Fact reports on the evidence surrounding grammar schools/social mobility [E2.3-2.4], in the Houses of Parliament POST Note for MPs/Lords on ‘Academic Evidence on Selective Secondary Education’ [E2.5], and is the basis for opposition to grammar schools by the pressure group Comprehensive Future, based on R2 and R4 [E2.6]. The Labour Party Manifesto for the 2017 General Election had a supporting document ‘Ending Selection by wealth, ability and aptitude. “Take for example, the very thorough recent study of 500,000 children by Gorard and Siddiqui from the University of Durham that shows that when adjusted for background and prior attainment, grammar school pupils achieve near identical results to similar pupils in comprehensive schools. Supporters of selection have argued that disadvantaged children do better in selective than non-selective schools but Gorard and Siddiqui show this is simply not the case” [E2.7].

The same research was referenced several times in Parliament in both houses. In a debate on ‘Social Mobility and Economy’, Lynn Brown MP Shadow Minister Treasury said “Many of us will have seen the new research from Durham University confirming that grammar school pupils do better because they are more likely to have social advantages, not because selective education is superior...” [E2.8]. The same study was referred to by Lord Storey, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson on Education, in a debate on ‘Schools that Work for Everyone’, when he answered, “Why are we opposed to grammar schools?” [E2.9].

Commenting on a Radio 4 Tonight (2018) broadcast, the Local Schools Network said “Plainly, as this research by Stephen Gorard establishes, the idea that selective grammar schools or academies are more likely to improve pupil progress overall than community comprehensives, is demolished” [E2.10]. Education Politics reported the 2018 Caroline Benn Memorial Lecture in the House of Commons “was delivered by Professor Stephen Gorard from Durham University. The lecture was a masterclass in showing how a rigorous analysis of data can challenge the ill-informed assumptions of many policy makers. A central claim was that data relating to poverty has been consistently misunderstood and that this has led policy makers to draw radically wrong conclusions... Pupil Premium allocations and much of the analysis of disadvantage that follows from it miss the essential difference between brief periods of low income and chronic, endemic levels of poverty found in some areas. This means of course that we are distributing funding in a way that doesn’t properly match needs” [E2.11]. The messages from our research have clearly been heard and taken on board by many of those concerned. The 2017 election did not produce an outright majority for the Conservatives, the chief adviser to the PM changed immediately after the election, and in 2019 the PM herself resigned. The grammar school policy is currently in abeyance.

Our work was used more directly at local levels. The Kent Education Network opposed plans for a new satellite grammar school. “Having viewed proposals by Queen Elizabeth Grammar School and the Barton Court Academy Trust I, on behalf of the Governors of The Whitstable School, would like to express unequivocal objection to what those plans appear to envisage... the notion that grammar schools promote social mobility is routinely claimed. That claim has been investigated most recently by Professor Stephen Gorard of the University of Durham. The Gorard study has received a lot of attention... with an irreproachably inclusive sample i.e. the entire national KS4 population

2014– 2016... There is absolutely *no empirical evidence* that grammar schools have made **any** positive impact on social mobility” [E2.12]. This new satellite school has not been agreed. Our study has been used as evidence by a parent arguing for the release of age 11+ data, in a Freedom of Information Administrative Appeals Tribunal [E2.13].

Refocussing attention away from purported school failure in the North:South divide [Evidence E3]

