

The Educational Achievement of Ethnic Groups in Northamptonshire

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Introduction

It is of critical importance that we are able to identify any significant group differences in educational achievement in Northamptonshire. The reason for this is simple. As a society we are committed to the principle of equality of opportunity and Northamptonshire County Council, like other councils - whatever their political complexion - is concerned to enshrine this principle in its educational system. Any significant group differences in educational achievement suggest, *ceteris paribus*, that the educational system is not providing equality of opportunity and is not ensuring that 'every child matters'.

Before policy makers in the County can be assured, or otherwise, that the educational system is working effectively to ensure equality of opportunity, it is imperative that they have at their disposal robust data. Only then is it worth debating alternative measures to address any identified deficiencies.

Northamptonshire County Council routinely collects data on educational achievement and this can be interrogated to identify whether there are significant group differences in educational achievement. Each year, statistics are produced which point to significant ethnic differences in educational achievement, with Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi children in particular demonstrating considerable educational under-achievement. On the basis of such data, communities, schools and the County Council have mounted various initiatives. The question arises, however, as to whether these initiatives have made any difference.

What this research seeks to do is to look at the data on ethnic differences over time in order to identify both continuities and changes in the ethnic patterns. Two distinct approaches have been undertaken.

Firstly trends over the period 2003-2006 in educational achievement by ethnicity have been identified by comparing the results over these three years of distinct cohorts. A number of comparators are used to enable an assessment of whether there are any differences between the patterns at the level of the nation and at the level of the County, and within the County whether there are any differences between Northampton and Wellingborough. In addition, group differences by gender and entitlement to free school meals (FSM) have been identified to enable comparison to be made between ethnic patterns and others, notably gender and social class (as measured by FSM).

A second approach has entailed tracking the educational achievement of the 2006 Key stage 4 cohort. We have identified how this cohort did at KS4 in 2006 and been able to identify how the same individuals did earlier at KS3 in 2004 and KS2 in 2001. On this basis it is possible to identify which groups have been making better progress relative to others.

Before examining the data for Northamptonshire, I have drawn upon a wealth of research to provide an account of the national picture and thus contextualise the position in Northamptonshire. Why has the issue of group differences in educational

achievement been seen as important? What does the plethora of research on ethnic differences in achievement tell us?

Having outlined what the national data tell us about ethnic differences in educational achievement, I turn to the situation in Northamptonshire and present the broad picture through a series of bullet points. I am grateful to Rebecca Brinkworth at the County Council for doing the number crunching and being responsive to my requests for further information. I remain of course responsible for the interpretation of the data below. The picture at the local level mirrors in many ways the picture at the national level, though there are subtle differences. To bring out the similarities and differences, I expressly compare the position nationally and the position locally. I also compare the position over time, albeit over a limited time period, to gauge whether any progress is evident.

My focus of attention is on those ethnic groups which previous research has indicated tend to underachieve, notably Black, especially Black Caribbean, and Bangladeshi pupils. These have been the focus of attention by the LA and I am grateful to Lynda Green and Morcea Walker for sharing with me information about the initiatives mounted locally to address the persistent underachievement of these groups. Other groups which the LA has also prioritised such as new arrivals with EAL and Gypsy/Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage are not the focus of attention here since the statistical data frequently does not expressly identify them and when it does, the numbers are too small to enable meaningful comparisons to be made.

The problem of small numbers unfortunately recurs. I would have liked to compare ethnic differences after controlling for social class and gender, but the size of the sample meant that the results would not have been statistically significant. The data which I received and draw upon below therefore presents class, ethnic and gender difference separately. It should be pointed out generally that the smaller the level examined, the less statistically significant are the results. Comparisons of the situation in Northampton and Wellingborough are presented but need to be viewed very circumspectly given the small numbers involved. The same goes for the results over time presented for pupils who comprised the KS4 cohort in 2006. Despite these caveats, the data are sufficiently robust and consistent with other data to enable us to be confident that the patterns identified below are real and not artefactual. They confirm in particular that *in Northamptonshire the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils remains stubbornly persistent.*

Having outlined what the national and local data tell us about ethnic differences in educational achievement, we then explore possible causes for such ethnic differences. What explanations have been put forward to account for ethnic differences in achievement? This section comprises a lengthy literature review of explanations put forward to explain in particular Black Caribbean educational achievement. What we must always remember, however, is that ethnic differentials in educational achievement are not inevitable. It is imperative in this context that we ask ourselves what *we* can do to prevent schools from failing black children. This applies not only to parents but also to us as professionals employed by the local authority and schools.

The collection and interpretation of data on group differences in educational achievement is vital to provide a realistic assessment of where we are in Northamptonshire. I was commissioned by the Racial Equality Council to write an independent report on the educational achievement of Black and minority ethnic groups in the county. I have gone somewhat beyond my brief to explore possible

explanations for such ethnic differences. While there is widespread agreement about what the data tell us about ethnic differences in educational achievement, the same unfortunately cannot be said of explanations where there continues to be fierce debate. I have presented my own evaluation of these explanations and on that basis put forward some tentative recommendations. I hope that this report will enable policy debate to be suitably informed and evidence based.

Social Inequality, Ethnicity and Education

The sociology of education has been preoccupied for much of the post war period with one central issue. The issue is of course that of social inequality with 'the major focus of traditional concern [being] with social class' (Halsey, 1995:162).

The thesis that industrial societies are moving towards meritocracy has provided the backdrop for much of the research. According to this thesis, the logic of industrialisation entails a transition from a situation where status is ascribed at birth to a situation where status is achieved through ones own efforts. Class origins become increasingly less influential in accounting for class destinations as educational qualifications become the key determinant of occupational placement. The thesis predicts that, with the expansion of educational opportunities, the path from origin to education (a) will decline. In addition it anticipates that employers' recruiting strategies will ensure that the path from origin to destination (b) also declines while the path from education to destination (c) increases (Heath et al, 1992).

Although research in Britain has indeed confirmed that there is a trend for link (b) to weaken and link (c) to strengthen (Halsey, 1977), its primary concern has been with link (a). Here, a range of studies, using odds ratios to calculate the relative chances of children from different class origins attending selective secondary schools (Halsey et al, 1980), obtaining one or more passes at GCE O level (equivalent to GCSE grades A-C) (Heath & Clifford, 1996) and entering higher education (Egerton & Halsey, 1993), have demonstrated, contrary to the predictions of the meritocratic thesis, that no change was evident among different birth cohorts during the twentieth century. The upshot of this research programme is clear. Despite a significant expansion in educational opportunities, which has benefited all social classes, class relativities have remained remarkably constant.

Despite the continuing significance of class for educational attainment, increasingly within the sociology of education attention has turned to gender and ethnicity. These comprise 'giants in the path of aspirations towards equality' (Halsey, 1995: 162). For sex discrimination still 'excludes women from the top jobs and highest earnings' (Hakim, 1996: 186) and race discrimination results in minority ethnic groups failing to gain 'the same returns on their investments (in education) as do native-born whites' (Cheng & Heath, 1993: 152). Contrary to the expectations of the meritocratic thesis, ascribed status is still clearly significant when the link between education and destination is examined.

What about the link between origin and education? Here change rather than continuity is evident in relation to gender. And the change is in the direction predicted by the meritocratic thesis of a declining link between origin and education. For 'the central empirical trend is of general and relative improvement in the levels of female educational attainment' (Moore, 1996). While the evidence points then to a 'pattern of unchanging relative social class disadvantage', it indicates 'decreasing disadvantage

for women' (Egerton & Halsey, 1993: 192). The issue we now need to address is the link between ethnic origin and education.

Ethnicity and Underachievement: Myth or Reality?

Educational opportunities have expanded considerably. Nonetheless, as we saw in the previous section, many sociologists still wish to argue that groups still do not have equal chances of acquiring valued qualifications. The working class for example still do not have the same chances as the middle class. In this view, the most appropriate indicator of the degree of opportunity is a measure of the relative educational achievements of different groups. 'It is in this sense that we can speak of a group underachieving in relation to other groups within the population' (Gillborn, 1990: 107). Hence it is that some commentators talk of working class underachievement and, more recently, of the underachievement of boys. When it comes to ethnicity, what has struck most commentators is the comparatively lower educational attainment of Caribbean (or West Indian) children. The Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, which was itself set up, at least in part, in response to widespread concern about the educational performance of 'West Indian' pupils, took this line. The interim (Rampton) report outlined the results of the DES annual school leavers' survey in 6 LEAs for 1978/9 and the final (Swann) report reported the findings of the same survey in 5 LEAs for 1981/2. After comparing the achievements of white, Asian and West Indian pupils, the interim report concluded that 'West Indian children *as a group* are underachieving in our education system' (Rampton, 1981: 10), while the final report concluded that 'there is no doubt that West Indian children, as a group, and on average, are underachieving, both by comparison with their school fellows in the white majority, as well as in terms of their potential, notwithstanding that some are doing well' (Swann, 1985: 81). The prominence given to this official inquiry meant the notion of West Indian underachievement received wide coverage and was widely disseminated.

The concept of underachievement has proved to be highly contentious, however. One critic has argued that it assumes that groups are equal in all 'relevant respects' (Flew, 1986: 24) and that this condition is not fulfilled in the case of West Indians because of evidence that they are inherently less able. Flew is correct in indicating that the concept does presuppose that ability is randomly distributed between groups but as we shall see in the next section this is not an unreasonable assumption. Another critic has argued that the concept of underachievement privileges one aim of education viz the pursuit of educational qualifications over others and that other aims are more desirable (Jeffcoate, 1984). While we may sympathise with this position, nonetheless educational qualifications are critical to people's life chances with the tightening link between education and destination and, given racial discrimination, are of the utmost importance to minority ethnic groups. A third critic has argued that the concept of underachievement implicitly blames the group deemed to be underachieving and that the notion of West Indian underachievement is particularly dangerous because it is likely to reinforce the common stereotype of black people as inherently less able (Troyna, 1984). He is right to warn us of possible connotations of the term but it is used here in a purely descriptive way to refer to demonstrable differences in relative achievement between groups and does not privilege any particular social explanation for such differences, although it does of course expressly rule out a genetic explanation.

More than two decades has passed since the official inquiry drew our attention to West Indian underachievement. Since then more reliable findings have emerged which move beyond the rather crude ethnic breakdown employed by Rampton/Swann and enable us to address simultaneously issues of class, gender and ethnic background (Pilkington, 1997). The two most significant overviews of research on ethnic differences in levels of achievement have been published by Ofsted (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000). These reviews draw on two main sources of data. The first derives from local education authorities (LEAs), while the second derives from the Youth Cohort Study (YCS), which comprises a longitudinal nationally representative survey of young people and represents a massive improvement on previous data.

While it cannot be said that ethnic monitoring has been undertaken in a consistent way by LEAs or has even been a universal feature of LEA data gathering, it is nonetheless interesting to note ‘that for each of the main ethnic groups...studied there is at least one LEA where *that* group is the highest attaining’ (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000: 9). While we cannot read too much into such local variability (which is anyway quite limited), this finding does remind us that there is no ‘necessary or pre-determined ethnic ordering’ and that ‘no ethnic group is inherently less capable of academic success’ (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000: 9,11). We need to bear this in mind when looking at the more reliable national data on ethnic difference in educational achievement from the YCS (Drew, 1995; Demack et al, 2000) and other sources (Home Office, 2005; DfES, 2006, DfCSF, 2007). Table 1 summarises data on achievement by ethnicity and gender for 2003.

Table 1: Achievements of 5 or more A-C grades at GCSE/GNVQ in 2003, by ethnicity and gender (%)

ETHNIC GROUP	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
White	46.2	56.7	51.3
White British	46.1	56.6	51.3
Irish	58.4	61.8	60.1
Traveller of Irish heritage	43.3	39.1	41.6
Gypsy/Roma	24.4	22.5	23.2
Any other White	46.3	58.2	52.0
Mixed	42.7	55.4	49.3
White and Black Caribbean	32.3	46.8	39.9
White and Black African	39.5	55.1	47.5
White and Asian	60.6	68.6	64.7
Any other Mixed	44.9	57.7	51.6
Asian	47.1	59.0	52.8
Indian	60.3	70.3	65.2
Pakistani	35.7	48.1	41.5
Bangladeshi	38.5	52.6	45.5
Any other Asian	53.8	64.6	59.0
Black	29.1	43.1	36.3
Black Caribbean	25.1	40.3	32.9
Black African	34.1	46.8	40.7
Any other Black	27.2	40.3	33.6
Chinese	70.9	79.2	74.8
Any other ethnic group	41.3	51.2	45.8
Unclassified	43.1	52.2	47.4
All pupils	45.5	56.1	50.7

Source: National Pupil Database (Home Office, 2005:26)

Table 1 points to considerable variations in achievement by ethnicity. This variability is not captured as much when broad ethnic groups (in bold) are compared as when smaller groups are distinguished. Clearly the achievements of the Chinese are the highest at 74.8% followed by Indians at 65.2%, White/Asian pupils at 64.7% and the Irish at 60.1%. By contrast at the other extreme, only 23.2% of Gypsy/Roma achieved this standard. Within the Mixed category, White/Black pupils performed relatively poorly; within the Asian category, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis performed relatively poorly; and within the Black category, Black Caribbeans performed particularly badly. Within all ethnic groups, girls tend to outperform boys. In some cases, looking at pupils as a whole masks how badly boys from some ethnic groups are doing. In the case of Black Caribbean boys, for example, only 25.1% achieve 5 or more GCSEs at the appropriate standard.

Within, all ethnic groups, achievement also varies by social class. Using entitlement to free school meals (FSM) as a proxy measure of social class, the data confirms that 'pupils with FSM do considerably less well than non-FSM pupils [at GCSE/GNVQ]...However, differences still remain between ethnic groups. Only 20 per cent of White British FSM pupils and 24 per cent of Black Caribbean FSM pupils achieved 5+ A-C GCSEs compared with 43 per cent of Bangladeshi pupils and 47 per cent of Indian FSM pupils. The pattern for non-FSM White British and Black Caribbean pupils does not mirror that for FSM pupils. For example, White British non-FSM pupils achieve considerably better than Black Caribbean non-FSM pupils (55.5 per cent compared with 36.6 per cent)' (Home Office, 2005:26).

Eligibility for free school meals is clearly a crude measure of social class but the use of more sophisticated class schemas point in the same direction (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000; Rethon, 2007). Gillborn and Mirza distinguish three broad social classes – nonmanual, skilled/semi-skilled manual and unskilled manual. While there are class differences within each ethnic group, 'social class differences do not override the influence of ethnic inequality: when comparing pupils with similar class backgrounds there are still marked inequalities of attainment between different ethnic groups. Indeed, in some respects the analysis reveals new inequalities: showing that Black pupils from relatively advantaged backgrounds are little better placed, as a group, than white peers from manual backgrounds' and, it should be added, are markedly worse placed than Indian peers from manual backgrounds (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000: 21).

Drawing on more recent YCS data and a fivefold combined class schema, Rethon reaches a similar conclusion: 'Within all ethnic groups, the percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades decreases quite significantly as one moves down the class structure. There are, however, differences between the performances of the ethnic groups for pupils of the same social class. One striking feature is that in almost all class categories Indians perform above the average for any given class. Both blacks and the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group appear to perform at a low level regardless of class. This low performance is generally more marked in the case of blacks; in all classes their distance from the average is greater than that of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis' (Rethon, 2007: 315-6).

When we compare pupils from different ethnic groups, after controlling for both gender and social class, the results demonstrate that in the mid 1990s at GCSE, 'Indian pupils did best, followed by white, Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Black pupils

respectively' (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000: 26). Placing gender, class and ethnicity in a relative perspective, we discover that 'the ethnic differences were larger than the gender differences and the social class differences were the largest of all... We have to remember [however] that those ethnic groups with the lowest educational attainment (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and blacks) are those with disproportionately large numbers in the lowest social class groups, Their problems are [therefore] ones of both "race" and social disadvantage' (Demack et al, 2000: 137-138).

Results from the 2004 DfES Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE), which entailed interviews with 15000 young people in year 9 of school, confirm the continuing underachievement of the same ethnic groups this time at an earlier stage, key Stage 3. 'The gaps associated with ethnicity in national tests at the end of key Stage 3 (KS3) (aged 14) are large. Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African groups achieve a KS3 average points score around 3.0 points less than White British pupils. This is equivalent to around a whole year of progress in terms of National Curriculum levels' (Stroud, 2007:1). What is true of results at key Stage 3 is also true of earlier key Stages. 'In 2006, Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Black African and Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils all performed below the national average in English tests across key stages 1 to 3' (DfCLG, 2007: 132).

What is also noteworthy is the size of the gaps for gender and class. 'The social class gap was the largest with a 10 point gap between pupils from higher managerial and professional families and those where the main parent was long term unemployed...[By contrast] the gender gap was just 0.8 points' (Stroud, 2007: 1). Class, ethnicity and gender all make a difference but social class continues to be the most critical factor and gender the least. Ethnic differences need to take account of both class and gender. In this context it is important to recognise that for Black Caribbeans, the gender gap is larger at GCSE than other groups and that controlling for social class accounts for less of the ethnic differential than for other groups (DfES, 2006; Stroud, 2007). The continuing underachievement of Black Caribbean boys is still a matter of concern and we cannot rest content with explanations that attribute this to the class position of their families. Additional explanations are needed.

In many ways it is the performance of Black Caribbean pupils which continues to constitute the greatest cause for concern. Apart from Gypsy/Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage (for which there are very low numbers), in 2006 Black Caribbean pupils - despite some improvement over time - achieve a lower proportion of 5+ GCSE A* - C grades (including English and Mathematics) (30%) than other ethnic groups. Both Pakistanis and Bangladeshis scored higher (35% and 39% respectively) (DCSFS, 2007.) And other measures of achievement point in the same direction. If we focus on those who leave school with no or very limited qualifications, 'students from Afro-Caribbean origin are the least successful' (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007).

What is most disturbing in this context is the lack of progress made by Black Caribbean pupils at both primary and secondary levels. At reception, 'Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils [along with pupils from Gypsy/Roma ancestry and Travellers of Irish heritage] do less well on all the scales of the Foundation stage profile than the average for all pupils' (DfES, 2006: 37). At the same time, the gaps for Black pupils at this point in meeting Early Learning Goals are not as wide as for Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils. Over time this relative advantage is whittled away. While the performance of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils in the early years of schooling

manifests improvement 'once they become proficient in English', Black Caribbean pupils do not make comparable progress (Ofsted, 1999).

Value added scores demonstrate the progress made by pupils from key Stage to key Stage after controlling for prior attainment. In 2004, Pakistanis made the same progress as White British pupils from key Stage 1 to 2 but greater progress from Stage 2 to 4, while Bangladeshis made significantly more progress across all these stages. By contrast, Black Caribbean pupils (together with Black Others, Mixed White and Black Caribbeans, Gypsy/Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage) made less progress than the White British both from Stage 1 to 2 and Stages 2 to 4 (DfES, 2006: 44). Although there do seem to be some variations from year to year, the data are not reassuring, with much of it pointing to the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils increasing over the course of compulsory schooling. Stroud concurs: Over the course of KS3, 'Black Caribbean pupils...made less progress than their White British peers [with the result that] underachievement relative to White British pupils increased significantly over the course of KS3' (Stroud, 2007: 2).

It is important to note that minority ethnic groups recognise the importance of education for occupational attainment. They tend therefore to invest strongly in education and remain in education after compulsory schooling. All minority ethnic groups are in fact more likely than Whites to go on to further and higher education to improve their qualifications and enhance their skills. This to some extent pays off. There is thus evidence that in the last three years success rates in further education have increased and that participation in HE has grown considerably. At the same time it should be recognised that participation in HE is heavily concentrated in the new universities and that ethnic differentials in the proportion who gain good honours degrees remains stubbornly persistent (DfCSF, 2007). It remains the case therefore that some minority ethnic groups possess lower levels of human capital than their White counterparts, which in turn harms their employment opportunities.

The data from the YCS, LSYPE and national test data focus on the performance of pupils during compulsory schooling. Young people from minority ethnic groups are, however, much more likely than white pupils to stay on in post compulsory education. Indeed Drew found 'that, once attainment was taken into account, ethnic origin was the single most important factor in determining the chances of staying on' (Drew, 1995: 180). This finding is echoed by the analysis of the participation rates of 16-19 year olds in full time education in the 1991 Census, which revealed 'the almost uniformly higher participation rate of ethnic minority groups during the post-16 period in comparison with the White group', a phenomenon 'little altered when differences associated with gender and social class are taken into account' (Drew et al., 1997: 25). Likewise, investigation of the participation in full time education of 16-24 year olds in the 1994 PSI survey indicated that 'no ethnic minority group had a lower participation rate in post-16 education than white people' and 'that people from ethnic minorities in general are also staying on for longer periods' (Modood et al., 1997: 76). Among those who had already gained an O-level or higher qualification, 'about twice as many ethnic minority as white persons were likely to be continuing in education', with the higher participation rate in post compulsory education of Asian men being particularly striking. This clearly represents a significant 'ethnic minority drive for qualifications' (Modood et al., 1997: 82). For staying on longer allows pupils more opportunity 'to upgrade existing qualifications and obtain further qualifications of value in the labour market'.

Evidence that the greater likelihood of members from minority ethnic groups staying on pays off emerges from an analysis over time of the experience of 16-19 year old youngsters who reached the minimum school leaving age in the mid 1980s (Drew, 1995). Although this study uses a rather crude ethnic breakdown (Afro-Caribbean; Asian; White) and is now somewhat dated, it does show how young people from minority ethnic groups are more likely than those from the majority ethnic group to improve their qualifications over time. By the age of 18, 'Afro-Caribbean' students had caught up a little on white students in terms of proportions obtaining 4 or more O levels (or their equivalent). Their relatively lower achievements at 16, however, had ramifications leading them to be more likely to study vocational rather than academic courses from which at 18 they emerged as the best vocationally qualified group, a finding consistent with the PSI study, which confirms that Caribbeans have a higher proportion of vocational qualifications than other ethnic groups. Meanwhile Asian students, who at 16 had been slightly behind white students in terms of proportions obtaining 4 or more O levels, by 18 had not only caught them up but overtaken them, emerging at this age as the best academically qualified group.

What is striking overall is that 'ethnic minorities manifest a radical diversity, indeed extreme contrasts, in their educational attainment levels' (Modood et al., 1997: 80). By no means can the minorities be seen to be in the same position. This becomes clearly evident when ethnic groups are compared in terms of their highest qualification. While this classification of qualifications is rather crude so that it shows for example the proportion whose highest qualification is any O level or equivalent where the equivalents may be vocational rather than, as in the YCS, the proportion with five higher grade passes at GCSE (5 O levels) (Jones, 1993), the results are nonetheless revealing. Among people of working age, the PSI survey indicates that 'the Chinese, African Asians and Indians are much the best qualified groups...Among men, then come whites, with Caribbeans and Pakistanis being less qualified, and Bangladeshis the least so' (Modood et al., 1997: 64-65). Among women, by contrast, Caribbeans are more likely to be qualified than whites, with Pakistanis and especially Bangladeshis generally much less qualified.

The overall situation of the different ethnic minorities manifests continuities with their different starting points. This is borne out by the 'correlation between the levels of qualifications of those born outside the UK and the levels of qualifications of those born in the UK' (Mortimore et al., 1997: 14) and the maintenance of a contrast between the achievement of Indians, African Asians and Chinese, on the one hand, and that of Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Caribbean men, on the other hand. 'There are at least two other striking processes', however. 'One is the strong educational drive found in the ethnic minorities' which has allowed many to make significant progress. The other 'is the special progress of women' (Modood et al., 1997: 75), a phenomenon not confined to ethnic minorities but one particularly evident there.

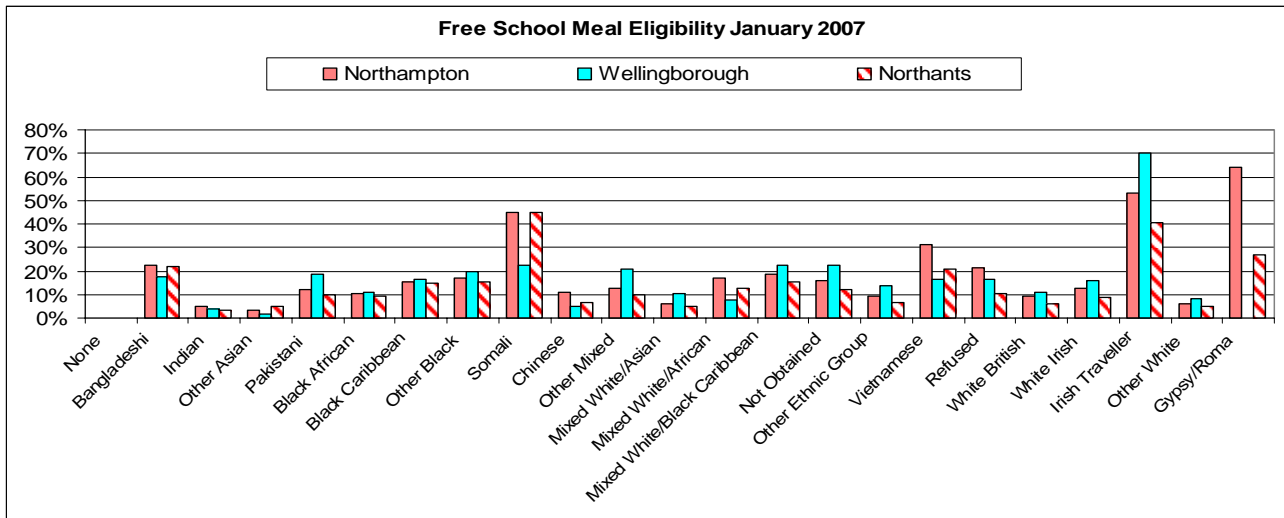
The emphasis of much of the research on ethnic differentials in educational achievement since the late 1970s has been on the underachievement of West Indians or Black Caribbeans. The 1985 committee of inquiry emphasised 'that West Indian children, as a group, and on average are underachieving' (Swann, 1985: 81). The terminology has changed over time, with the 1996 Ofsted report preferring the term African Caribbean and avoiding the term underachieving, but the same emphasis is apparent. 'Recent research tends to show African Caribbean pupils as relatively less successful than their "Asian" and white peers' (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996: 29). Such a conclusion, however, warrants modification in the light of our analysis of more recent research, which involves nationally representative samples and involves

disaggregating ethnic groups by gender and national origin While there are some differences in the results of research which focus on the performance of pupils in schools (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000; Demack et al, 2000) and the results of studies which look at young people's highest qualifications (Karn, 1997; Modood et al., 1997), together they suggest that it is Caribbean young men rather than young women who are significantly underachieving and that the position of two Asian groups is not markedly better but is improvin (Pilkington, 2003).

Ethnic group differences in educational achievement in Northamptonshire

Contextual data

- The ethnic categories employed below are the Census categories. Although they are the most reliable ones to use for our purposes, it should be noted that they are not unproblematic and do not fully capture how pupils define themselves which can and does change over time;
- In Northamptonshire minority ethnic pupils (defined here as not White British) comprised 12.3% of pupils on roll in January 2007;
- In the main towns distinguished, Northampton and Wellingborough, minority ethnic pupils comprised 24.1% and 23.9% respectively of the pupils on roll in January 2007;
- In Northamptonshire, Bangladeshis comprised 1.1% of pupils on roll, with 3.9% and 2.0% in Northampton and Wellingborough respectively;
- In Northamptonshire, Black Africans comprised 1.0% , Black Caribbean 0.7%, Other Black 0.5%, Somali 0.3% and Mixed White/Black Caribbean 1.3% of pupils on roll;
- While Black African and Somali pupils were more likely to be found in Northampton than Wellingborough (2.7% v 1.5% and 1.1% v 0.1%), Black Caribbean, Black Other and Mixed White/Black Caribbean were more likely to be found in Wellingborough than Northampton (2.9% v 1.6%, 1.5% v 1.1% and 3.1% v 2.5%);
- Travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma comprised a very small proportion of pupils on roll in the county, 0.2% in toto;
- The distribution by gender does not differ significantly by ethnicity and there is an appropriate balance in both the county and the main towns;
- Using eligibility for free school meals as a proxy measure of class deprivation, what is noticeable is the higher level of deprivation in the county of most minority groups compared to the White British;
- Irish travellers (40.7%), Somalis (44.8%), Gypsy/Roma (26.7%), Bangladeshis (21.9%) and the Vietnamese (21.1%) experience levels of deprivation over three times higher than that of the White British (6.0%);
- Black Caribbeans (14.9%), Black Other (15.6%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbean (15.5%) experience levels of deprivation over twice that of the White British (6.0%);



- The data on authorised and unauthorised absences are notoriously unreliable, with schools differing in how they define authorised/unauthorised absences;
- The data nonetheless point to very high levels of authorised absences in the county at primary level among both Irish travellers and Gypsy/Roma (19.0% and 15.5%) compared to the White British (4.1%);
- Unauthorised absences at primary level are especially high among Irish travellers (4.0%), Bangladeshis (2.1%) and Gypsy/Roma (1.3%) compared to the White British (0.3%);
- Unauthorised absences at primary level are also twice as high among Black Caribbean (0.6%), Black Other (0.8%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils (0.8%) compared to the White British (0.3%);
- A similar pattern can be found at secondary level with the data pointing to even higher levels of authorised absences than at primary level in the county among both Irish travellers and Gypsy/Roma (35.9% and 18.8%) compared to the White British (6.1%);
- Unauthorised absences are higher at secondary level, with the rates being especially high among Irish travellers (13.6%), Gypsy/Roma (7.7%), Bangladeshis (3.7%) and Somalis (2.9%) compared to the White British (1.4%);
- Unauthorised absences among Black Caribbean (1.7%), Black Other (1.4%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils (1.8%) is approximately twice as high than at primary level but is not significantly different from that of the White British (1.4%)

Basic trends

- The basic trends for three consecutive cohorts, 2004-2006 are based on pupils matched by home postcode;

Key stage 1

- The trends at KS1 identify the % gaining level 2+; 2004 data was based on tests and 2005 onward on teacher assessment;
- The results in Northamptonshire for reading, writing and maths are in each cohort higher than those for a comparable cohort nationally;
- The gap between the performance of pupils locally and nationally has been growing in reading (1.1% to 3.1%) and writing (1.5% to 4.5%) but has fallen slightly in maths (2.1% to 1.4%);

- The results in the main towns are lower than those in the county and in 2006 in all cases lower than those for a comparable cohort nationally;
- While Wellingborough has maintained its superior position between 2004-2006 over Northampton in maths, the gap in reading and writing has fallen and the results for the most recent cohort are now similar;

Table 2: KS1 Trends -% Achieving level 2+ in Key stage 1 basic trends

	READING			WRITING			MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Northampton Town	80.5	82.9	83.3	78.7	82.5	79.7	89.3	91.0	87.6
Wellingborough Town	82.4	83.8	83.4	81.6	82.8	79.8	90.0	92.2	88.7
Northamptonshire	86.1	87.7	87.1	83.5	86.7	85.5	92.1	93.1	91.4
National	85	85	84	82	82	81	90	91	90

- Girls perform consistently better than boys in Reading, Writing and Maths at national, county and town levels;
- The gap is largest in writing (10% in 2006 at county level) and least in maths (3% in 2006 at county level), with the gap in reading (7% in 2006 at county level) closer to that in writing;
- The gap is slightly smaller in 2006 at the county level than the national level in reading (2%) and writing (1%) but the same in maths.
- The gap at county and national levels has not diminished over these three cohorts and indeed has slightly increased at the national level in reading (1%) and at the county level in maths (1%);
- The gender gap was higher in 2006 in Wellingborough than Northampton in all three areas but was most marked in writing (16% v 10%);

Table 3: KS1 results – % Achieving level 2+ in KS1 Trends by gender

	READING			WRITING			MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
National Girls	89	89	89	87	88	87	92	92	92
National Boys	81	81	80	76	77	76	89	90	89
Northampton Girls	85	88	88	85	88	85	90	93	88
Northampton Boys	77	78	80	72	78	75	89	90	87
Wellingborough Girls	87	88	88	88	90	88	92	93	90
Wellingborough Boys	78	80	79	76	76	72	88	91	87
Northants Girls	90	92	91	89	91	91	93	95	93
Northants Boys	83	84	84	79	82	81	91	92	90

- The gap between those eligible and those not eligible for free school meals is enormous, with those eligible for FSM scoring in 2006 19% lower in reading, 20% lower in writing and 12% lower in maths than those not eligible;
- The gap is not changing significantly over time, with the gap in reading and writing increasing by 1% and falling by 1% in maths between 2004 and 2006;
- The gap is generally higher in the towns, with the gap in Wellingborough for both reading and writing being particularly high (26% and 28% respectively) and the gap in Northampton and Wellingborough for maths being markedly higher than that found nationally (23% and 19% respectively);

Table 4: KS1 results – % Achieving level 2+ in KS1 Trends by free school entitlement

	READING			WRITING			MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
National No FSM	88	89	88	85	86	85	93	93	92
National FSM	70	70	69	66	66	65	80	81	80
Northampton No FSM	85	85	87	83	85	84	93	93	90
Northampton FSM	63	72	68	60	72	62	75	83	77
Wellingborough No FSM	87	87	88	86	86	85	93	94	92
Wellingborough FSM	61	67	62	63	69	57	76	85	73
Northants No FSM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Northants FSM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Key Stage 2

- The trends at KS2 identify the % gaining level 4+;
- The results in English and Maths in the county improved over the period 2004-2006 (78% to 80% and 72% to 74% respectively);
- The results in English are generally slightly higher (1% in 2006) than those for a comparable cohort nationally while those in Maths are generally slightly lower (2% in 2006);
- The results in the towns are lower than those in the county or nationally for both English and Maths, with Wellingborough increasing its superior position in both subject areas over the period (1% to 4% in English and 9 to 10% in Maths)

Table 5: KS2 Trends -% Achieving level 4+ in Key stage 2 basic trends

	ENGLISH			MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Northampton Town	72	75	73	62	66	63
Wellingborough Town	73	76	77	71	74	73
Northamptonshire	78	81	80	72	75	74
National	78	79	79	74	75	76

- Girls consistently perform better than boys in English at national, county and town levels with the gender gap being higher in 2006 at the level of the towns (13%) than the other two levels (11% at the national level and 10% at the county level);
- The gender gap in English has not changed at the national level but has slightly fallen at the county level (12% to 10%);
- The gender gap in Maths is much smaller and at the national and county levels a gap has opened up to the advantage of boys, with the boys in 2006 having a 2% advantage at national level and a 3% advantage at county level;

Table 6: KS2 results – % Achieving level 4+ in KS2 Trends by gender

	ENGLISH			MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
National Girls	83	84	85	74	75	75
National Boys	72	74	74	74	76	77
Northampton Girls	78	81	79	60	65	63
Northampton Boys	66	70	67	63	67	64
Wellingborough Girls	83	80	84	74	74	72
Wellingborough Boys	65	73	71	69	75	74
Northants Girls	84	85	85	72	74	73
Northants Boys	72	77	75	73	77	76

- The gap between those eligible for FSM and those not eligible is even more marked than that at KS1, with the gap being nationally 22% in English and 21% in Maths in 2006;
- The gap has only slightly fallen over the period, 2004-2006 (by 1% in English and 2% in Maths);
- The gap is even bigger in the towns, being in English 26% and 30% respectively for Northampton and Wellingborough and being in Maths 26% and 33% respectively for Northampton and Wellingborough;

Table 7: KS2 results – % Achieving level 4+ in KS2 Trends by free school entitlement

	ENGLISH			MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
National No FSM	81	82	83	78	78	79
National FSM	58	60	61	55	56	58
Northampton No FSM	76	80	78	66	71	68
Northampton FSM	48	56	52	41	45	42
Wellingborough No FSM	79	82	83	77	78	79
Wellingborough FSM	47	50	53	44	55	46
Northants No FSM	-	-	-	-	-	-
Northants FSM	-	-	-	-	-	-

Key Stage 3

- The trends at KS3 identify the % gaining level 5+;
- It should be noted that the county data covers only LA maintained schools while national data covers all schools, including CTCs and Independent schools;
- There has been a small increase over 2004-2006 in the proportion of pupils nationally and locally gaining level 5+ in both English (1%) and Maths (3-4%);
- The performance of pupils in English and Maths at the national level and county level is very similar;
- The performance of pupils in the towns is lower with the gap between 2004 and 2006 growing both in English (where Northampton has an advantage) and in Maths (where Wellingborough has an advantage)

Table 8: KS3 Trends -% Achieving level 5+ in Key stage 3 basic trends

	ENGLISH			MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Northampton Town	63	66	63	69	68	70
Wellingborough Town	64	66	57	69	69	73
Northamptonshire Maintained	70	73	71	74	74	77
National - All Schools	71	74	72	73	74	77

- Girls consistently perform better than boys in English, with the gap increasing over time from 2004 to 2006 at both the national (from 13% to 15%) and county levels (from 12% to 17%);
- The gender gap has grown in both towns to 18% and there has been a particularly marked increase in the gender gap in Northampton;
- The gender gap in English is markedly higher at KS3 than KS2;
- The gender gap is markedly smaller in Maths, but (unlike KS2) girls are doing slightly better in all years at both the national level (1% in 2006) and county level (1% in 2006);
- In the towns, the advantage that boys held in 2004 (4% in Northampton; 2% in Wellingborough) has eroded, and girls are now moving ahead (2% in Northampton) or performing at the same level;

Table 9: KS3 Trends – % Achieving level 5+ in KS3 Trends by gender

	ENGLISH			MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
National Girls	77	80	80	74	74	77
National Boys	64	67	65	72	73	76
Northampton Girls	65	76	73	67	68	71
Northampton Boys	61	56	55	71	67	69
Wellingborough Girls	72	72	66	68	69	73
Wellingborough Boys	56	59	48	70	69	73
Northants Girls	76	81	80	75	75	78
Northants Boys	64	65	63	74	74	77

- The gap between those eligible for FSM and those not eligible is even more marked than that at KS2, with the gap being nationally 27% in English and 25% in Maths in 2006;
- The gap has slightly fallen over the period, 2004-2006, by 3% in English and 2% in Maths;
- The gap in the towns is not dissimilar to the pattern found nationally and has fallen markedly in Northampton (9% in English and 7% in Maths) and slightly in Wellingborough since 2004 (1% in English and 5% in Maths);

Table 10: KS3 Results – % Achieving level 5+ in KS3 Trends by free school meal entitlement

	ENGLISH			MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
National No FSM	76	78	77	77	78	81
National FSM	46	51	50	50	51	56
Northampton No FSM	67	70	66	73	72	73
Northampton FSM	37	35	45	41	41	48
Wellingborough No FSM	68	70	61	74	73	76
Wellingborough FSM	39	45	33	46	52	53
Northants No FSM	-	-	-	-	-	-
Northants FSM	-	-	-	-	-	-

Key Stage 4

- The trends at KS4 identify the % gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE and the % gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (including English and Maths);
- While the proportions gaining these qualifications has risen in the county, the rate of growth has been lower than that of a comparable cohort nationally, with the gap growing from 1.9% in 2004 to 4.4% in 2006 gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE and from 1.9% in 2004 to 2.6% in 2006 gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (including English and Maths);
- The performance of pupils in the towns is consistently lower than that in the county, with the advantage enjoyed by Wellingborough in 2004 having been eroded by 2006;

Table 11: KS4 Basic Trends -% Achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE and the % gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (including English and Maths); in Key stage 4 basic trends

	5+ A*-C (GCSE OR EQUIVALENT)			5+ A*-C GCSE (INCLUDING ENGLISH AND MATHS)		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Northampton Town	43.6	45.4	47.0	35.0	37.0	39.5
Wellingborough Town	43.8	40.5	44.7	36.2	37.0	32.3
Northamptonshire Maintained	49.5	51.1	53.2	38.0	40.0	41.0
National Maintained	51.4	54.7	56.6	39.9	42.2	43.6

- Girls are performing better than boys in achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE at both the national level and county level (9% gap in 2006) with the gap growing faster in the county than across the country;
- The gap is smaller in the towns (3% in 2006) and has fallen slightly since 2004 (4%);
- The gap increases slightly when the proportion gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (including English and Maths) is compared, with the gap nationally being 10% in 2006 and at the county level being 11%;
- The gap is smaller in the towns (5% in 2006 in Northampton and 7% in Wellingborough);

- The gender gap in the proportion gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (including English and Maths) has not significantly changed over the period; the biggest change has been in Wellingborough where the gap has grown by 3% since 2004 ;

Table 12: KS4 Trends – % Achieving 5+ A*- C and 5+ A*- C GCSE including English and Maths in KS4 Trends by gender

	A*-C (GCSE OR EQUIVALENT)			A*-C GCSE (INCLUDING ENGLISH AND MATHS)		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
National Girls	57	60	62	44	47	48
National Boys	46	49	52	36	38	39
Northampton Girls	46	50	50	37	38	41
Northampton Boys	41	41	45	33	36	38
Wellingborough Girls	46	43	48	38	40	34
Wellingborough Boys	42	39	41	34	35	31
Northants Girls	55	58	59	41	45	46
Northants Boys	45	45	48	35	35	37

- The gap between those eligible for FSM and those not eligible is extremely marked, with the gap in 2006 being nationally 26% gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE and 28% gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (including English and Maths);
- The gap is even wider at county level in 2006, being 27% gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE and 32% gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (including English and Maths);
- The gap is falling slightly over time, slightly less so at county level (1%) than at national level (2%) in the proportion gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (including English and Maths);
- The gap between the towns is not dissimilar for the proportion gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (23% and 24% for Northampton and Wellingborough respectively), but is markedly higher in Wellingborough (31% as opposed to 21%) for the proportion gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE (including English and Maths);

Table 13: KS4 Trends – % Achieving level 5+ A*- C and 5+ A*- C including English and Maths in KS4 Trends by free school entitlement

	A*-C (GCSE OR EQUIVALENT)			A*-C GCSE (INCLUDING ENGLISH AND MATHS)		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
National No FSM	56	59	61	-	46	43
National FSM	26	30	33	-	18	17
Northampton No FSM	47	48	49	38	39	42
Northampton FSM	21	27	28	12	18	19
Wellingborough No FSM	47	44	48	40	40	35
Wellingborough FSM	18	16	17	13	13	11
Northants No FSM	53	54	56	41	42	43
Northants FSM	20	22	24	11	16	16

Ethnic trends

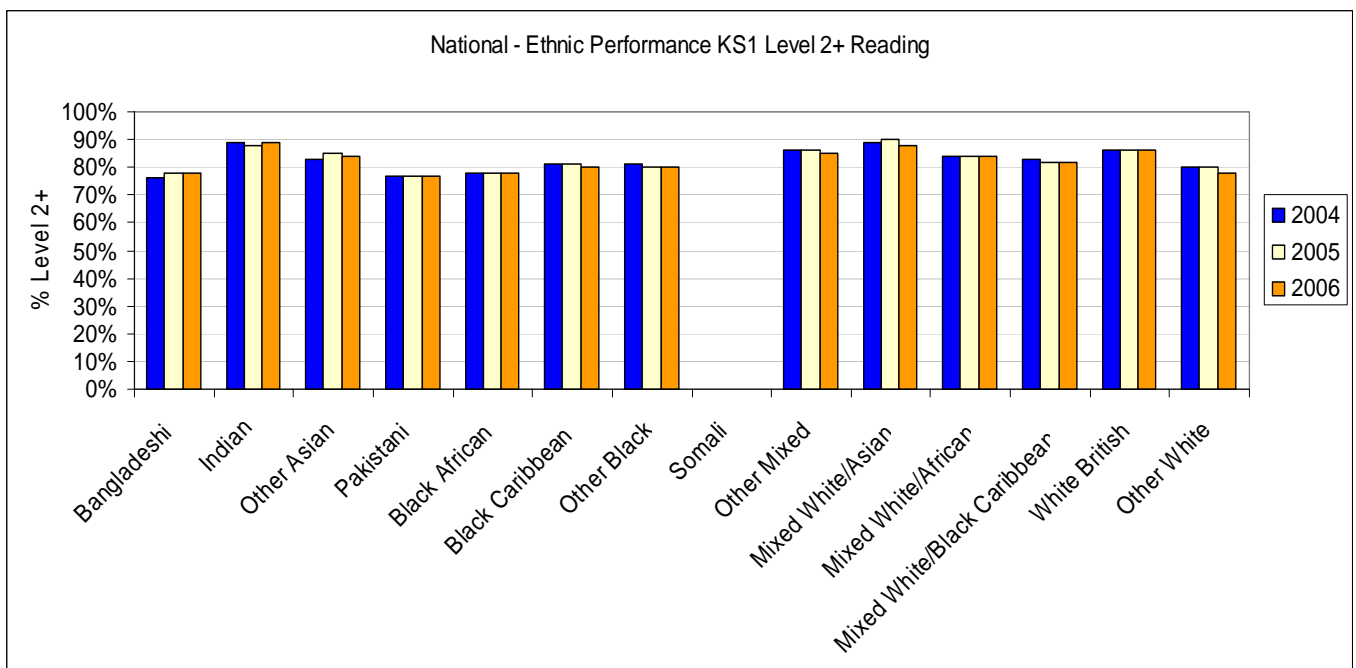
Key Stage 1

- In Northamptonshire, the ethnic groups in 2006 that perform worst in reaching level 2+ in reading are the Somalis (52%) and Bangladeshis (79%). These groups are underachieving in comparison to the White British (88%);
- All the Black groups distinguished performed at a somewhat lower level than the White British: Black African (84%); Black Caribbean (82%); Black Other (80%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbean (84%);
- In Northamptonshire, the ethnic groups in 2006 that perform worst in writing are the Somalis (48%) and Pakistanis (71%). These groups are underachieving in comparison to the White British (87%);
- Bangladeshis (77%) perform better than two of the Black groups, all of whom perform at a somewhat lower level than the White British but to significantly varying degrees: Black African (85%), Black Caribbean (76%), Black Other (75%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbean (79%);
- In Northamptonshire, the ethnic groups in 2006 that perform worst in maths are the Somalis (57%) and Bangladeshis (78%). These groups are underachieving in comparison to the White British (92%);
- The Black groups distinguished vary in their performance and do not perform in all cases at a lower level than the White British: Black African (88%), Black Caribbean (80%), Black Other (80%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbean (93%);
- *Taking the results for reading, writing and maths together, the groups that give the most cause for concern because they underachieve to a significant degree across the board are the Somalis, Bangladeshis, Black Other and Black Caribbean;*
- *While English may not be the (main) language spoken at home for Somalis, a newly arrived group, Bangladeshis and for some members characterised as Black Other, the same cannot be said of Black Caribbeans. The low performance of this group at KS1 is therefore a particular cause for concern.*
- Looking at the position over time, we find that the performance of the White British slightly improves in reading (1%) and writing (3%) and slightly falls in maths (1%).
- The position of Bangladeshis improves faster in reading (3% v 1%) but deteriorates in writing (2%) and maths (5%) so that the gap is generally widening over time at KS1 (this contrasts somewhat with the national picture which points to slight progress across the board); by comparison the position of Somalis improves faster in both reading and writing (14% and 17%) but deteriorates in maths (6%) so that overall there has been some reduction in the gap over time at KS1;
- The position of Pakistanis is not generally a cause for concern but it is noticeable that there has been some decline in reading (7%) and a marked deterioration in writing (19%) offset to a limited extent by an improvement in maths (2%);
- The fortunes of Black groups varies over time: Black Africans improve across the board (5%, 10% and 9% respectively in reading, writing and maths), much more so than the rather static picture over time nationally, and are steadily catching up with the White British; the gap between the Black Caribbeans and the White British is increasing over time, remaining the same in reading and deteriorating by 3% and 8% in writing and maths respectively (this contrasts somewhat with the national picture where a slight decline in reading (1%) is

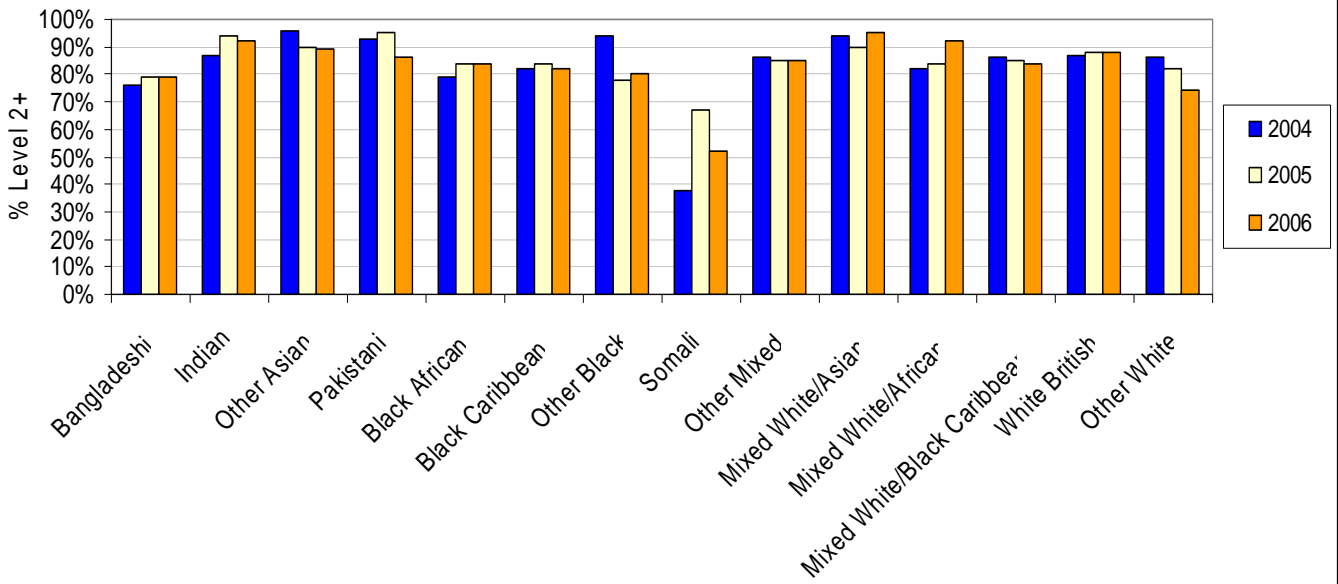
more than offset by improvements of 1% in both writing and maths); the same trend is even more marked in the case of Black Other whose performance deteriorates across the board by 14%, 10% and 11% respectively in reading, writing and maths, a significantly worse scenario than that found nationally where the deterioration is restricted to reading and writing (1%); by comparison, the fortunes of Mixed White/Black Caribbeans varies, falling by 2% and 6% respectively in reading and writing but improving by 2% in maths (this contrasts with the national picture where there the situation has remained mainly unchanged).