The image of failing schools in the NE does not stand up to robust scrutiny [R5, R6]. The National Governance Association referred to R6 in a report querying the official idea that schools in the North of England were failing their poorer pupils [E3.1]. A manifesto for a disadvantaged authority in the northeast reported in the *New Statesman*, ‘Searching for the Hartlepool Promise’ said “This isn’t a north-south divide, either, as some would have it. Professor Stephen Gorard of Durham University tracked the progress of 1.8 million pupils. He found no evidence that schools in the northeast were less effective. It is the socio-economic mix of a pupil body that dictates outcomes, not school effectiveness” [E3.2]. The Head of Policy at the Social Mobility Commission asked for our help on this when preparing its 2018 State of the Nation Report, which recommended that government consider whether “differential levels of funding might be more beneficial for those with long-term disadvantage”, as we had suggested [E3.3]. Sammy Wright, a Social Mobility Commissioner, wrote to us because our work came up in conversations with Opportunity North East and Schools North East, asking for help to “address the problems of social mobility with an awareness of the subtleties of the data” [E3.4]. This led to a roundtable to “explore likely solutions with the hope of establishing a set of medium-term social mobility principles [E3.5]. Following this, the press quoted Commissioner Sammy Wright as saying that “schools should receive more cash for pupils who have been on free school meals longer”, using our figures in R5 in support [E3.6].

In response to claims that children in disadvantaged parts of the North are 18 months behind their peers elsewhere, and the blame that this implied for schools and teachers, a Schools North East blog said “Durham University’s Professor Stephen Gorard, shows that once you account for the impact of long-term deprivation, the region’s secondaries perform as well as any in the country” [E3.7]. And responding to DfE funding figures “Despite the high levels of long-term disadvantage in our region, we will not be receiving adequate funding” [E3.8]. Our findings were used in the Schools North East election manifesto for NE education [E3.9-3.10]. In January 2020, Ofsted identified schools described as “stuck” and claimed that these were disproportionately in the northeast, particularly Darlington. Schools North East and others were able to use our re-analysis in R6 to show that these claims were false [E3.11]. A different kind of school improvement is needed.

We have been contacted by individuals/groups of schools, to discuss our research in their contexts. Sarah Holmes-Carne, Head of Kenton School wrote wanting us to “analyse how Kenton FSM6 do against National FSM6 in terms of progress... based on the number of years claiming”, in order to select appropriate strategies [E3.12]. We showed that pupils at Kenton were making equivalent progress to all pupils in England who had been Free School Meal (FSM)-eligible for the same duration. We helped Andy Finley, Headteacher of Park View School in Chester-le-Street [E3.13], and Amy Blackburn, Pupil Premium lead of Oxbridge Lane School in Stockton [E3.14], with talks to staff, advice and re-analyses of their data. These schools now target interventions at persistently disadvantaged pupils.

Reducing the attainment gap by improving school outcomes for disadvantaged pupils: The Teaching Schools Council used evidence based on our large systematic review of how to improve primary education, funded by the DfE, and also cited our EEF evaluation report on enhanced feedback [E4.1]. The DfE (2018) published guidance for schools on how to spend the catch-up funding for literacy/numeracy which references six of our evaluations in R3 [E4.2]. An EEF (2019) list of “promising projects” contains four of our evaluations [E4.3]. Both reports are widely cited by schools on their own websites. Across England, a further 1,409 schools have been found with a direct reference to our work on their websites, explaining that our evidence is why they have spent their catch-up/Pupil Premium funding on one of the programmes we evaluated in R3 – e.g. Accelerated Reader, Switch-On Reading, and Philosophy for Children – and suggesting that using this evidence has helped their pupils, especially the lowest attaining/most disadvantaged [E4.4].

For example, Hayle Academy website says, “according to an independent study by... Durham University, Accelerated Reader produces ‘particularly positive results’... I am pleased to say the

following students have... received their certificates for reading over a million words since September” [E4.5]. Prescott Primary School says “[Evidence] taken from the EEF evaluation report 2015... The Accelerate Reader programme has been met with a positive response from teachers and children alike... Children... can talk confidently about the books they have read” [E4.6]. Bellingham Middle School cited our EEF research in using Accelerated Reader, reporting a rise in Pupil Premium pupils reaching expected reading levels from 20% December 2018 to 80% March 2019 [E4.7]. Programme developers have also seen an impact. The national charity developing Philosophy for Children (P4C) in schools reported a huge increase in the number of schools applying for their training following publication of our evaluation in 2015. Bob House (CEO SAPERE) sent us a graph showing a trebling of school registrations for P4C, and a letter summarising an upturn in both national and international interest in training for P4C [E4.8]. He said “Durham University Evidence Centre for Education findings for the Education Endowment Foundation study into Philosophy for Children, published July 2015, had a substantial impact on the uptake of the programme”.