- Examination of trends at KS1 over time confirm that Bangladeshis, Black Caribbeans and Black Other are a particular cause for concern since the gap between them and the White British is growing;
- Looking at the national data, it is evident that in 2006 the White British perform better in the county than the country as a whole;
- The Bangladeshis also do marginally better except in maths where there is a gap of 6%, while Pakistanis do significantly better except in writing where there is a gap of 2%;
- The fortunes of Black groups distinguished varies: Black Africans do significantly better in the county (by 6% in reading, 11% in writing and 4% in maths); Black Caribbeans do slightly better in reading (2%), the same in writing but worse in maths (6%); Black Other do the same in reading and writing but worse in maths (by 5%); Mixed White/Black Caribbeans do better in reading (5%) and maths (5%) and the same in writing;
- This data indicates that in the county particular attention needs to be given to the performance of Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black Other pupils in maths;

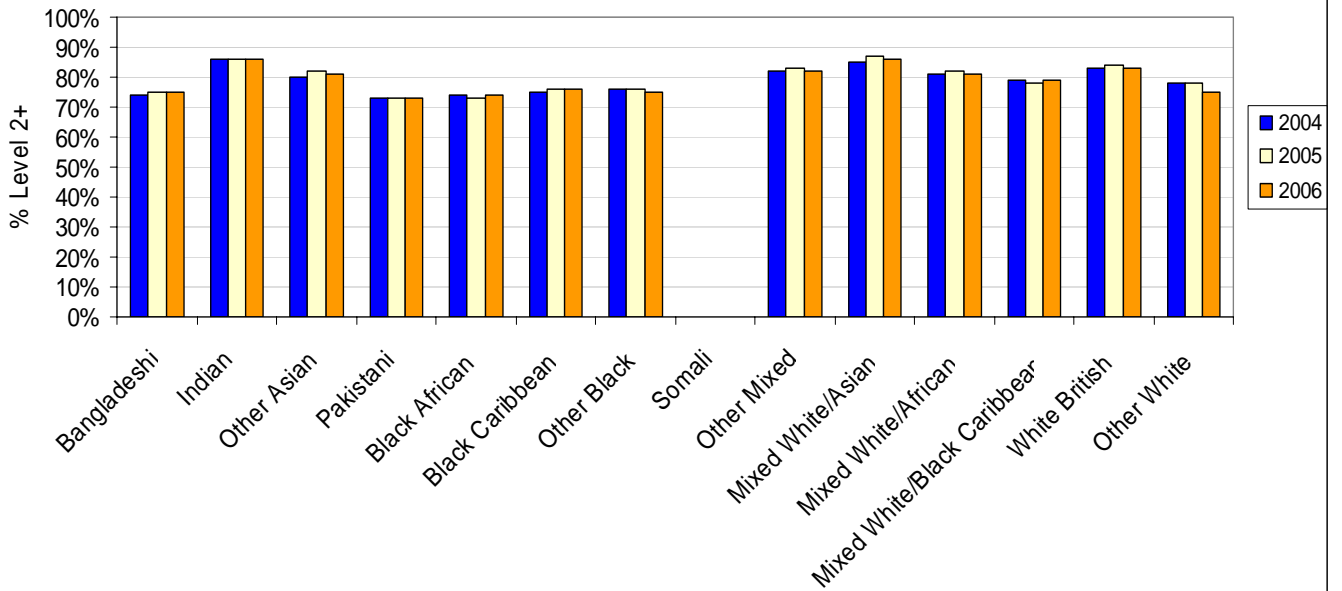
National and Northamptonshire - KS1 Level 2+ by ethnicity



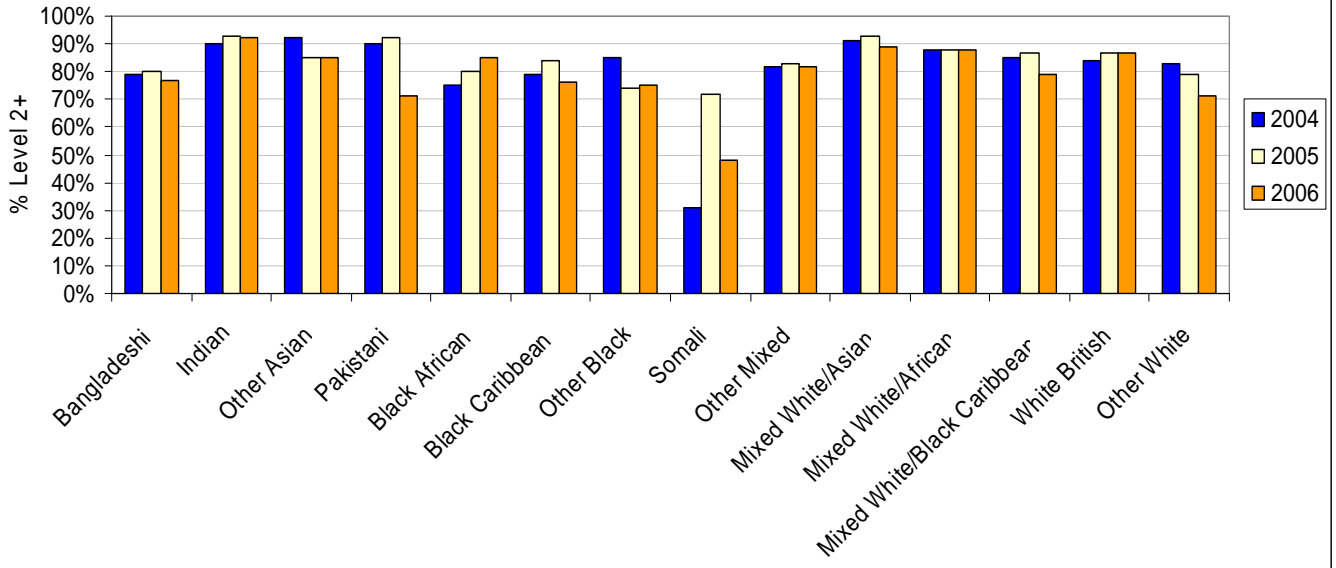
Northamptonshire - Ethnic Performance KS1 Level 2+ Reading



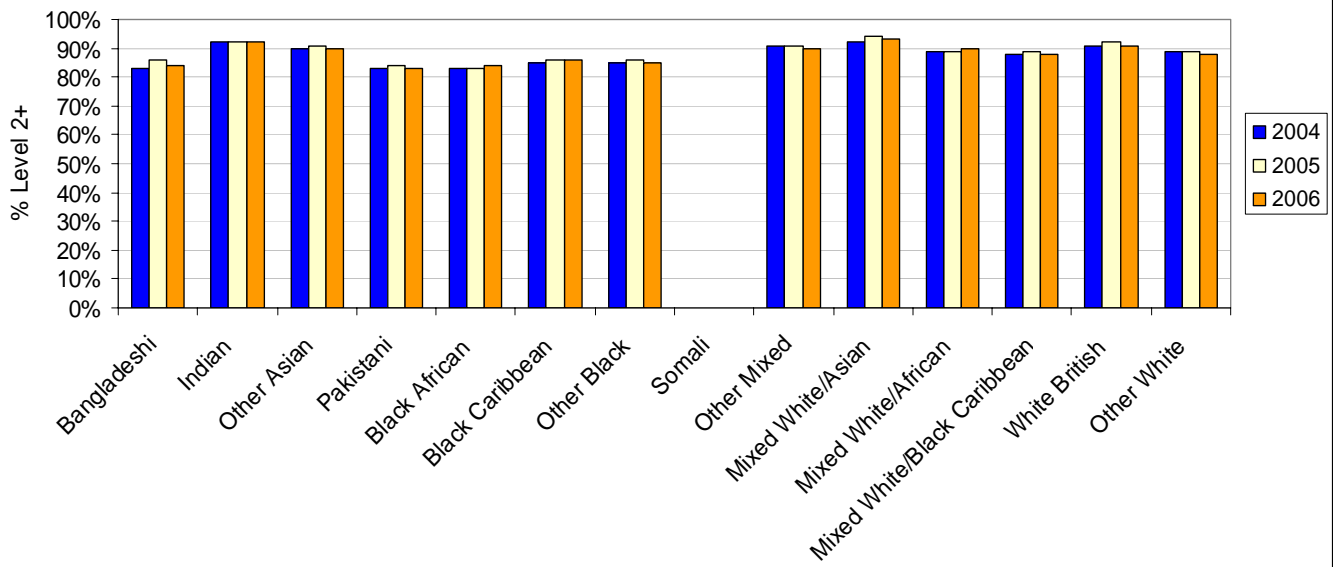
National - Ethnic Performance KS1 Level 2+ Writing

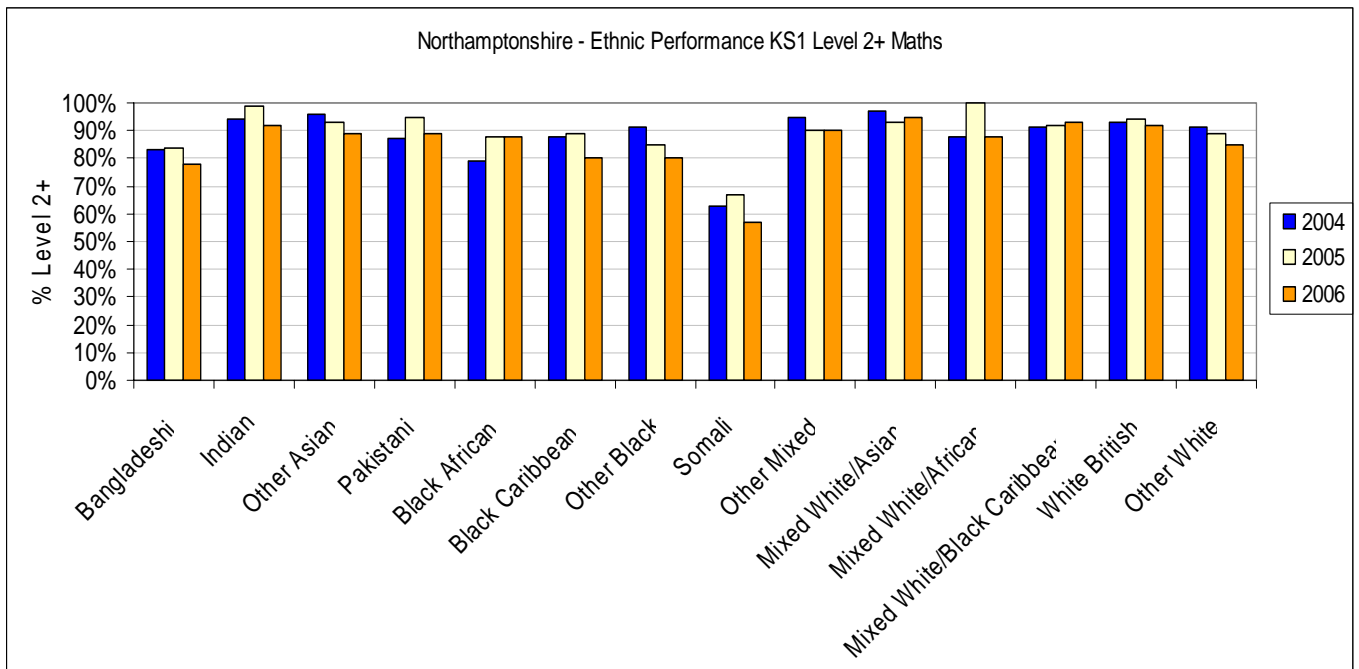


Northamptonshire - Ethnic Performance KS1 Level 2+ Writing



National - Ethnic Performance KS1 Level 2+ Maths

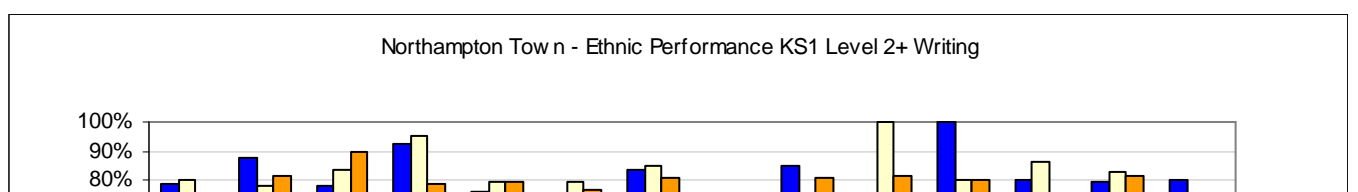
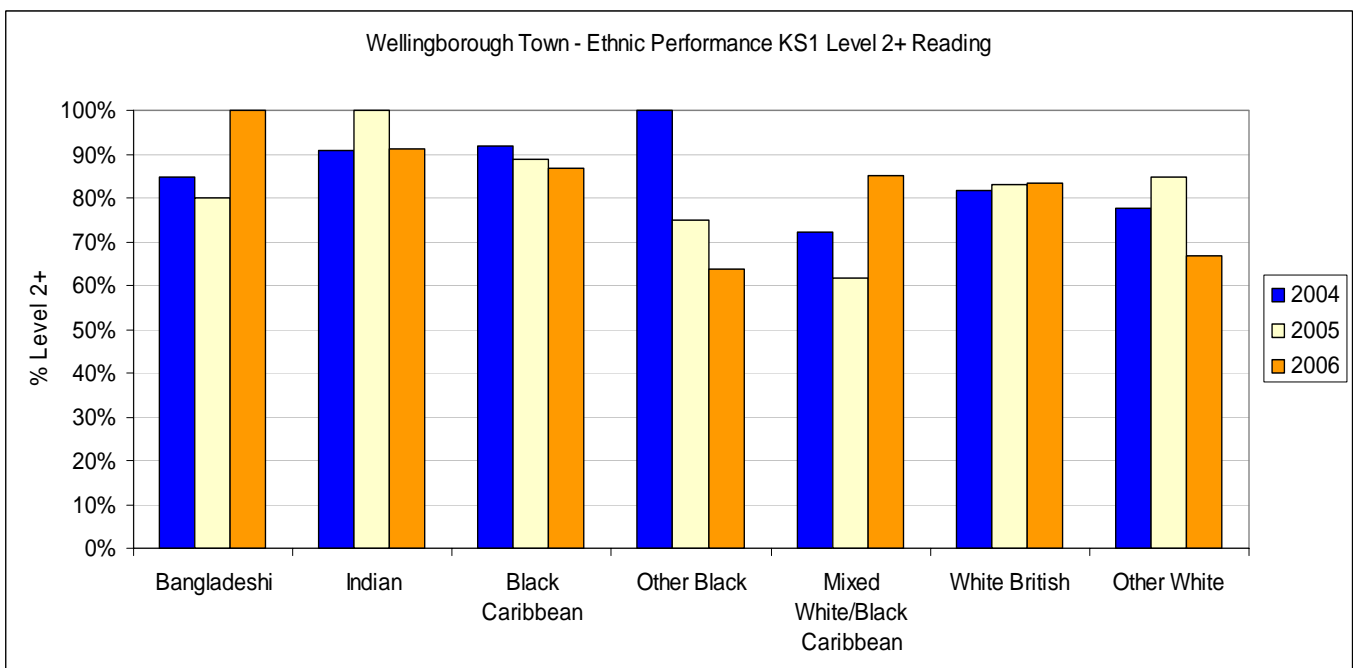
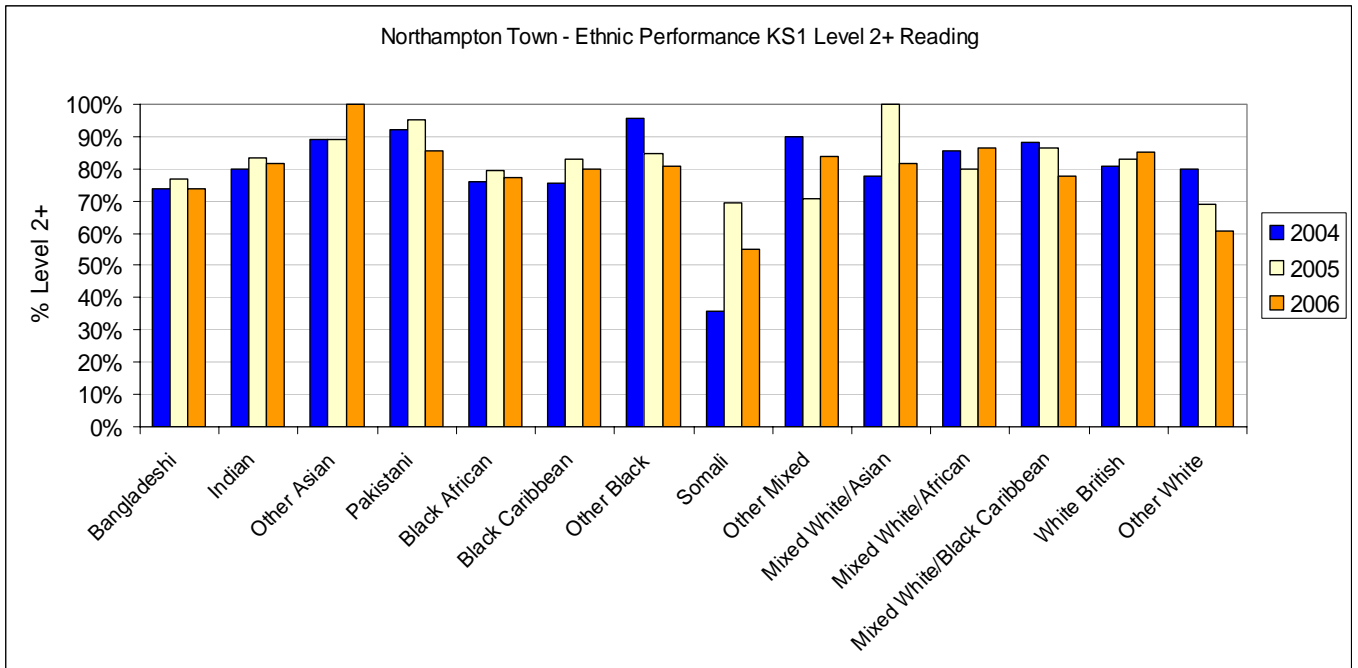


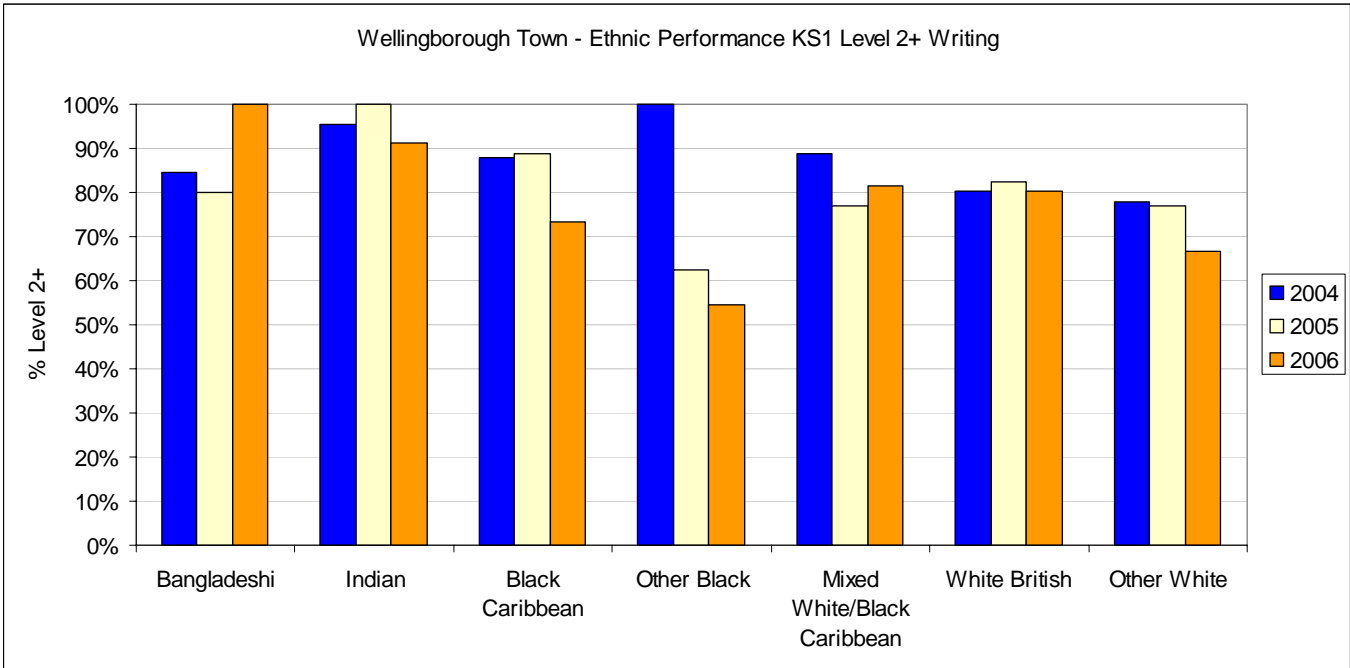


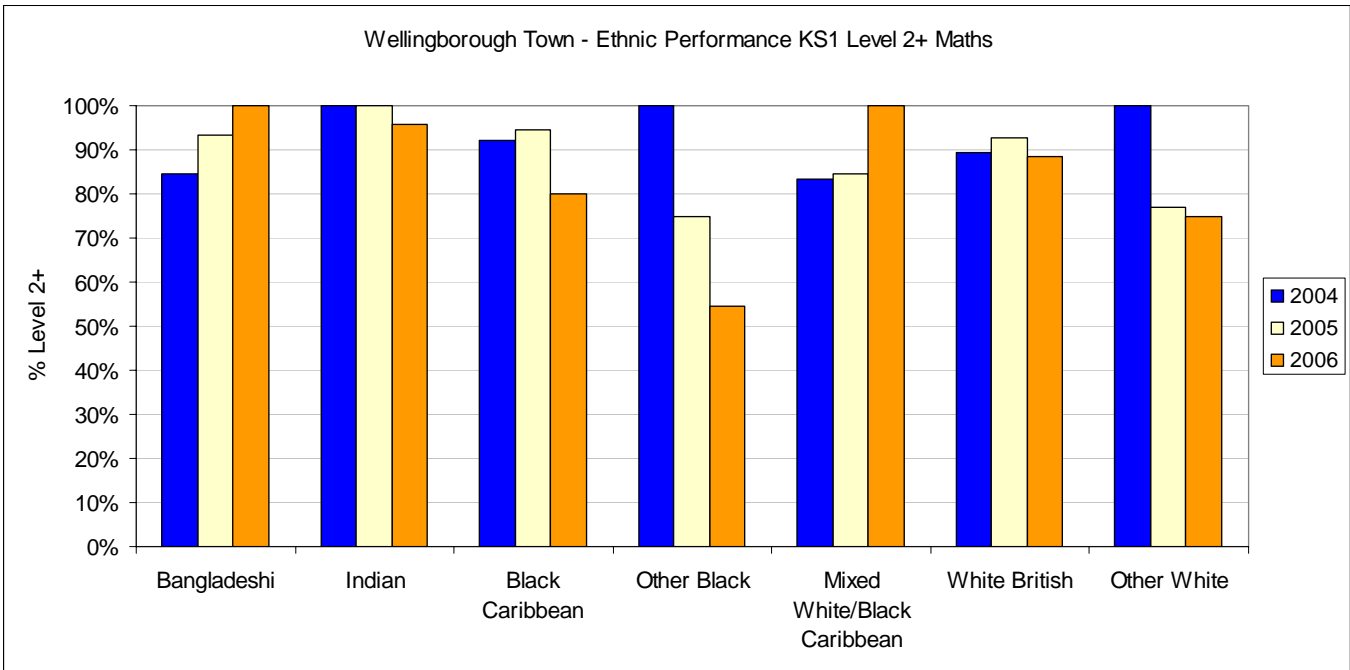
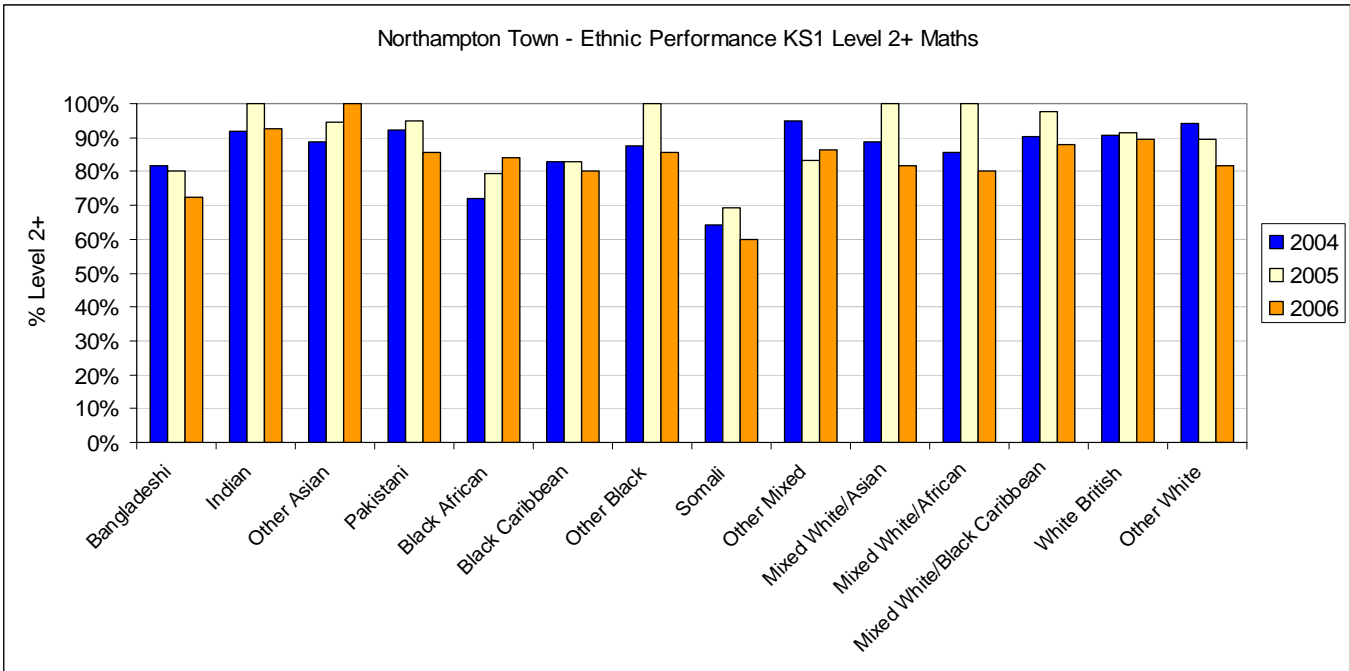
- When we turn to the data for Northampton and Wellingborough, we find that the numbers in each cohort for each minority ethnic group often become too small to make comparisons meaningful;
- The pattern in Northampton in 2006 is not dissimilar to that in the county, with Somalis and Bangladeshis performing poorly across the board;
- All Black groups tend to perform somewhat below that of the White British (85%, 82% and 90% respectively in reading, writing and maths), with Black Africans performing the worst in reading (77%), Mixed White/Black Caribbeans performing the worst in writing (69%) and Black Caribbeans performing the worst in maths (80%).
- The White British in 2006 perform slightly less well in Wellingborough across the board;
- The pattern in Wellingborough is a little different from that found in the county, with Bangladeshis doing significantly better across the board (100% success rate) and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans doing somewhat better across the board than the White British (85% v 83% in reading, 81% v 80% in writing and 100% v 88% in maths);
- Over time the White British are making progress in reading (by 4%) and writing (by 3%) but not in maths (-1%) in Northampton;
- The Bangladeshis are falling further behind the White British across the board, with their performance in reading remaining static and their performance in writing and maths deteriorating by 7% and 10% respectively in writing and maths;
- The position of Black groups over times varies, with Black Africans making progress across the board and greater progress indeed in writing and maths than the White British; with Black Caribbeans matching the progress of the White British in reading and writing and falling behind only in maths; and with, by contrast, the Black Other and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans deteriorating across the board and thus falling further behind the White British over time;
- In Wellingborough unlike Northampton, the Bangladeshis have dramatically improved their position across the board;

- While the situation of the Black Other is not dissimilar with the gap between them and the White British growing over time, the same cannot be said of the other two groups: Black Caribbeans are doing worse over time across the board and falling further behind, while Mixed White/Black Caribbeans are improving their performance in reading and maths and catching up overall;

Northampton town and Wellingborough - KS1 Level 2+ by Ethnicity





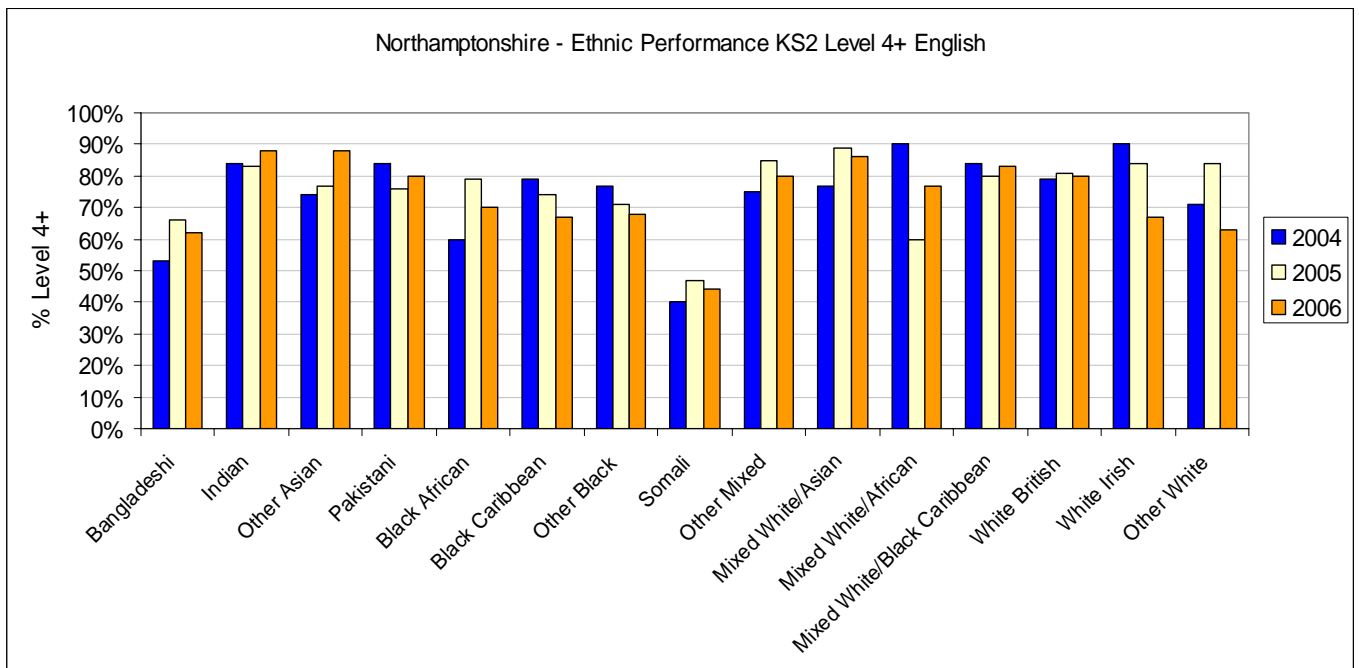
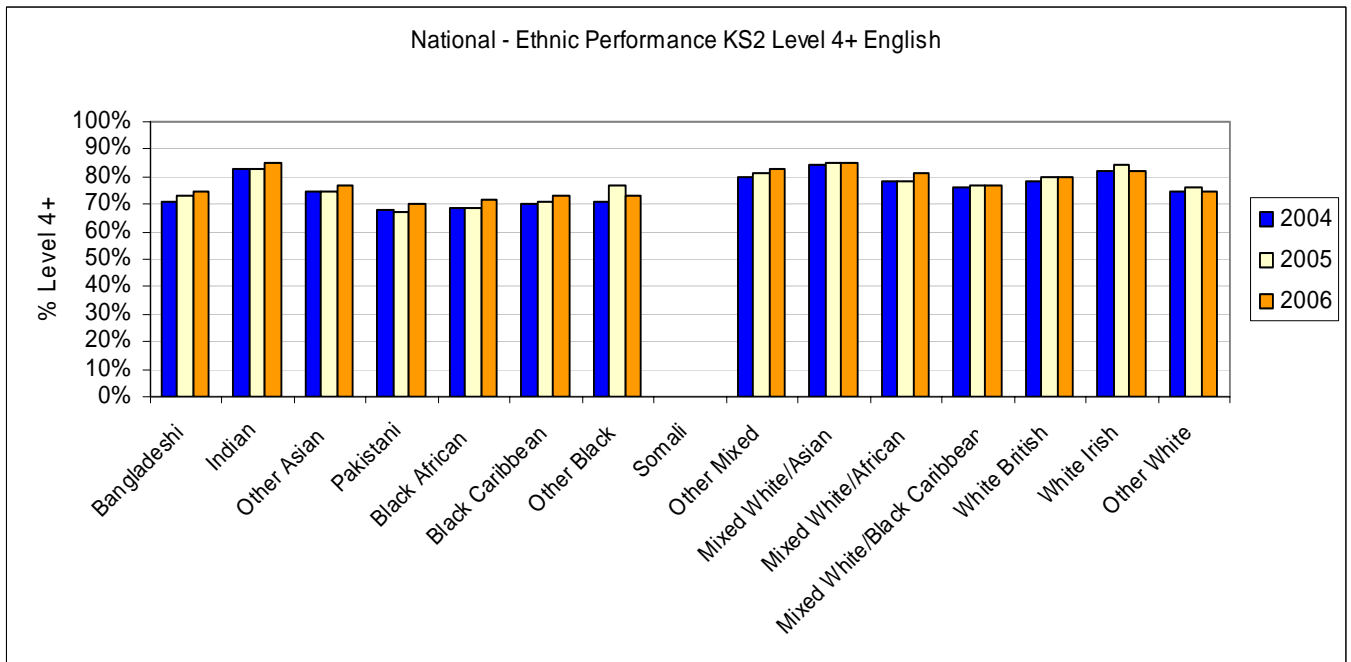


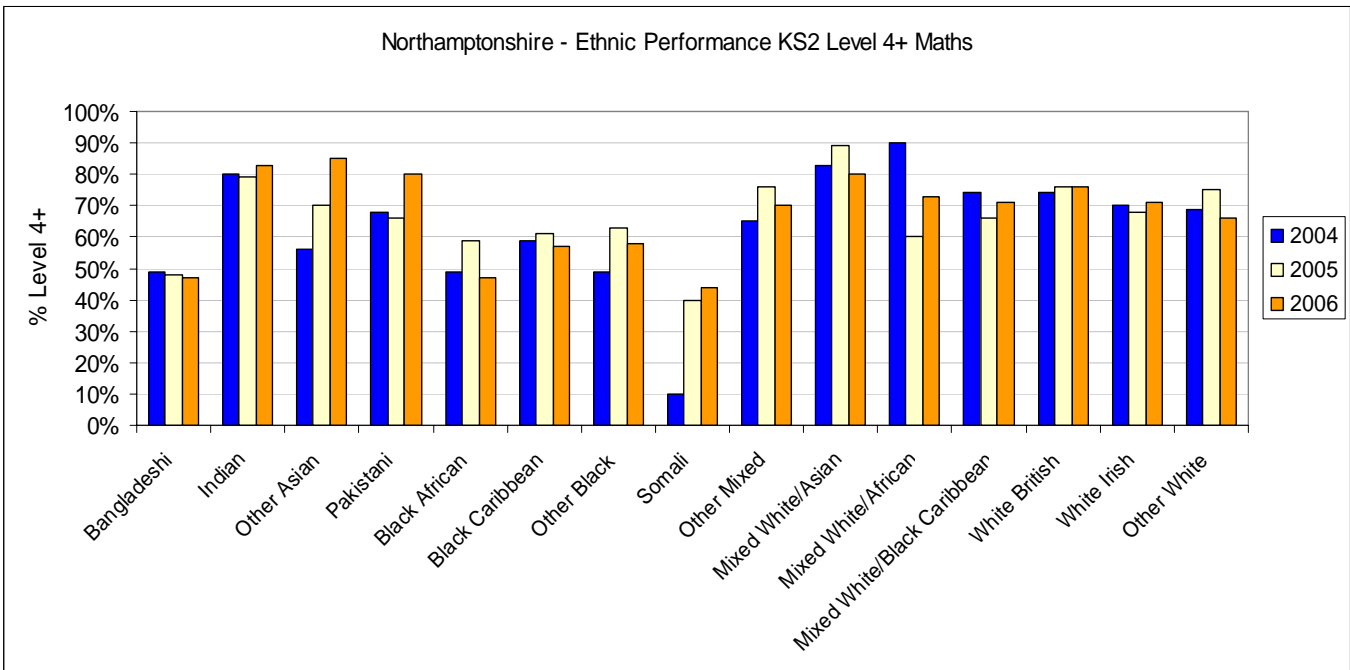
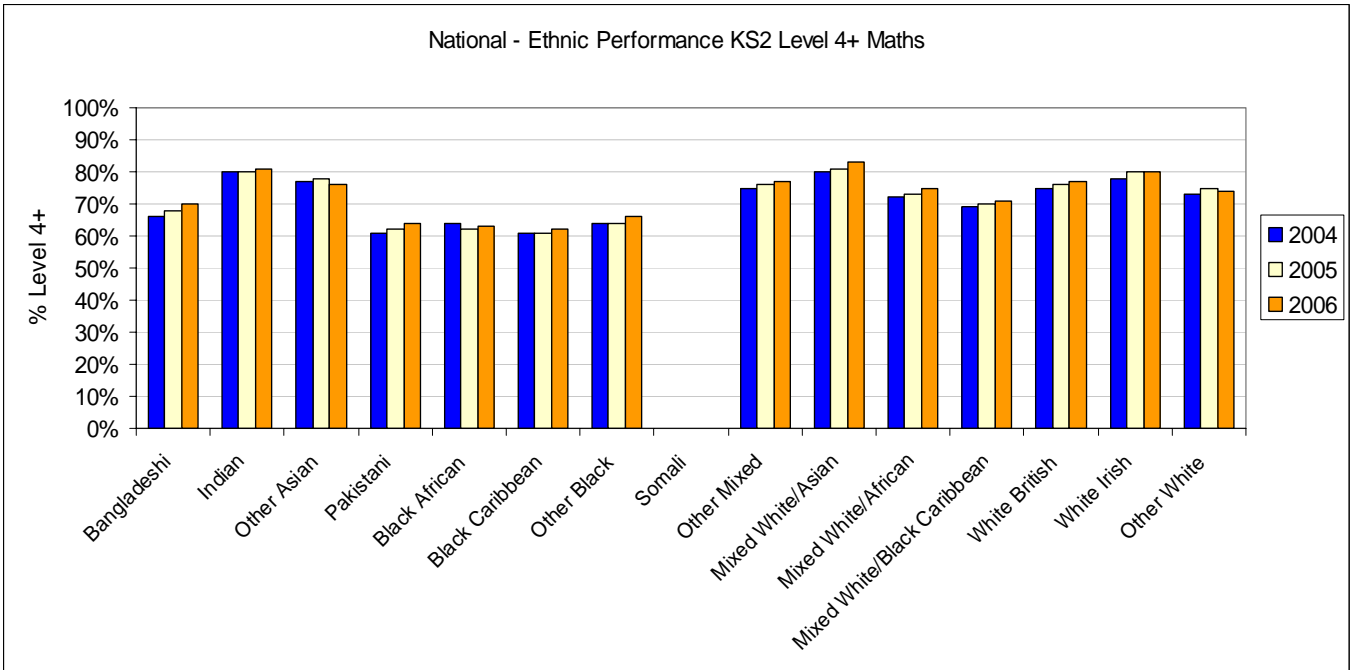
Key Stage 2

- The pattern found at KS1 is more marked, with Somalis (44% in both English and Maths) and Bangladeshis (62% in English and 47% in Maths) performing in 2006 in the county at a significantly lower level than the White British (80% and 76% respectively) ;
- The performance of Black groups in English is variable with Mixed White/Black Caribbean performing better than the White British and the others somewhat worse: Black Africans (70%), Black Caribbeans (67%) and Black Other (68%);
- The performance of Black groups is also variable in Maths with Mixed White/Black Caribbeans (71%) performing closest to the White British (76%) and the others somewhat further behind: Black Africans (47%), Black Caribbeans (57%) and Black Other (58%);
- Any concern which the performance of Pakistanis at KS1 exhibited in writing is exorcised when we note that in English Pakistanis perform at the same level as the White British and in Maths at a higher level;
- Both the Somalis (4%) and Bangladeshis (9%) are improving in English over time and thus reducing the gap with the White British
- The position of Black groups varies: Black Africans (10%) are improving faster than the White British (1%), the Mixed White/ Black Caribbeans are falling slightly behind (-1%) and the Black Caribbeans and Black Other are falling radically behind (-12% and -9% respectively);
- While the Somalis (34%) are improving in Maths, the Bangladeshis (-2%) are not and are thus falling further behind the White British (2%);
- Apart from the Black Other whose performance has improved (by 9%), the other Black groups have deteriorated in Maths and have thus fallen further behind the White British (who have improved by 2%): Black Africans have fallen by -2%, Black Caribbeans by -2% and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans by -3%;
- *Taking the results for English and Maths together, the groups that give the most cause for concern because they underachieve to a significant degree across the board are the Somalis, Bangladeshis, Black Caribbean and Black Other;*
- *It should be noted that these are the same groups we identified at KS1;*
- *Examination of trends at KS2 over time confirm that Black Caribbeans and Black Other are a particular cause for concern since the gap between them and the White British is growing;*
- The performance of the White British in 2006 is the same nationally and locally for English but is slightly worse for Maths (by 1%) in the county than the country as a whole;
- The performance of Bangladeshis is worse in English and Maths in the county than across the country;
- While Bangladeshis are making greater progress in the county than across the country in English, their performance in Maths in the county is falling while their performance in Maths across the country is improving; the gap therefore is increasing over time in Maths;
- Apart from the Mixed White/Black Caribbeans whose performance in English and Maths is similar nationally and locally, the performance of the other Black groups in English and Maths is worse in the county;
- While Black Africans are making more progress in English in the county (by 7%), they are falling slightly further behind in Maths in the county (by -1%); the reverse is true of the Black Other whose performance in English in the

county is deteriorating (by -9%) when nationally it is improving and whose performance in Maths is improving (by 9%) in the county at a faster rate than across the country; by contrast, the performance of Black Caribbeans and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans is deteriorating in the county in English (by -12% and -1% respectively) and Maths (-2% and -3% respectively) at a time when nationally there have been small improvements over time in both subject areas;

National and Northamptonshire - KS2 Level 4+ by Ethnicity

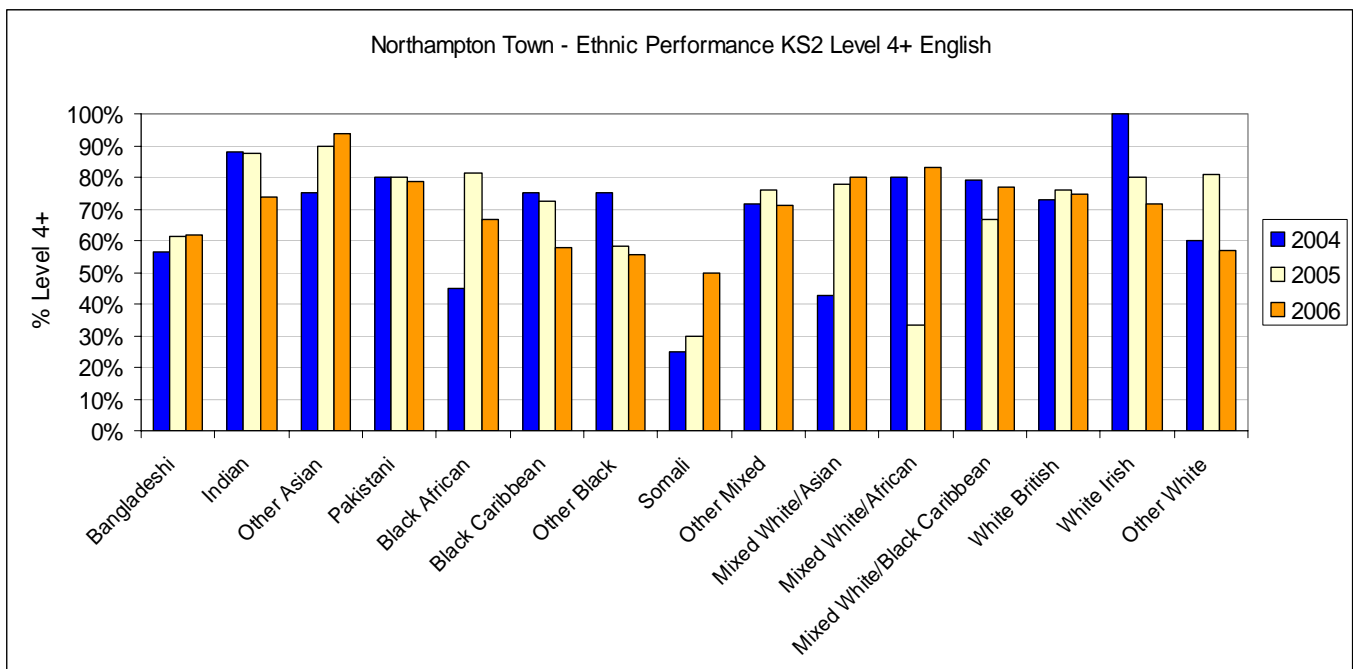




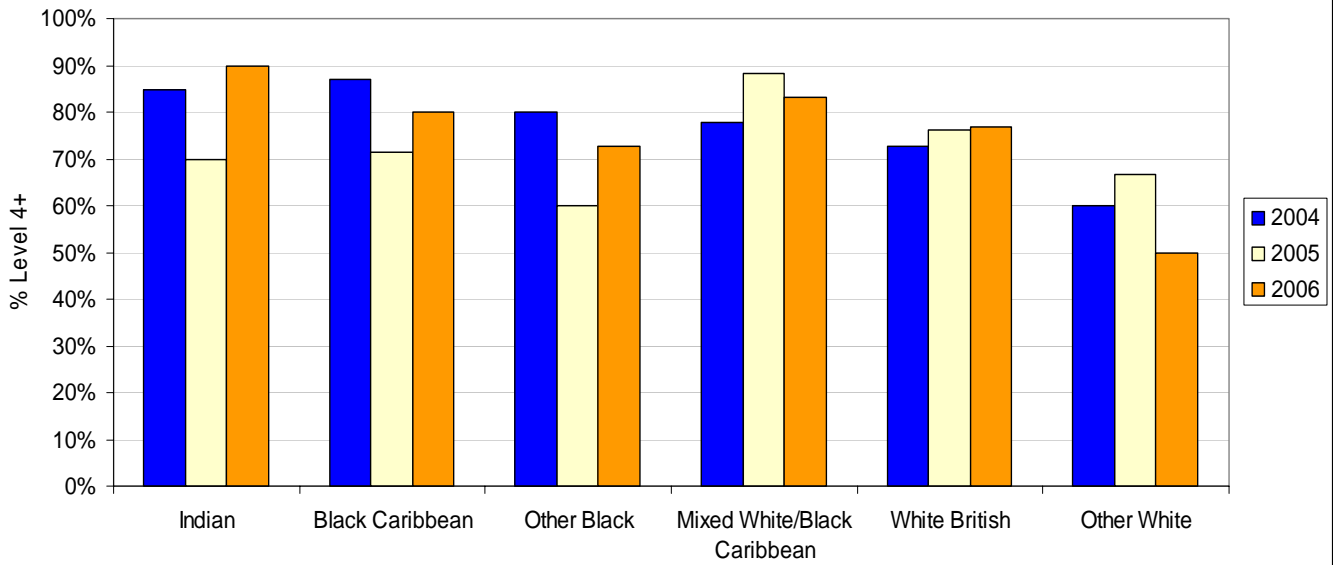
- The White British perform less well in the towns than in the county though the gap is less marked in Wellingborough;
- In Northampton, the performance of Somalis and Bangladeshis is not as markedly different as in the county, with Bangladeshis indeed performing better in English than both Black Caribbeans and Black Other and Somalis performing better in Maths than Black Africans, Black Caribbeans and Black Other;