Based on our publications/presentations R1–R6, we wrote more than 40 articles for practice/professional magazines including New Scientist, Significance, and Research Fortnight. We were invited to present to policymakers, practitioners, and general public on over 70 occasions, including Labour Party Conference, ResearchEd, Demos, and regional head teacher conferences. Press coverage of our work includes at least 170 stories in all major newspapers including Guardian, Economist, Sun, Independent, TES, Observer, New Statesman, THE, i, Daily Mirror, Sunday Times, Financial Times, Telegraph, Daily Mail, Times, Evening Standard, and Metro. Almost every local newspaper in England covered our story about the impact of grammar schools. Stories about our research appeared on Sky, BBC and ITV national news, Sunday Politics, Victoria Derbyshire and Breakfast on BBC1, Radio 2, Radio 4, Five Live, and LBC, with the grammar school story being covered by most UK local radio stations [examples E2.11, E2.13, E3.11]. We were recognised in the 2018 BERA Impact and Engagement Awards. We provided oral evidence to the House of Commons Education Committee, which also published our further written evidence, as part of 8 other investigations. We provided oral evidence to the EU Commission, Royal Society of Edinburgh, and written evidence to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee, on the attainment of pupils experiencing poverty. We were invited by the Director General for Social Care, Mobility and Disadvantage at the DfE to discuss our findings on the North:South divide to all staff across England at ‘DfE Live’ (19 November 2019). We acted as academic adviser to the Cabinet Office from 2014. We took part in Evidence Week in Parliament 2019, speaking to 39 Parliamentarians including Shadow Minister for Education. On the basis of work described in this case study, all three authors accepted invitations to join the Cabinet Office “What Works Advice Panel” for civil servants as part of the Prime Minister’s Implementation Unit.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Evidence listed here numbered in the order described in Section 4, with full evidence appearing in each source document [E1–E4].

E1: Evidence on forced academisation: 1 NUT 2013; 2 EDUFACTS 2014; 3 TUC 2014; 4 Kevin Brennan MP Hansard 2015a; 5 Hansard 2015b; 6 Powell-Davies 2015; 7 The Socialist 2015.

E2: Evidence concerning grammar school expansion: 1 Liberal Democrat Voice 2016; 2 Left Futures 2017; 3 Full Fact 2016; 4 Full Fact 2017; 5 Parliamentary Business 2016; 6 Comprehensive Future 2018; 7 Policy Forum 2017; 8 Lyn Brown MP Hansard 2018a; 9 Lord Storey Hansard 2018b; 10 Radio 4 Tonight 2018; 11 Education Politics 2019; 12 The Kent Education Network 2019; 13 Media stories about evidence used by parents in FOI and Appeals.

E3: Evidence concerning North:South divide: 1 NGA 2018; 2 New Statesman 2018; 3 Erika Boak email; 4 Social Mobility Commission State of the Nation Report 2018/19; 5 Sammy Wright emails; 6 Speck 2019; 7 Schools North East 2019a; 8 Schools North East 2019b; 9 Schools North East 2019c; 10 Schools NE Manifesto; 11 Media stories about our evidence on “stuck” schools in NE. Headteacher emails – 12 Sarah Holmes-Carne; 13 Andy Finley; 14 Amy Blackburn.

E4: Evidence concerning schools’ use of our evaluation evidence: 1 Teaching Schools Council 2016; 2 DfE 2018; 3 EEF 2019; 4 Examples of schools using our Accelerated Reader evidence to improve outcomes, websites: 5 Hayle Academy, 6 Prescott School, 7 Bellingham Middle School, 8 Bob House email re P4C.