- The performance of Mixed White/ Black Caribbeans is similar to that found in the county, being higher than the White British in English and only 1% lower than the White British in Maths;
- In Wellingborough, the Black Other perform slightly less well than the White British in English but markedly less well in Maths;
- While the performance of Mixed White/ Black Caribbeans is higher than the White British in both English and Maths and significantly better than that in Northampton, the performance of Black Caribbeans is more variable, being higher than the White British in Wellingborough and lower in Northampton;
- We must again remember that the cell sizes are often small so that we need to be circumspect about any comparisons at this level;

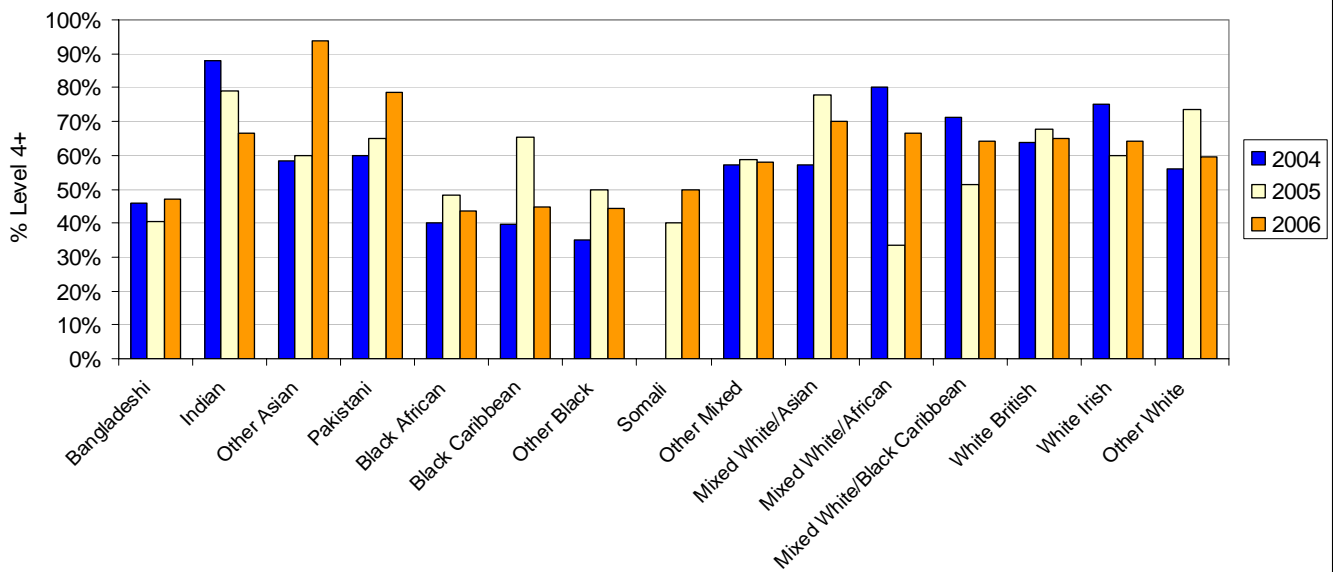
Northampton town and Wellingborough - KS2 Level 4+ by Ethnicity

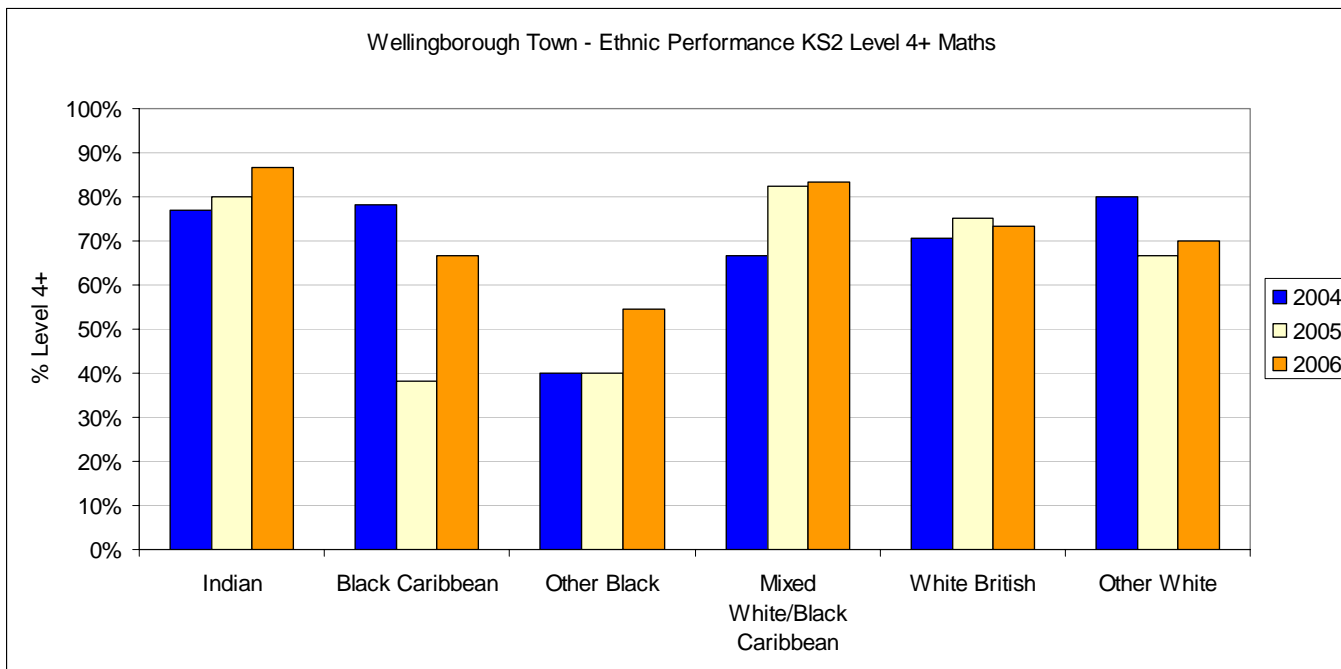


Wellingborough Town - Ethnic Performance KS2 Level 4+ English



Northampton Town - Ethnic Performance KS2 Level 4+ Maths



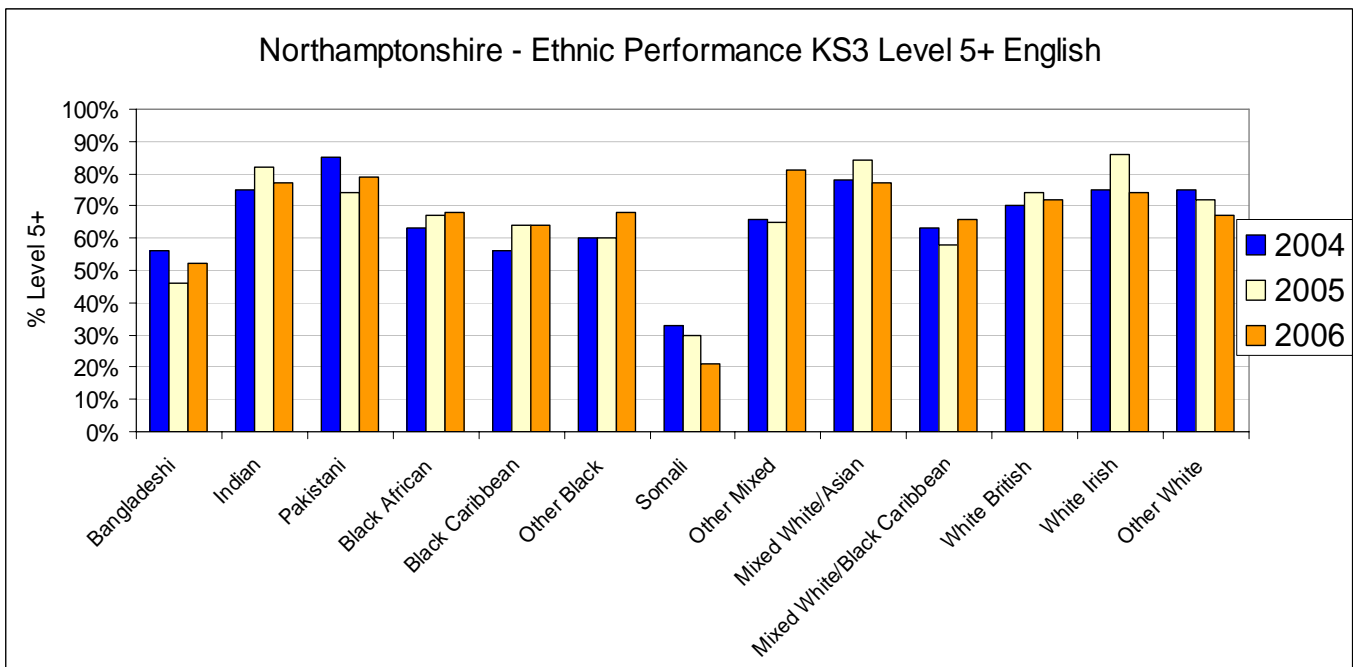
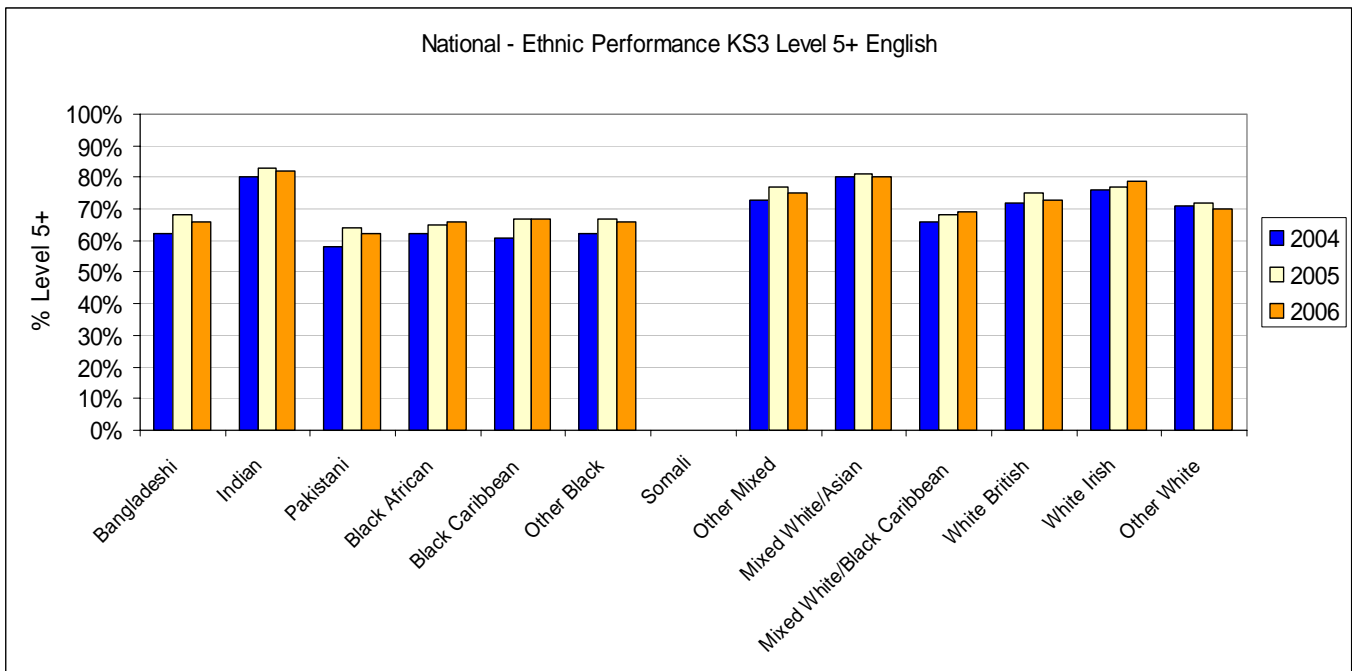


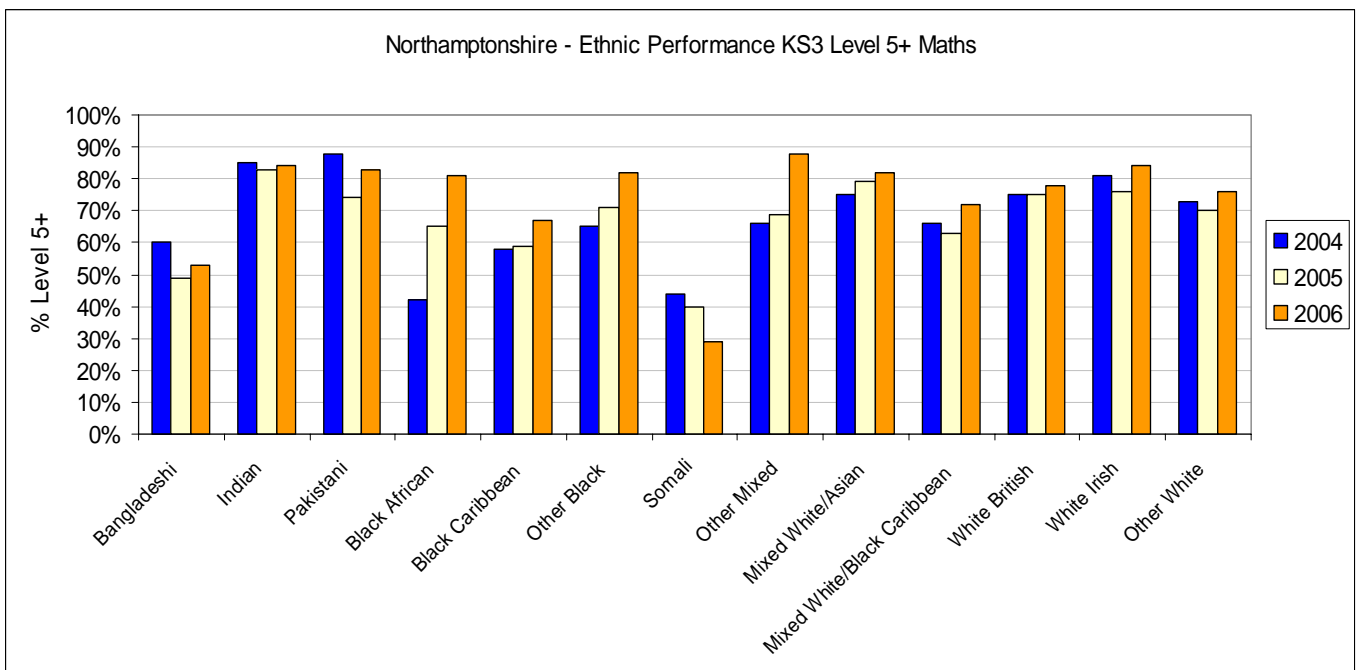
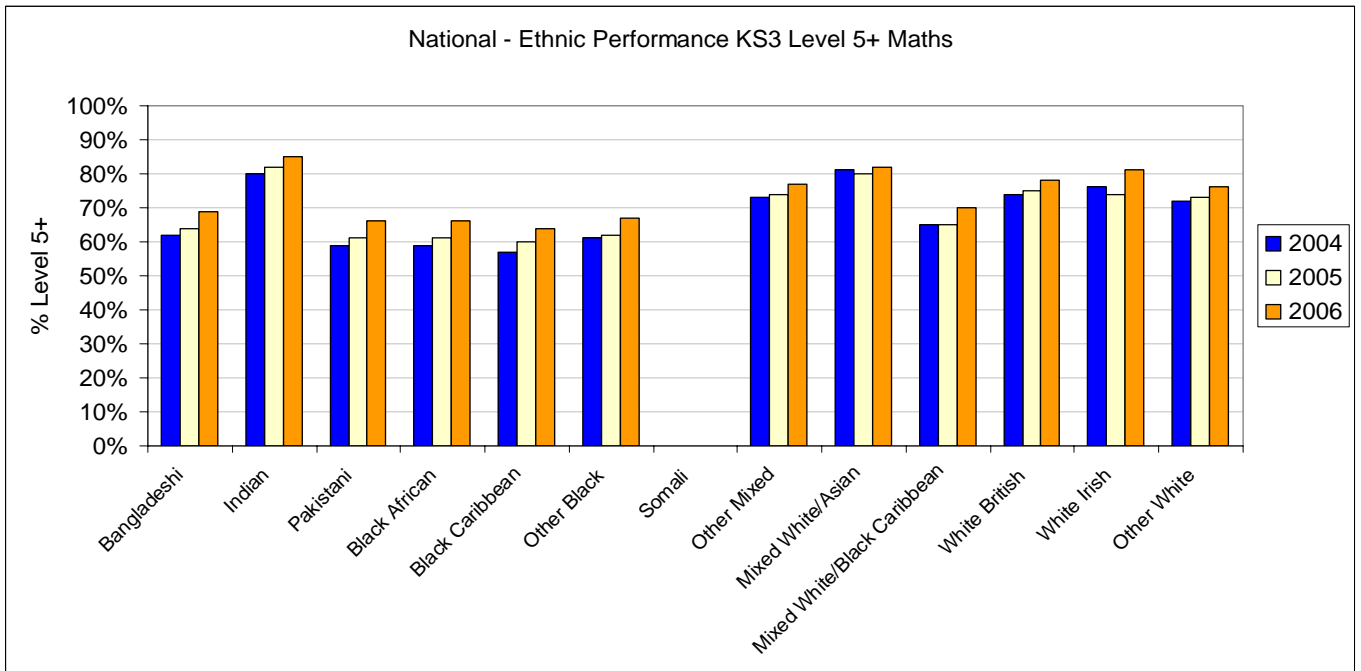
Key Stage 3

- The pattern found at KS2 is more marked, with Somalis (21% in English and 29% in Maths) and Bangladeshis (52% in English and 53% in Maths) performing in 2006 in the county at a significantly lower level than the White British (72% and 78% respectively);
- The gap between Somalis and Bangladeshis relative to the White British is somewhat greater in English than that in KS2. At KS3 the gap for Somalis is 51% and for Bangladeshis 20% in English as opposed to 36% and 18% respectively at KS2; the gap between Somalis and Bangladeshis relative to the White British has grown for the former and not changed radically for the latter: at KS3 the gap for Somalis is 49% and for Bangladeshis 25% in Maths as opposed to 32% and 29% at KS2;
- While the small numbers of Somalis raises doubts as to the meaningfulness of the above comparisons, the same cannot be said of Bangladeshis. Their position is of particular concern;
- The performance of Black groups in English is somewhat below that of the White British (72%): Black Africans (68%), Black Caribbeans (64%) and Black Other (68%); Mixed White/ Black Caribbean (66%);
- The performance of Black groups is more variable in Maths with Black Africans (81%) and Black Other (82%) surpassing the White British (78%) with the others somewhat further behind: Black Caribbeans (67%) and Mixed White/ Black Caribbeans (72%);
- While Black Caribbeans perform at a lower level than other Black groups in both English and Maths, it should be emphasised that the gap between them and the White British is much lower at KS3 than at KS2. At KS3 the gap in English is 8% compared to 13% at KS2, while the gap in Maths is 11% compared to 19% at KS2. This improvement alongside the performance of other Black groups gives some grounds for hope;

- Over time both Somalis and Bangladeshis have experienced a deteriorating performance in both English (by -12% and -4% respectively) and Maths (by -15% and -7% respectively) so that both are falling further behind the White British (whose position improved in English by 2% and in Maths by 3%);
- All the Black groups improved their performance over time: in English, Black Africans (5%), Black Caribbeans (8%), Black Other (15%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans (3%); in Maths Black Africans (39%), Black Caribbeans (8%), Black Other (17%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans (6%) with the gap falling between each of them and the White British, whose position improved in English by 2% and in Maths by 3%;
- While the performance of the White British in the county is not dissimilar to that nationally and follows the same trajectory over time, Bangladeshis do significantly better nationally and, in contrast to the situation in the county, are steadily improving their performance in both English and Maths;
- The situation of Black groups varies: Black Africans and Black Other perform better in the county and are experiencing more improvement there than a comparable cohort nationally;
- Both Black Caribbeans and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans are performing slightly worse than a comparable cohort nationally in English but this is offset by their higher performance in Maths; at the same time their improvement in the county is at a faster rate than the improvement found nationally;
- These trends provide some grounds for optimism for two groups identified earlier as of particular concern, notably Black Caribbeans and Black Other; what the data suggest is that in the early years of secondary school Black groups are catching up with the white British to varying extents;
- *Taking the results for English and Maths together, the groups that give the most cause for concern because they continue to underachieve to a significant degree across the board are the Somalis, Bangladeshis and Black Caribbeans;*
- *It should be noted that these are the same groups we identified at KS1 and KS2; only the Black Other of the four earlier picked out are no longer identified as of particular concern;*
- *The reduction in the gap between the performance of Black Caribbeans and the White British at KS3 compared to KS2 gives some grounds for hope;*
- *Examination of trends at KS3 over time confirm that Bangladeshis are a particular cause for concern since the gap between them and the White British is growing;*

National and Northamptonshire - KS3 Level 5+ by Ethnicity



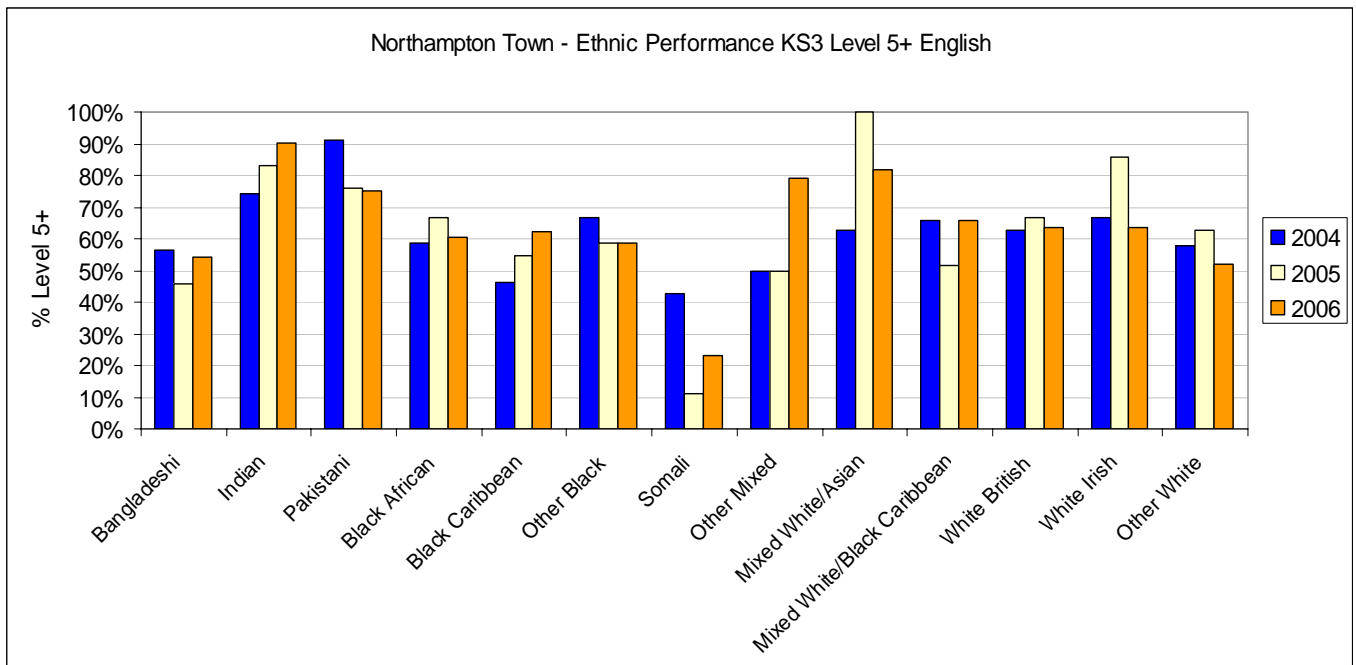


- The White British perform less well in the towns than in the county with their performance in English in Wellingborough being particularly depressed;
- The performance of Somalis and Bangladeshis in Northampton is, in line with their performance across the county, worse than other groups in both English and Maths, and it is deteriorating over time so that the gap with the White British is growing;
- The performance of the Black groups in Northampton in English is closer to that of the White British than in the county, with one group, the Mixed

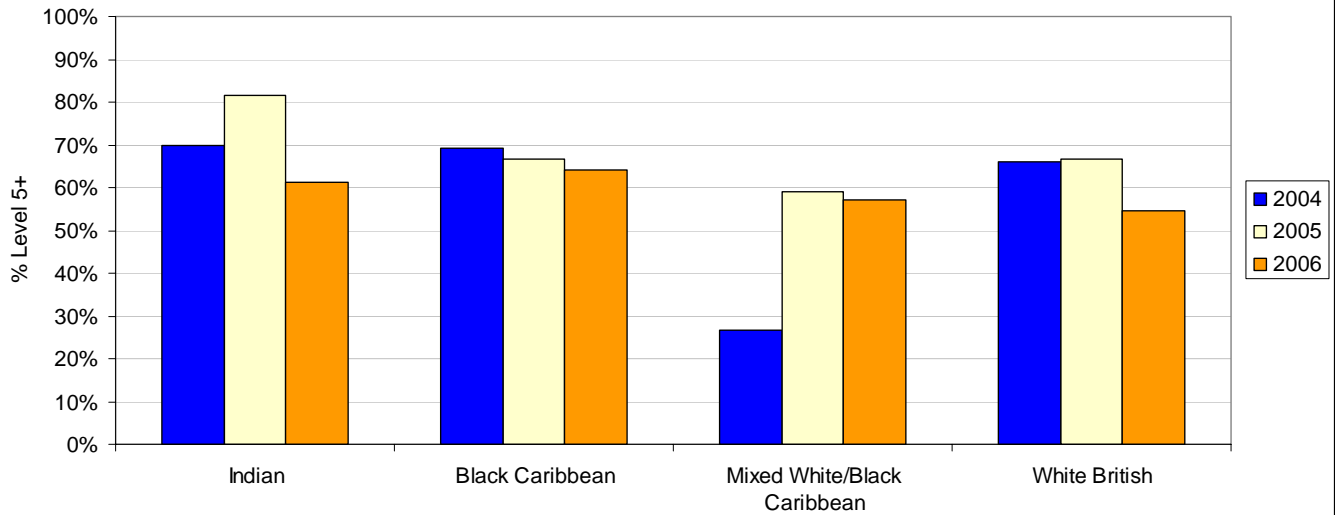
White/Black Caribbeans indeed out performing the White British in both Northampton and Wellingborough;

- The performance of the Black groups in Northampton in Maths is, with the exception of Black Africans who outperform the White British (by 8%), somewhat further away from the White British than in the county: Black Caribbeans (-14% v -11%, Black Other (-6% v +4%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans (-7% v -6%);
- Black Caribbeans do slightly better in English (by 2%) and significantly better in Maths (by 19%) in Wellingborough than in Northampton, and indeed out perform the White British there;
- Over time, the performance of Black Africans and Black Caribbeans in Northampton is improving faster in both English and Maths than that of the White British; the performance of Black Other in English, however, is falling and this is only partially offset by a slight improvement in Maths; the Mixed White/Black Caribbean position remains fundamentally unchanged;
- In Wellingborough, the Mixed White/Black Caribbeans are experiencing a dramatic improvement in both English and Maths, while the fall in the performance of Black Caribbeans there in English is more than offset by a dramatic improvement in Maths;
- As always we need to be very circumspect in drawing conclusions at the level of towns since the numbers are so small in many of the cells;

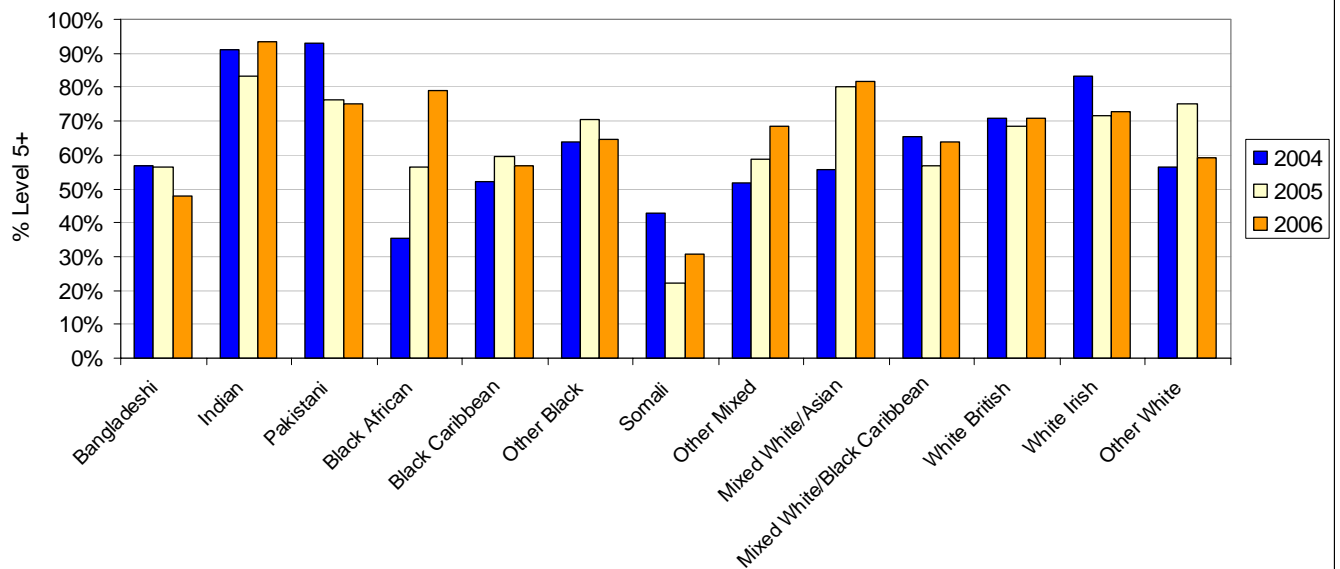
Northampton town and Wellingborough - KS3 Level 5+ by Ethnicity



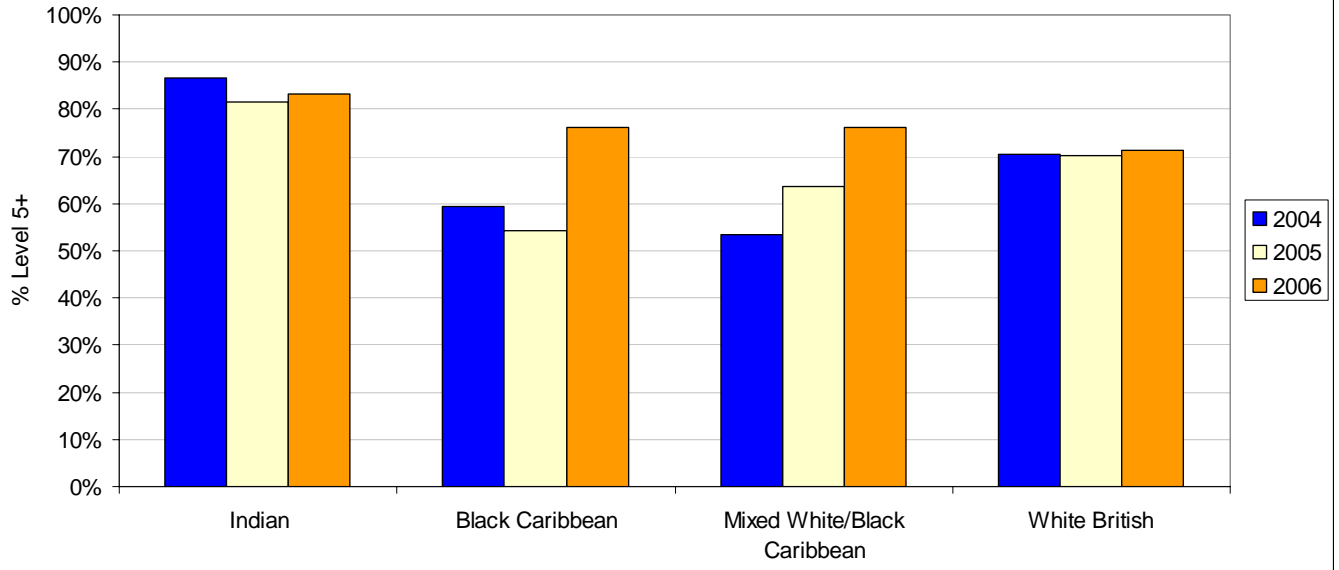
Wellingborough Town - Ethnic Performance KS3 Level 5+ English



Northampton Town - Ethnic Performance KS3 Level 5+ Maths



Wellingborough Town - Ethnic Performance KS3 Level 5+ Maths



Key Stage 4

- What is most striking when we examine the proportions gaining 5+A*-C GCSE is the poor performance in the county of Black groups in 2006 all of whom do less well than the Bangladeshis (40%): Black Africans (19%), Black Caribbeans (29%), Black Other (38%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans (36%);
- The gap between each of these Black groups and the White British (54%) is significantly wider than that found in KS3;
- A similar pattern is evident when we look at the proportions gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths): Black Africans (14%), Black Caribbeans (14%), Black Other (34%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans (23%); only the Black Other have caught up with the Bangladeshis (32%) – the others are performing at a lower level than this underachieving group;
- The gap widens further with the White British (42%) for Black Caribbeans (-25%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans (-19%) when we look at the proportions gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths), the chief indicator now used;
- While the White British are improving (by 3%) over time in the proportions gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths), all the Black groups other than Black Other (+7%) are deteriorating over the period, 2004-2006: Black Africans (by -12%), Black Caribbeans (by -13%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans (by -2%);
- In contrast to the situation of Bangladeshis whose performance is improving over time faster than the White British (7% v 3%) and are therefore catching up, albeit slowly, Black Africans, Black Caribbeans and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans are falling further behind the White British;
- The White British are performing slightly better at the national level (by 2%)
- Bangladeshis are doing better nationally (by 7%) than at the county level so that we need to guard against any complacency about improvements at the county level;
- Apart from the Black Other who are performing worse at national level (by -3%), Black groups are doing significantly better at a national level: Black Africans (by 24%), Black Caribbeans (by 16%) and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans (by 10%); this means that their performance at the county level is even more worrying;
- *The data point to considerable underachievement at GCSE level for the following groups who this constitute a cause for concern in descending order: Black Africans, Black Caribbeans, Mixed White/Black Caribbeans, Bangladeshis and Black Other;*
- *Analysis of trends indicates that Black Africans, Black Caribbeans and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans remain a particular cause of concern;*
- *It should be noted that the one group consistently identified across the 4 stages as a serious cause for concern is that of Black Caribbeans;*

Table 14: National and Northamptonshire in KS4 – by Ethnicity

	% 5+A*-C			% 5+A*-C INC ENGLISH & MATHS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Bangladeshi	48	53	57		35	39
Indian	67	70	72		57	59
Pakistani	45	48	51		33	35
Black African	43	48	51		35	38
Black Caribbean	36	42	45		27	30
Other Black	36	42	47		28	31
Chinese	74	81	80		69	66
Other Mixed	52	59	59		46	45
Mixed White/African	47	56	57		41	43
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	40	44	47		31	33
White British	52	55	58		43	44
Other White	55	59	60		46	47

	5+A*-C			5+A*-C INC ENGLISH & MATHS			COHORT		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Bangladeshi	29	34	40	25	25	32	52	76	54
Indian	75	73	70	64	63	58	80	105	105
Pakistani	46	58	50	36	47	44	28	19	18
Black African	39	53	19	26	28	14	31	32	39
Black Caribbean	28	29	29	20	27	14	81	86	65
Other Black	34	52	38	27	37	34	41	27	32
Chinese	65	67	65	48	61	48	23	36	23
Other Mixed	70	49	47	64	35	38	33	55	48
Mixed White/African	20	27	55	20	13	35	5	15	22
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	39	35	36	25	30	23	59	63	79
White British	51	52	54	39	40	42	6965	6789	6739
Other White	39	56	59	27	43	46	150	113	149

- In Northampton, the white British perform on a comparable level to that in the county in the proportions gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths), in 2006; in Wellingborough, they perform somewhat lower (33%);
- The performance of the Bangladeshis (38%) in Northampton is better than that in the county and is not far below that of the White British (41%);
- The performance of all the Black groups is also better in Northampton than that in the county;
- Black Caribbeans perform less well than other ethnic groups in the proportions gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths) in Northampton (with only 19% achieving 5+A*-C (including English and Maths)) and, along with Mixed White/Black Caribbeans, perform the least well in Wellingborough (with only 8% and 7% respectively gaining the appropriate qualifications);

KS4 –Northampton Town and Wellingborough by Ethnicity

	% 5+A*-C			% 5+A*-C INC ENGLISH & MATHS			COHORT		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Bangladeshi	28	31	45	26	22	38	39	58	42
Indian	90	72	67	81	69	55	21	29	33
Pakistani	59	58	43	47	50	43	17	12	14
Black African	45	54	27	27	33	23	22	24	26
Black Caribbean	25	26	31	20	24	19	40	42	26
Other Black	25	50	42	29	33	42	24	12	12
Chinese	100	73	80	60	60	50	5	15	10
Other Mixed	56	58	43	56	42	22	9	12	23
Mixed White/African	0	25	38	0	25	23	2	8	13
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	33	26	43	22	22	30	27	27	44
White British	44	47	47	35	38	41	1437	1401	1445
Other White	33	32	54	20	18	54	46	28	24

	% 5+A*-C			% 5+A*-C INC ENGLISH & MATHS			COHORT		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Indian	65	64	69	54	50	60	26	36	35
Black Caribbean	28	45	25	16	36	8	25	22	24
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	50	40	21	50	47	7	10	15	14
White British	45	37	46	38	35	33	466	454	494
Other White	29	75	26	23	63	21	31	16	19

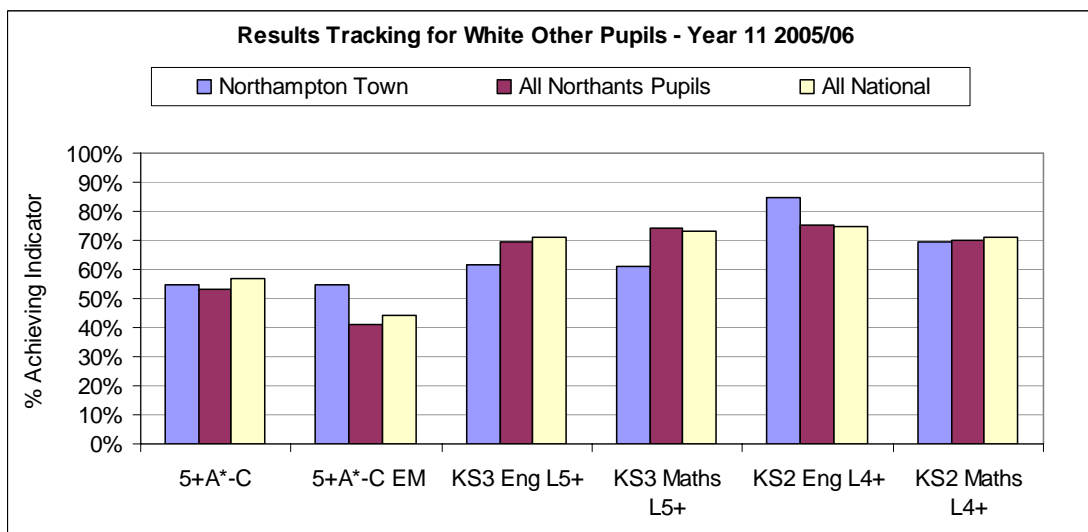
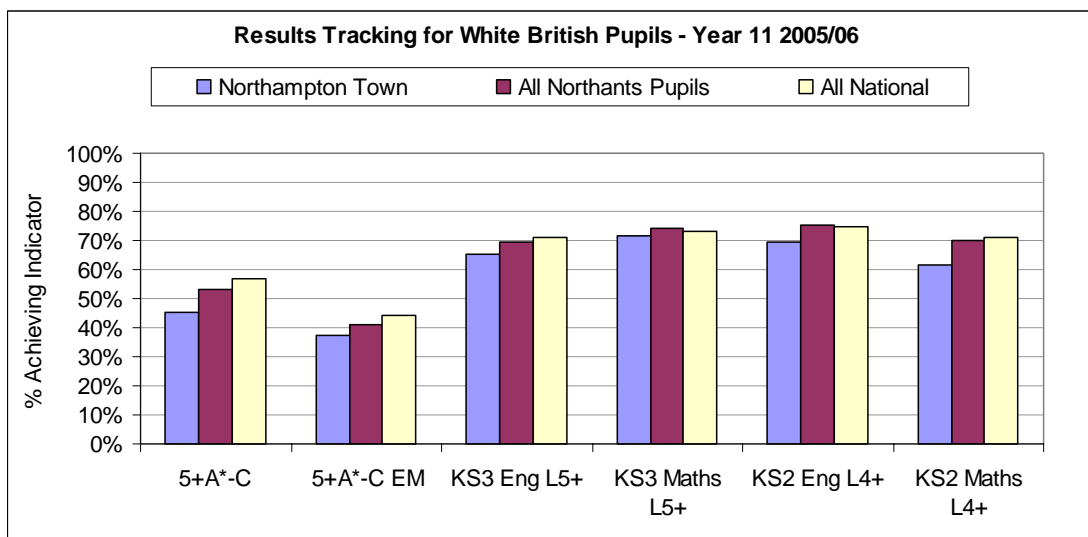
Tracking one cohort

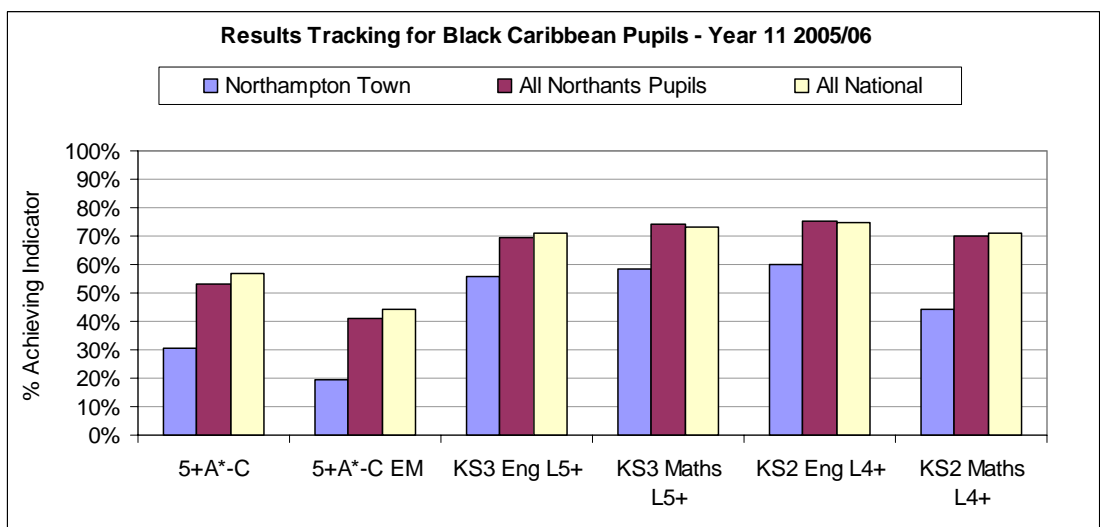
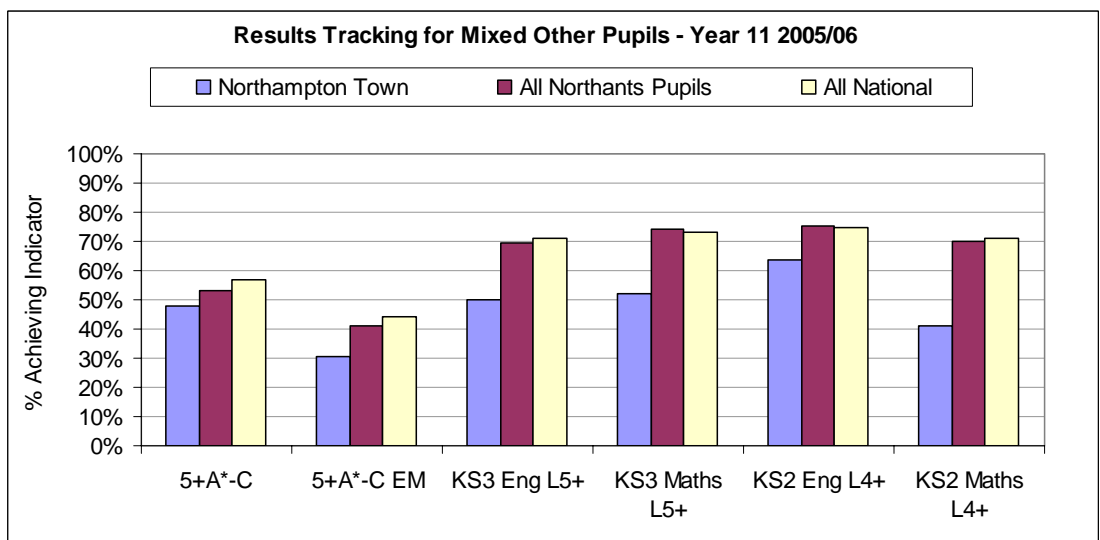
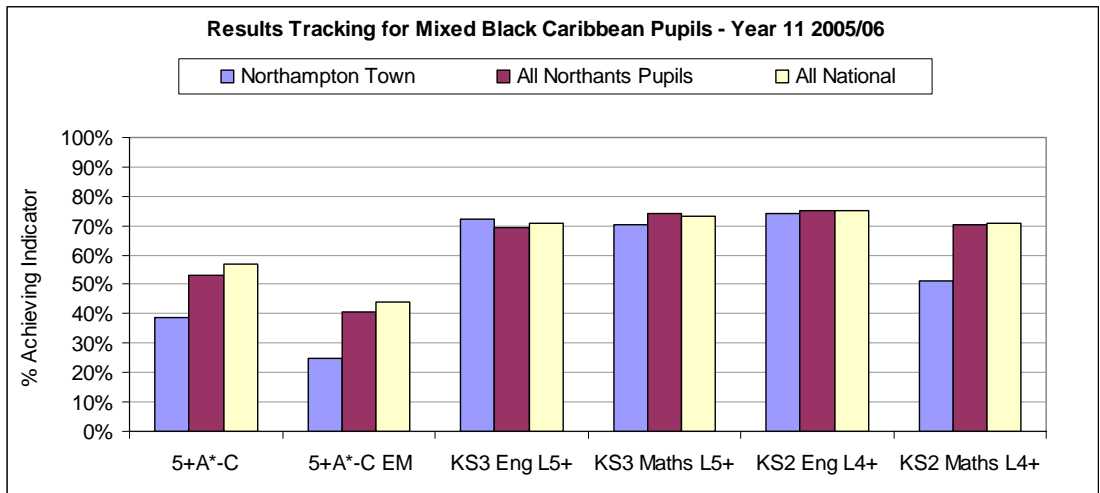
- So far we have been looking at different cohorts. The pupils in KS1 are different from those at KS2, KS3 and KS4. Although we have used language at times which may suggest that we are referring to the same pupils at different stages, we are in fact taking a number of snap shots in three different years of different cohorts of pupils the KS1 of 2004, the KS1 of 2006, the KS2 of 2004, the KS2 of 2006 etc.
- To gauge progress we need to track the same pupils over time. This has been done for one cohort completing KS4 in 2006 who did KS3 in 2004 and KS2 in 2001. The analysis has been done for Northampton and Wellingborough but not the county;
- We need to be very circumspect in interpreting the results because the number of pupils that can be matched over this period is small;
- If we take in turn the key groups that we have focused on above and compare their difference with the White British at each stage we can gauge what progress if any each of these groups is making;

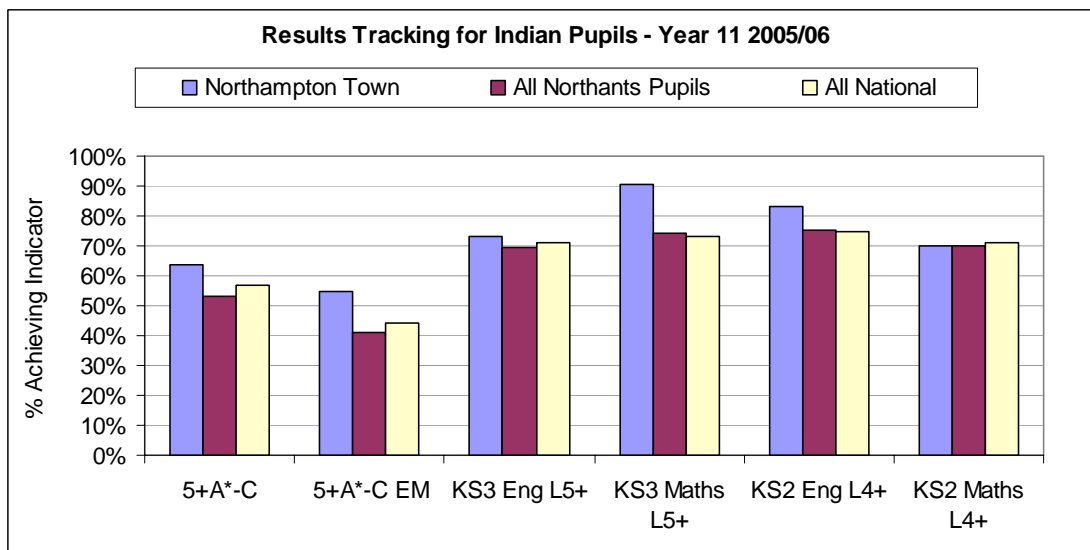
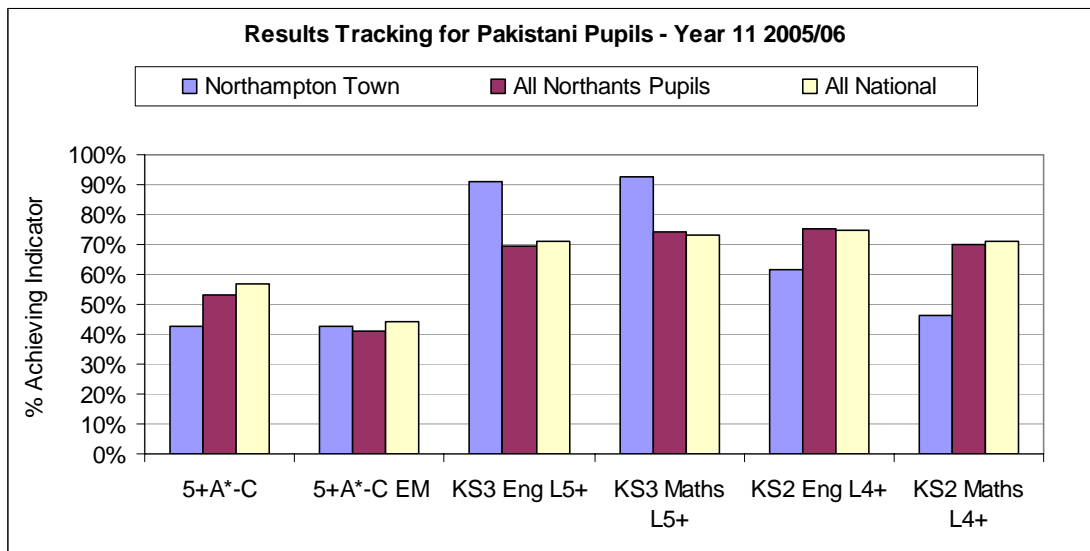
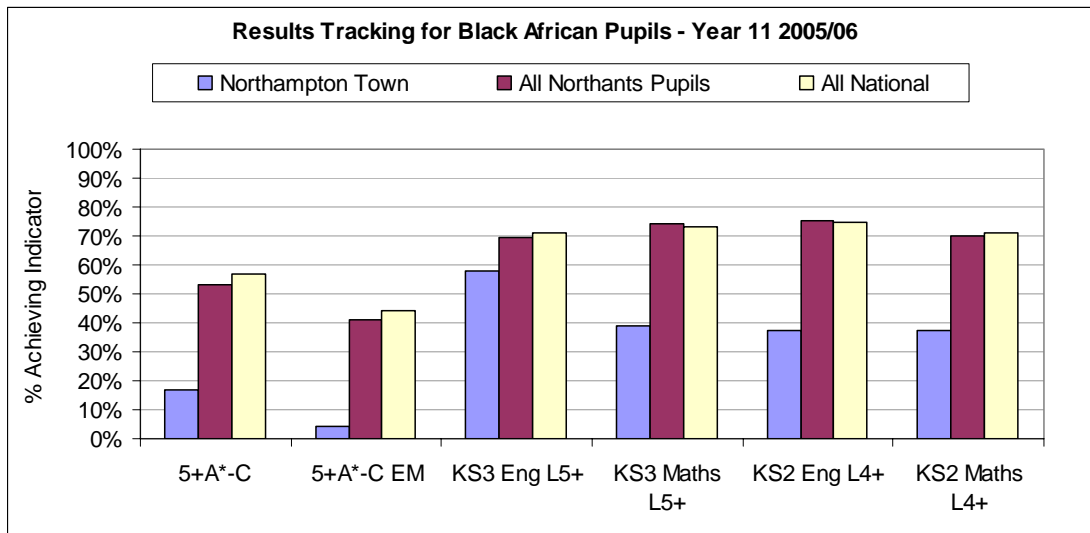
- We shall focus below on Northampton mainly because the numbers are higher;
- The Bangladeshis steadily improve from stage to stage. A gap of 12.9% in English at KS2 and 18.1% in Maths at KS2 becomes reduced at KS3 where the gap falls to 8.5% in English and 17% in Maths. The gap is even lower at KS4 in the proportion gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths): 6.2%
- The experience of Black groups is more variable;
- Black Other start well and perform better than the White British in English and Maths at KS2. They maintain their superior position in English at KS3 but drop behind the White British (by 11.8%) in Maths. This setback is only temporary, however, and they achieve better results (by 4.5%) than the White British at gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths);
- The Mixed White/Black Caribbeans start well in English at KS2 and outperform the White British (by 5.1%) but are at this stage behind in Maths (by 10.4%). They maintain their superior position in English at KS3 (by 10.7%) and virtually catch up in Maths (behind only by 1.3%). They are not able, however, to maintain this progress and fall behind in the proportion gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths) by 12.2%;
- Black Africans face the worst gap at KS2: 21.8% in English and 24.2% in Maths. Some progress is made in English at KS3 where the gap falls to 9.3% but the gap in Maths widens to 32.9%. They are not able to recover and are way behind the White British in the proportion gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths) with the gap being 33%;
- Black Caribbeans already face a gap in English (9.3%) and Maths (17.7%) at KS2. Only limited progress is made at KS3 with the gap remaining at 9.3% in English and falling only slightly to 13.5% in Maths. The Black Caribbeans don't recover and the gap actually increases in the proportion gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths) with the gap being 18%;
- In Wellingborough, Black Caribbeans also face a gap in English (17.6%) and Maths (9.2%) at KS2. While there is a marked improvement in English at KS3, with the gap falling to 1.1%, the gap in Maths becomes bigger (17.6%). The Black Caribbeans don't recover and the gap actually increases in the proportion gaining 5+A*-C (including English and Maths) with the gap being 23.7%;
- The numbers for each of the ethnic groups identified in the cohort analysis are very low and so we need to be circumspect. Of the minority ethnic groups distinguished only two contain more than 40 pupils: Bangladeshis and Mixed White/Black Caribbeans. The experience of the first does seem to point to relative progress being made as pupils go through the school system, while the experience of the second suggests that some groups may face particular difficulties in the last years of compulsory schooling;
- The cohort analysis does confirm our earlier analysis of the performance of Black Caribbeans. In both Northampton and Wellingborough, they arrive at secondary school already behind their white peers. They make limited progress at KS3 but fall behind again at KS4;
- The cohort analysis also made a calculation for what is known as 'contextual value added'. Value added scores show the progress made by pupils from one key Stage to the next after controlling for prior attainment. Since we know that other factors such as deprivation have an important impact on attainment, contextual value added scores can be calculated which take account not only of prior attainment but also a range of other contextual features such as levels of deprivation;

- Contextual value added scores have been calculated for Northampton and Wellingborough. They indicate that when account is taken of prior attainment and contextual factors, most groups are not making the expected progress either from KS2-KS4 or KS3-KS4. The only exceptions are in Northampton and relate to KS2-4 where all the Black groups distinguished are to varying degrees making greater than expected progress. We need to be careful not to make too much of this but it does resonate with the suggestion made earlier that Black groups are making most progress at KS3.

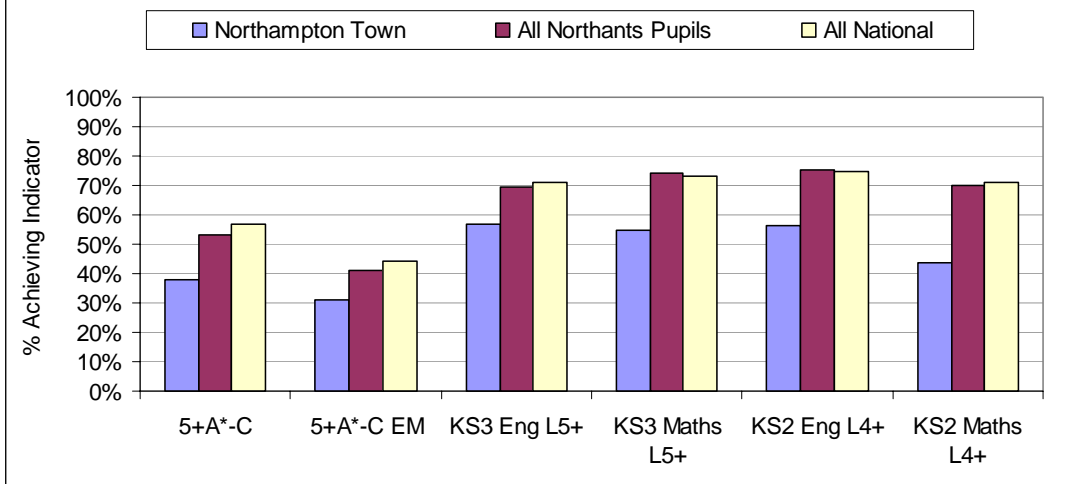
Year 11 2005/06 Results tracking







Results Tracking for Bangladeshi Pupils - Year 11 2005/06



Explaining Educational Inequality

In view of the fact that most of the existing research has focused on West Indian or Caribbean underachievement, we shall perforce here focus on different explanations for the lower educational attainment of this group rather than that of Pakistanis or Bangladeshis. It should be noted, however, that many of the explanations, which we shall be exploring, have earlier been used to account for social class differentials in educational attainment and, with modifications, have also been used to explain Pakistani and Bangladeshi underachievement. What we should note, however, is that ethnic differences in educational achievement cannot be explained away as class differences in educational achievement. As we saw earlier, even when we control for social class, ethnic differences remain. 'In the case of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, low social class explained more than half the difference. However, for blacks, of both genders, social class offered proportionately less in terms of an explanation (Rothson, 2007: 316). Stroud reaches a similar judgement from his analysis of more recent data. After controlling for a number of indicators of (class) disadvantage, he notes that 'Indian and Bangladeshi groups achieved higher results than would be expected given the nature of their disadvantage; the gap for Pakistani pupils relative to White British pupils was reduced by four-fifths and the Black African pupils gap by two-thirds. However, the low attainment of the Black Caribbean group was not accounted for by such controls, remaining 2.5 points below the White British pupils' average' (Stroud, 2007:2). Something else is going on and additional explanations need to be examined and evaluated.

It will be evident that the debate between competing explanations is deeply political. Parekh illustrates this well: 'For example, an explanation in terms of genetic inferiority, the structure of the family or lack of cultural depth, fastens the blame on the West Indian community; an explanation in terms of the West Indian child's low self-esteem, ethnocentric curriculum, racist textbooks and the ethos of the school lays the blame at the door of the school and the educational system; and one that stresses racism and economic inequalities puts the responsibility upon the white society. Not surprisingly, the group which suspects that it might be blamed and asked to change its ways tends to marshal whatever arguments it can against the threatening explanation, or to demand impossible standards of proof and conceptual rigour from it while not bothering to provide these for its own alternative explanation, or to impugn the intellectual judgement and honesty of its advocates' (Parekh, 1983: 114).

The IQ Question

The fact 'that West Indian children tend to score lower than white children on tests of intelligence' (Taylor, 1981:67) has suggested to some people that the differences in educational attainment are primarily attributable to differences in intelligence and that these differences are in turn genetically determined. Although the notion that racial differences in ability are inherited was thoroughly discredited by the scientific community after the Second World War, it was given renewed respectability by Jensen in an article entitled, 'How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement?' (Jensen, 1969), has been popularised in this country by Eysenck (1971) and has been given a renewed lease of life with the publication of 'The Bell Curve' (Hernstein & Murray, 1994).

It might be argued that to devote space to an examination of the alleged genetic inferiority of Caribbean children is to confer 'intellectual legitimacy and social respectability upon an absurd view' (Parekh, 1992: 97). The view is still, however, propagated by some academics and popularised through the media and cannot be left unchallenged. Parekh argues that the Swann Report had no alternative but analyse and

expose the genetic explanation and, given the publication of 'The Bell Curve' since, we are in the same position.

The central thesis of 'The Bell Curve' is that the United States is becoming a meritocracy, with intelligence becoming the key determinant of status. The result is a system of 'cognitive classes', with those at the top tending to be the most intelligent members of society and those at the bottom tending to be the least intelligent members of society. Examining the links between origin, education and destination in Britain, we challenged the meritocratic thesis in the first section. For Herrnstein and Murray, however, and those who sympathise with their position in Britain (Saunders, 1996), the thesis cannot be so easily dismissed. IQ measures intelligence and it is individual differences in IQ (itself seen as primarily inherited) which explain differences in the class positions which individuals achieve.

Although the issue of group differences in intelligence is irrelevant to their central argument, Herrnstein and Murray do broach the issue. They point to the significant fifteen point gap in the average IQ scores between whites and blacks and, drawing mostly on the work of Jensen, claim that there are good reasons for believing that the IQ differences are primarily genetic in origin. Although they are careful enough in the end to conclude that they are 'resolutely agnostic' (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994: 311) on the precise mix of environment and genes, the overall tenor of their argument is clear. The over representation of black people in the lower cognitive classes is explicable in terms of their lower IQ scores and there is nothing which can be or indeed should be done to try to change this situation. Rather than bemoaning the fact that blacks are intellectually inferior to whites, we should celebrate the fact that they possess different qualities: 'It is possible to look ahead to a world in which the glorious hodgepodge of inequalities of ethnic groups - genetic and environmental, permanent and temporary - can be not only accepted but celebrated' (Murray & Herrnstein, quoted in Malik, 1996: 207).

The publication of 'The Bell Curve' caused a huge furore, with the contention that there are inherent racial differences in intelligence being particularly explosive. Here we shall soberly list the arguments which cumulatively indicate that 'the evidence for the mental superiority of one or the other [race is] so flimsy, confused and full of intellectual dishonesty as to be scarcely worth considering' (Jones, 1996: 205).

1 It is questionable whether race is a biologically meaningful concept. Although we can of course distinguish people on the basis of skin colour, those classified as white or black do not, as we saw in chapter 1, constitute distinct populations. Intermarriage is common in Britain for example and geneticists have shown that there is vastly more genetic variation within so-called races as between them (Jones, 1996).

2 It is questionable whether IQ measures intelligence. Gardner for example challenges the notion that there is such a thing as general intelligence and claims instead that there are distinct kinds of intelligence. IQ tests only measure some of these intelligences and are as a result culturally biased (Gardner, 1995).

3 Although studies in the United States indicate a gap of 15 points in the average IQ scores of whites and blacks 'there are signs that the gap between black and white is narrowing' (Kohn, 1996: 104), a phenomenon acknowledged even by Herrnstein and Murray. What's more studies in Britain indicate that 'the overall difference...is considerably smaller' (Swann, 1985: 129).

4 In Britain differences between the social and economic circumstances of white and black families are primarily responsible for the IQ gap. Mackintosh and Mascie-Taylor, who were commissioned by the Swann Report to look into the IQ question concluded that 'the often quoted gap between West Indian and White IQ scores is sharply reduced when account is taken of socio-economic factors' (Swann, 1985: 81).

5 A crucial difference in the environments between blacks and whites depends on whether individuals are classified as black or white. This factor - racism - 'cannot be pinned down by controlling conventional environmental variables' (Kohn, 1996: 100). In a study which critically examines Herrnstein and Murray's thesis, the authors argue that attention needs to be given not only to socio-economic deprivation but also the segregation and stigmatised identity of black people in the United States. Once these three effects of racism are taken into account, the IQ gap becomes explicable (Fischer et al., 1996).

6 Herrnstein and Murray argue that environmental factors cannot explain IQ differences because studies of identical twins reared apart in different environments from an early age show that the heritability of IQ is too high. There are two problems here. Firstly, estimates of heritability (the proportion of the variation of a trait that can be attributed to genetic variation) differ, with Jensen putting it as high as 80% but Jencks putting it much lower at 45%. Secondly, estimates of heritability are based on tests administered to particular groups and cannot properly be generalised to other groups. Thus 'the heritability of height might be extremely high in both a poor Third World village and a wealthy First World suburb - taller parents would produce taller children in both places. The richer population might be taller than the poor, but this does not preclude the possibility that a better-nourished generation in the South might in the future grow as tall as its distant peers in the presently developed world. The correlation between the heights of parents and children might remain just as strong, but the heights themselves might change' (Kohn, 1996: 103-4).

7 The only evidence which could convincingly show that black-white differences in IQ were genetic in origin 'would be the demonstration of a difference in IQ scores between randomly selected groups of black and white children brought up in strictly comparable conditions' (Swann, 1985: 130). Only three studies 'have even attempted to approximate these ideal conditions (albeit not very successfully)' and in these studies what is striking is that 'such differences have been extremely small' (Swann, 1985: 130).

8 There is considerable evidence that IQ scores, which hereditarians assume are relatively stable, are in fact rising considerably. Flynn, who has found this phenomenon in over twenty countries concludes that 'IQ tests "cannot bridge the cultural distance that separates one generation from another". And if the tests cannot bridge the gap between generations, they may be incapable of bridging other cultural gaps, such as those between ethnic groups' (Kohn, 1996: 105).

In view of these arguments, the Swann Report's somewhat circumspect conclusion 'that IQ is not a significant factor in underachievement' seems more than justified.

Economic Deprivation, Culture and the Home

Economic and cultural factors at one stage were considered by sociologists to be critical to an explanation of group differences in achievement. They are still considered important by many. Although the 1944 Education Act removed some financial barriers which had previously reduced access to secondary education for the working class, 'material factors' continued to be responsible for class differences in staying on after compulsory schooling (Halsey, et al., 1980). As for the more recent legislation flowing from the shift in focus generated by the 1988 Education Reform Act, it has been argued that 'choice and the market provide a way for the middle classes to reassert their reproductive advantages in education' (Ball, 1993). This is partly because of their more favourable economic situation which allows private transport, child care etc to be affordable but also because of their 'cultural capital' which enables more informed choices of schools to be made. If we turn to ethnic differences in achievement, again economic and cultural factors are significant. Thus the underachievement of Bangladeshis is explicable in terms of both extreme economic deprivation, which exceeds that of other ethnic groups, and cultural factors - being the most recent immigrant group from South Asia, they are the least familiar with the English education system and understandably have less facility in the English language. The same factors - economic deprivation and lack of fluency in English - go some way also towards explaining the underachievement of Pakistanis (Modood et al., 1997).

The Swann report points out that ethnic minorities are 'particularly disadvantaged in social and economic terms'. This is evidenced for example in the higher rate of unemployment of all minority ethnic groups which stems at least in part from racial discrimination. 'This extra deprivation over and above that of disadvantaged Whites leads in many instances to an *extra* element of underachievement' (Swann 1985: 89). The report recognises that underachievement cannot be wholly accounted for in these terms because groups similarly subject to discrimination and disadvantage differ in their levels of achievement. Since the report was published, evidence has mounted to indicate that, although minority ethnic groups may all be subject to racial discrimination, Indians can no longer be considered to be as a group economically disadvantaged in the same way as Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Caribbeans are. This goes some way to accounting for the educational achievement of Indian pupils. Nonetheless, the differences in achievement between Caribbeans and Asians overall, many of whom are equally disadvantaged, needs to be explained. And here many, including both the Rampton and Swann reports, have turned somewhat cautiously to a cultural explanation.

Here is the Rampton report:

'A disproportionate number of West Indian women are forced to go out to work because of their economic circumstances...The percentage of West Indian men employed on night shift is almost double that of white males and the incidence of one parent families is higher for West Indians than for Whites. West Indian parents may therefore face particular pressures affecting their children in the vital pre-school formative years....While it is now generally accepted that young children need to form a stable and consistent relationship with only a limited number of adults we are faced with a situation where West Indian parents are stretched in ways which make steady, relaxed care of their children hard to achieve...Many West Indian parents may not be aware of the pre-school facilities that are available and may not fully appreciate the contribution that they can make to the progress of their child before he enters school' (Rampton, 1981, quoted in Cashmore & Troyna, 1990: 133).

Here is the Swann Report, seeking to grapple with the differences in achievement between Afro-Caribbean and Asians:

'Asians, it has been put to us, are given to "keeping their heads down" and adopting a "low profile", thereby making it easier to succeed in a hostile environment. West Indians, by contrast, are given to "protest" and "a high profile", with the reverse effect. Given the very different histories of the two groups, it is not an improbable explanation...It has also been put to us that the explanation lies in the particularly tightly knit structure of the Asian community and the Asian family, more tightly knit than is either the case with whites or West Indians' (Swann, 1985: 86).

By contrast the 1996 and 2000 Ofsted reports make no reference to cultural factors at all. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, Ofsted's remit is narrower than that of the other two reports, being focused 'on issues that directly influence pupils' achievements, especially where they relate to education policy, schools and matters that teachers might wish to address as part of their work' (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996: 7). Secondly, certain cultural factors, which previously had been thought to be important in accounting for Caribbean underachievement, have been found empirically to be insignificant. Milner, for example, who earlier had been very influential in pointing to a negative self image among West Indian children because of the inability of their culture to insulate them from racism, recognises 'that black children are now quite clear about their racial identity and view it positively' (Milner 1983: 163). What is true of negative self- image is also true of language. The Caribbean dialect known as Creole or patois, once thought to play a role in underachievement, is now generally recognised to be of minimal significance in this regard (Pilkington, 1984). Thirdly, there has been widespread rejection of cultural explanations because they are taken to imply that Caribbean culture is deficient, effectively blame parents for the underachievement of their children and in the process absolve the education system of responsibility.

There clearly are a series of problems in pointing to cultural differences. The boundaries between ethnic groups are fuzzy; there is a great deal of variation within ethnic groups; and there is the danger of overstating differences. Rampton's picture of the West Indian family is also applicable to many white families for example. The risk of ethnocentrism is high, with other cultures being inappropriately judged by the standards of ones own. Thus Creole or patois was once seen as bad English when it is in fact a dialect of English and linguistically no better or worse than any other dialect. Cultures can be de-contextualised as though they are freely chosen ways of life without acknowledgment being given to their historic roots and their location in a particular social and economic context. It is clearly much more difficult for Caribbean parents to translate their high aspirations for their children into concrete support when they are subject to racial discrimination and economic insecurity. And there is indeed the danger in pointing to cultural factors that the mainstream education system is absolved of responsibility, with policies of compensatory education being put forward to counteract perceived cultural deficits.

Nonetheless, we cannot dismiss cultural explanations by labelling them cultural deficit models. There are cultural differences. Thus 'marriage is markedly less, and divorce and solo parenthood markedly more, prevalent among Afro-Caribbeans than among other ethnic groups' (Elliott, 1996: 46). Cultures are not equally effective in the support which they are able to provide children. Both Caribbean and Asian cultures are more effective than that of the white working class in encouraging children to stay on after post compulsory schooling. And there is little doubt, as Stuart Hall points out and as Swann reiterates, that Asian cultures are more 'cohesive and

supportive' than others. In suggesting that Caribbean culture is less conducive to educational success than that of Asians, it is not implied that the parents are to be blamed for the underachievement of their children. Caribbeans historically suffered 'a more severe process of cultural fragmentation' than Asians and, despite efforts since then to fashion 'a cohesive and supportive' culture, have found it difficult, given the material disadvantage and racism they continue to face (Hall et al., 1978). To recognise that the culture of the home is a significant factor in underachievement does not imply merely a policy of compensatory education. Measures to improve the social and economic circumstances of Caribbean families and measures to combat racism are crucial. And it is of course incumbent upon the education system to be more active.

Location, deprivation and culture

The greater likelihood of minority ethnic groups living in the most deprived areas, and thus the greater likelihood of attending worse performing schools, tends to depress the educational outcomes of minority ethnic groups (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007). This applies to the achievement of Black Caribbean pupils as well as other minority ethnic groups including in particular Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black African pupils (Stroud, 2007).

There has recently been increased concern expressed in some quarters at the level of residential and educational segregation evident in (some) minority communities (Pilkington, 2005). While the claim that segregation has generally been growing has been effectively challenged by empirical studies (Dorling & Thomas, 2004), it cannot be assumed that increasing segregation invariably has negative implications and declining segregation invariably has positive educational outcomes. What is noteworthy about the location of Black Caribbeans is that they tend to have the lowest level of residential segregation of all minority ethnic groups. This means that there are more opportunities for inter ethnic contact. This comes at a price, however. They are more likely to live in poorer areas than Whites as a whole but at the same time they tend to live alongside relatively poor Whites in those areas who already feel disillusioned about education. 'Greater levels of contact with disenchanted majority working class youth can lead to negative engagement with school and poorer levels of attainment for all groups including Whites' (Rothson, 2007: 317).

Educational policy

The advent of a Labour government in 1997, committed to increased spending on 'education, education, education' has meant that, in contrast to the previous administration, equality of opportunity has been explicitly resurrected as a key objective. In his foreword to the White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, which sets out the government's thinking behind subsequent reforms, the Secretary for Education and Employment described the government's key objectives as 'equality of opportunity and high standards for all' (David Blunkett, 1997 quoted in Gillborn & Mirza, 2000:7).

The emphasis on the overriding importance of standards, however, and the consequent commitment to parental choice, the maintenance of diverse types of school, a revamped national curriculum, league tables and inspections represent significant continuities with the previous administration. For some commentators, the concern to raise standards has in practice taken precedence and the reliance on employing market mechanisms to this end has meant increased inequalities. The response of schools to a competitive environment generated by league tables, which

rank schools in terms of the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grades at GCSE, has been to be more selective and to give extra support to those pupils identified as likely to meet this threshold. The result, it is argued, is 'a new IQism' (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000: 210), which labels minority students, as likely failures and justifies rationing provision to support those, often middle class white students, marked for success. In this way national education policy entails increased inequalities. What is more, successful schools are eligible for more funding. The urban location and socio-economic position, however, of many parents from minority ethnic groups inhibit their ability to choose such schools for their children, thereby, it is argued, 'segregating most minority students in under-funded and under-staffed schools in urban areas' (Tomlinson, 2000: 33) This finding is backed up by some more recent research which revealed that 'many BME parents find' that in practice they 'were unable to exercise choice' (Weekes-Bernard, 2007).

While it is important to examine the unintended consequences of a market in education, the government's espousal of equality of opportunity cannot be dismissed merely as an empty form of words. The government has addressed equality issues primarily through its social exclusion agenda. This has meant for example, in the case of education, creating Education Action Zones. Such initiatives are attempts to combat social disadvantage and are not specifically targeted at minority ethnic groups, the assumption being that measures benefiting all disadvantaged groups will disproportionately benefit minority ethnic groups. Since the publication of the Macpherson report, however, the government has become rather less colour blind in addressing the issue of racial equality. An Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) was created in 1999 to replace the special funding previously available under Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act. Since LAs have to bid for this funding, its advent along with other initiatives (including most importantly new race relations legislation), has encouraged LAs and schools, whose arrangements for monitoring were generally poor (Ofsted, 1999), to adopt a more systematic approach to ethnic monitoring. At the same time, Ofsted, criticised for its failure in its inspections to report on racism in schools (Osler & Morrison, 2000) has been given new guidance and training to enable it to tackle racial equality in schools more seriously. In addition, Curriculum 2000 has moved a little away from the previous colour blind national curriculum by making explicit, albeit piecemeal, references to race and cultural issues. The government has even made some hesitant moves to give multiculturalism a greater emphasis in the curriculum. From 2002, all secondary school pupils have been obliged to study citizenship and both this and personal and social education entail a multicultural component. How effective these measures have been remains a matter of dispute. It still remains the case that multiculturalism is not included in the overarching statement of the curriculum's aims and values. To this extent multicultural education still remains somewhat peripheral and perhaps increasingly so with the renewed emphasis on community cohesion. And there clearly are many schools which have neither developed nor implemented appropriate race equality action plans as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

While it is probably too soon to reach a definitive judgement, it is at least arguable that there are contradictions between the measures designed to strengthen the market to drive up standards and the measures designed to promote equality and diversity. The unintended consequences of the first set of measures may outweigh the impact of the second set of measures in tackling the educational underachievement of (some) BME groups (Weekes-Bernard, 2007).

Effective and Ineffective Schools

Sociologists have increasingly moved away from looking at the economic and cultural factors which influence educational achievement and have focused instead on the contribution which schools make. One strand of research - known as School effectiveness research - seeks to compare schools in terms of their effectiveness in promoting educational progress. Such research recognizes that the effectiveness of schools cannot be judged purely by the educational achievements of pupils because these are influenced by the prior achievements of pupils and background factors such as social class. A statistical technique has been devised known as multi level modelling which seeks to control for extra school factors such as prior attainment and intake to measure the contribution of schools themselves to educational progress. The intention is to reach a judgement as to which schools are more effective on average than others in promoting progress and whether schools are more effective with one category of pupils rather than another. Two studies have paid particular attention to ethnicity.

Smith and Tomlinson conducted a study between 1981 and 1986 on 3000 pupils in 18 urban multiethnic comprehensives from 4 LEAs, including different parts of the country - London, the Midlands and the North. Although White pupils on average scored better in the final examinations, followed by Asians and then Caribbeans, the ethnic minorities in fact made better progress. By controlling for the prior attainment and intake of the pupils, Smith and Tomlinson were able to demonstrate significant differences between schools in their average effectiveness. Although some evidence of differential effectiveness was noted, much more significant in their view was the overall effectiveness of schools. Some schools in other words were much better than others in producing good exam results with children from similar backgrounds and with similar previous attainments. Indeed they concluded that 'the differences in exam results attributable to ethnic groups are very much smaller than those attributable to the school level. In other words, what school a child goes to makes far more difference than which ethnic group he or she belongs to' (Smith & Tomlinson, 1989: 281). This is an important study. For 'the average differences in school effects reported could be sufficiently large to account for the reported differences in the average exam performances of ethnic minority and white pupils' (Drew, 1995: 30). We would need, however, further evidence which Smith and Tomlinson don't provide, that ethnic minority pupils do disproportionately go to less effective schools. Although Smith and Tomlinson's findings are very suggestive, the schools examined were not nationally representative, with the researchers having deliberately made efforts to include both schools which were 'thought to be successful and others less so' (Smith & Tomlinson, 1989: 32). It is noticeable that 'the expectations of what all the pupils in these urban schools could achieve was low' (Tomlinson, 1990: 346) so that it is questionable how effective even the effective schools are in the areas where ethnic minorities tend to receive their education.

The other study of note is that of Nutall et al (1989 outlined in Pilkington, 1997) which was much more extensive covering 30,000 pupils in 140 ILEA secondary schools. They found that the progress of ethnic minority pupils was generally as good as, if not better, than white pupils. The one exception comprised Caribbean pupils who made slightly less progress. They also discovered that some schools were on average more effective than others but in addition noted differential effectiveness in relation to Caribbean and Pakistani pupils. Although this study is also suggestive in pointing to differences between schools, there are problems. Unlike Smith and Tomlinson's study, class is not controlled for and doubts have been expressed about

the validity of the prior attainment scores which were partially based on teacher assessments.

School effectiveness research is still at an early stage. There is evidence that schools differ in their effectiveness. On the other hand it is questionable how useful the concept of overall effectiveness is. For there is also evidence 'that the variation between departmental effectiveness is often greater than the differences between schools' overall levels of effectiveness' (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996: 42). In addition there is the question of differential effectiveness, with Nuttall et al's study indicating that not all pupils benefit equally from attending apparently 'effective' schools. The research shows that schools do make a difference but as yet we can't tell exactly how much and for whom. A recent study on tackling low educational achievement concludes that, while disadvantage is the most important determinant of educational outcomes, 'about 14 per cent of the incidence of low achievement is attributable to school quality' (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007).

Racism and Multi-ethnic Classrooms

A second strand of research on schools is not concerned so much with differences between schools as the features which schools share. In the view of some writers, schools are suffused with ethnocentric values. The curriculum reflects the outlook of one culture and as such is biased against children from minority ethnic groups, who find that their own cultures are either ignored or belittled.

In the view of some commentators, the bias against Caribbeans is particularly severe and takes a racist form (Majors, 2001). An early piece of research which involved 510 teachers from 25 schools around the country revealed 'a high degree of consensus of opinion concerning the academic and social behaviour' of Caribbean pupils, with more than two thirds of teachers agreeing in effect that such pupils are less able and give rise to more disciplinary problems. Since the teachers exhibited a much greater willingness to accept unfavourable generalisations about pupils of Caribbean origin than those of Asian or European origin, it does indeed seem 'that there is large scale stereotyping of West Indian pupils' (Brittan, 1976, quoted in Pilkington, 1984: 139). Although we do not have recent evidence from questionnaires on teachers' attitudes towards ethnic minority pupils, a series of qualitative studies in schools indicate that 'African Caribbean and Asian pupils can be subject to different expectations' (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996: 54). One study of a boy's comprehensive in the early 1980s noted, 'There was a tendency for Asian male students to be seen by the teachers as technically of "high ability" and socially as conformist. Afro-Caribbean male students tended to be seen as having "low ability" and potential discipline problems' (Mac an Ghaill, 1988: 64).

To acknowledge that some teachers hold stereotypical views does not necessarily mean that they treat pupils differently in practice. If we wish to explore this question we need to study multi-ethnic classrooms. The first study to gain widespread recognition - and referred to in the Swann report - studied 70 white teachers in primary and middle school classrooms. Using a modified version of the Flanders schedule to measure pupil-teacher talk, Green discovered that Caribbean boys were much more likely to be criticised than other pupils and that, in the case of ethnocentric teachers, Caribbean girls were also much more likely to be criticised. He concluded that 'boys and girls of different ethnic origins taught in the same multi-ethnic classroom by the same teacher are likely to receive widely different educational experiences' (Swann, 1985: 53). Green's work does not, however, explore the

processes which underlie teacher-pupil relationships. To do this we need to turn to ethnographic studies. We shall focus below on five in particular.

Wright conducted an ethnographic study of two multi-ethnic comprehensive schools between 1982 and 1984, focusing on the fourth and fifth years. She found the teachers to be critical of rather than encouraging towards Caribbean pupils. The result was that 'the classroom encounters observed for both schools showed the interaction between the teacher and the individual Afro-Caribbean student to be frequently characterised by confrontation and conflict' (Wright, 1987: 110). 'Behavioural criteria rather than cognitive ones' influenced the teachers' assessment of Caribbean pupils with the result that they 'were likely to be placed in ability bands and examination sets well below their actual academic ability' as measured in one school by their performance in the third year examination (Wright, 1987:123). The response of Caribbean pupils to the labelling process was to resist, in the process confirming their teachers' expectations and entering into a self-fulfilling prophecy which in some cases resulted in suspension or expulsion.

Gillborn studied a coeducational 11-16 comprehensive in the mid 1980s. Despite the fact that the teachers seemed much more committed to the goal of equality of opportunity than those studied by Wright, they believed 'that Afro-Caribbean pupils represented a greater challenge to their authority than any other group in the school' (Gillborn, 1990: 25). Believing 'the myth of an Afro-Caribbean challenge' they sought to nip it in the bud. The result was that 'Afro-Caribbean pupils experienced a disproportionate amount of punishment, and that they were sometimes exclusively criticised even when peers of other ethnic groups shared in the offence' (Gillborn, 1990: 43). A high level of tension and indeed conflict was evident between white teachers and Caribbean pupils, who responded to their differential treatment in some cases by resistance, in other cases by accommodation.

Mac an Ghaill studied a boys' comprehensive and a sixth form college in the early 1980s. Again conflict was evident between white teachers and black pupils. The boys' comprehensive was rigidly streamed, with behavioural criteria rather than cognitive ones again disadvantaging Caribbean pupils. One teacher justified this approach in the following terms, 'There are boys of relatively higher ability in the lower sets, especially among the West Indians. I've told you before Johnson and Brian were marvellous at Maths, especially problem-solving. But it's their, it's the West Indians' attitude and that must decide it in the end. You can't promote a boy who is known to be a troublemaker who's a dodger. It will look like a reward for bad behaviour' (Mac an Ghaill, 1988: 81-2). The response of Caribbeans often took the form of resistance, with the formation of a distinct subculture, the Rasta Heads. Some Asians also resisted but their subculture - the Warriors - adopted a lower profile. The response of the Caribbean and Asian students at the sixth form college was different again. The Black Sisters adopted a policy of 'resistance within accommodation' being, like other young black women studied in two comprehensive schools in London (Mirza, 1992), anti-school but pro-education.

Wright studied 4 inner-city primary schools in 1988-9. Here 'classroom observation indicated that teachers tended to treat Afro-Caribbean children (especially boys) in a more restrictive way than other pupil groups. For instance issuing orders rather than encouraging them to express their ideas. Asian children, on the other hand, received less individual attention; in other words they tended to be overlooked or underestimated by teachers' (Wright, 1992: 27). What is of particular concern 'in addition to the frequency of critical and controlling statements which Afro-Caribbean

pupils received was the observation that they were likely to be singled out for criticism even though several pupils of different groups were engaged in the same act of behaviour' (Wright, 1992: 39). The following extract from a nursery group of 4 year olds illustrates this:

- Teacher: Let's do one song before home time.
- Peter (white boy): Humpty Dumpty.
- Teacher: No, I'm choosing today. Let's do something we have not done for a while. I know, we'll do the Autumn song. What about the autumn song we sing. Don't shout out, put your hand up nicely.
- Mandy (shouting out) Two little leaves on a tree.
- Teacher: She's nearly right.
- Marcus: (Afro-Caribbean boy with his hand up) I know.
- Teacher: (talking to the group) Is she right when she says 'two little leaves on a tree'?
- Whole group: No.
- Teacher: What is it Peter?
- Peter: Four.
- Teacher: Nearly right.
- Marcus: (waving his hand for attention). Five.
- Teacher: Don't shout out Marcus, do you know Susan (white girl)?
- Susan: Five.
- Teacher: (holding up one hand) Good...because we have got how many fingers on this hand?
- Whole group: Five.
- Teacher: OK, let's only have one hand because we've only got five leaves. How many would we have if we had too many. Don't shout out, hands up.
- Mandy: (shouting out) One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.
- Teacher: Good, OK how many fingers have we got?
- Marcus: Five.
- Teacher: Don't shout out Marcus, put your hand up. Deane, how many?

Deane: Five.

Teacher: That's right, we're going to use five today, what makes them dance about, these leaves?

Peter: (shouting out) The wind.

Teacher: That's right. Ready here we go. Teacher and children sing: 'Five little leaves so bright and gay, dancing about on a tree one day. The wind came blowing through the town, whoooo, whoooo, one little leaf came tumbling down'.

Teacher: How many have we got left?

Deane: (shouting out) One.

Marcus: (raising his hand enthusiastically). Four.

Teacher: (to Marcus) Shush, Let's count, one, two, three, four.

Teacher: How many Deane?

Deane: Four.

Teacher: Good, right, let's do the next bit.

(Teacher and children sing the next two verses)

Teacher: How many have we got left, Peter?

Peter: I don't know.

Mandy: Two.

Teacher: I know that you know, Mandy.

Marcus: Two.

Teacher: (stern voice) I'm not asking you, I'm asking Peter, don't shout out. We'll help Peter, shall we. Look at my fingers, how many? One, two. How many, Peter?

Peter: Two.

Teacher: Very good. Let's do the next bit.

(Teacher and children sing the next verse; at the end of the verse:)

Susan: One.

Teacher: Good, let's all count, one. Let's do the last bit.

(Teacher and children sing the last verse; at the end of the verse:)

Teacher: How many have we got left?

All children: None.

Teacher: That's right there are no leaves left. Marcus, will you stop fidgeting and sit nicely.

The final study to be explored was one conducted between 1985 and 1987 in a multi-ethnic comprehensive. Unlike the other studies, the author 'found no evidence of differential treatment of students on ethnic or racial lines either in classrooms or in wider school processes' (Foster, 1990:179). Minority students especially Caribbean girls in fact achieved better results than white pupils, albeit in a school where the standards expected were low. The school differed from the others studied in being located in a community with a long history of cooperation between different ethnic groups. It was generously staffed and the staff had a high level of awareness of race, being engaged in the implementation of an anti-racist programme.

Although Foster recognised that the distinct features of the school he studied may have resulted in him reaching different conclusions than the other ethnographic studies, he has, together with Gomm and Hammersley, since attacked the credibility of these studies. A series of articles have culminated in a book attacking ethnographic and other studies which purport to show that school processes contribute to educational inequality. Their conclusions are worth quoting: 'On studies claiming to show that schools are discriminatory in their allocation of students to different levels of course, they conclude, 'Taken overall this body of research fails to establish that discrimination against working class and black students occurs on any scale in the allocation of students to courses or through the effects of this allocation' (Foster et al., 1996: 105). 'On studies claiming to show discriminatory treatment in the classroom they conclude, 'There are also some serious problems with the evidential base on which descriptive claims about differential treatment rely. Sometimes no evidence at all is presented...And when evidence is provided it is often of a kind which cannot effectively support the sort of claim made: for instance one or two examples are offered to establish the different frequency of particular sorts of teacher action in relation to different categories of student. Moreover many of the interpretations made of data are questionable' (Foster et al., 1996: 138). Given such scepticism towards evidence which points to inequalities at school level and in the classroom, their overall conclusion comes as no surprise: 'There is no convincing evidence currently available for any substantial role on the part of schools in generating inequalities in educational outcomes between social classes, genders or ethnic groups' (Foster et al., 1996: 174).

How satisfactory is this critique when applied to ethnicity, where the central concern has been with the attainment of Caribbean pupils? We shall begin by examining the evidence on discrimination in allocation to different levels of course.

Here there is considerable evidence that Caribbean pupils are under represented in top sets and over represented in bottom sets. Even the 1992-93 Report of HM Chief Inspector of Schools acknowledged that they, along with other minority ethnic pupils, were in general 'under represented in the top ability sets' (Tomlinson and Craft, 1995: 6). There is also evidence that placement is often not based on ability alone and that this disadvantages Caribbean pupils. We have already pointed to the evidence from

Wright and Mac an Ghail, which indicates that behavioural criteria and not purely cognitive ones were used in the allocation of pupils to examination sets and streams and that this practice disadvantaged Caribbean pupils in particular. And there is other evidence pointing in the same direction. For example a study of one local education authority shows that 'when there was a mismatch between the VR [verbal reasoning] band in which a pupil had been placed by teachers and that based on test performance, Caribbean pupils were more likely to be placed in the lower VR band...while ESWI [English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish] pupils were more likely to be placed in a higher VR band than their test scores would suggest' (Kysel, 1988, p88). The most recent evidence pointing in the same direction comes from the 2004 LSYPE: 'Black Caribbean pupils were under-represented in entry to the higher test tiers for the science and mathematics tests [at KS3], even after adjusting for prior attainment, social class, gender, entitlement to FSM, motivation, educational risk factors and school and neighbourhood deprivation. All other things being equal, for every three White British pupils entered to the higher tiers only two Black Caribbean pupils were entered, both in mathematics and science. Black Caribbean pupils were the only group to be under-represented in this way' (Stroud, 2007: 4-5). Foster indeed noted that behaviour rather than ability influenced allocation in his own ethnographic study. As he puts it: 'the behaviour of older Afro/Caribbean boys tended to be regarded less favourably. In a sense their youth cultural norms conformed less closely to the teachers' conceptions of the 'ideal' and as a result they seemed somewhat more likely to be allocated to lower status groups in the school's system of differentiation' (Foster, 1990: 81). And in a revealing footnote to their damning critique of evidence of discrimination, Foster et al. also recognize themselves that 'it may be of significance that the departures from what would be expected on the basis of measured ability that have been found within and across studies, while small, tend to be always in the same direction. This indicates that more thorough investigation is justified' (Foster et al., 1996: 81). This also, it should be pointed out, indicates that indirect discrimination is probably occurring since allocation on behavioural criteria has been shown to result, however unintentionally, in disadvantaging Caribbean pupils.

As for the consequences of streaming, Wright, Gillborn and Mac and Ghail do point to a tendency for the attitudes of different streams to polarise, with those in the bottom streams tending to engage in resistance, and at some points in their book Foster et al. also acknowledge 'the operation of a differentiation - polarisation effect' (Foster et al., 1996: 103).

Let us move on to look at the evidence on inequalities in the classroom. Foster et al.'s critique is valuable in alerting us to some potential pitfalls of ethnographic studies. Although they can provide a rich understanding of classroom processes, there is the danger of selective perception, with ones observations being interpreted through the prism of a pre-existing theory. Other interpretations are always possible. Take the extract above about Marcus. We are led to assume that Marcus is particularly subject to censure because he is Caribbean. Couldn't there be other reasons? Are other Caribbean pupils also particularly subject to censure? In this particular study, Wright does in fact provide evidence to suggest that white teachers in general discriminated against Caribbean boys in general (Woods, 1992). And this is crucial. For it is only by using different sources of evidence which corroborate each other that ethnographic studies are convincing. The ethnographic studies we have looked at are of variable quality in this respect but all use a variety of methods to triangulate their findings. All also point to a relatively high level of conflict between white teachers and Caribbean pupils. Where Foster differs from the others is in seeing teachers responding

appropriately to the behaviour of Caribbean pupils and playing no real part in generating conflict (Foster, 1992).

Foster (1993a) argues that teacher typifications are based on observations of students' behaviour and academic ability in the classroom. He may be substantially correct. Nonetheless, observations are not innocent and may be influenced by prior typifications. Here is a student on teaching practise in a boys' comprehensive learning the ropes from school management: 'I was told that I had to look out for the West Indians and what to do. If they went mad, one just had to leave them alone to cool down. There was nothing we could do, and things like that if they swore at us in their own language we must report it. They had trouble from them in the past.' The student was subsequently appointed to the school. Here he is, a year later, 'The West Indians are tough. I tried not to let anyone influence me in how I treated them but they look at you with wild eyes if you tell them to sit down. They are looking, expecting trouble. They are more prejudiced than white people. The Asians are better, you tell them to do something an' then meek an'[mild] they go an' do it' (Mac on Ghail, 1988: 64-5). In addition to evidence that old hands may influence teacher typifications, there is also evidence from the studies by Gillborn and Wright and, more recently from Ofsted (Smithers, 2001) that the same behaviour may be treated differently by teachers. This is particularly disturbing if it results in Caribbeans being particularly subject to censure early in their school career, as in the case of Marcus. For Smith and Tomlinson (1989) indicate that students who are subject to consistent criticism tend to underachieve.

To point to evidence which suggests that Caribbean pupils are subject sometimes to differential treatment in the classroom does not mean, however, that Foster's ethnographic study and Foster et al's subsequent critique of research in this area should be summarily dismissed. There is substantial agreement that, at least in the latter stages of schooling, the behaviour of some Caribbean pupils is not only defined by teachers as deviant but in fact is deviant. Where Foster and his critics fundamentally disagree is over their explanation of 'bad behaviour'. For Foster, primacy is given to extra school factors. 'There may be a general tendency for Afro-Caribbean students on average to be less well behaved in schools' (Foster, 1991:168) because of their adoption of a distinctive subculture consequent on a recognition on their part of poor post-school prospects and rejection of racism in the wider society. For the others, primacy is given to school processes, with some Caribbean pupils pictured as turning towards a distinctive subculture in order to resist their differential treatment in schools. The debate between Foster and his critics is reminiscent of the debate over the criminalisation of black people. For some writers, the greater involvement of Caribbean young men in street crime is primarily responsible for their greater criminalisation; for others, racism in the criminal justice system is primarily responsible for their greater criminalisation. More recently, however, there have been attempts by some criminologists 'to move beyond the either/or of racist criminal justice v back criminality' (Taylor et al., 1996: 486) to recognise that both 'reinforce and feed off one another in a vicious circle of amplification' (Reiner, 1993: 14). By analogy, we might suggest that in schools both differential treatment and 'bad behaviour' may result in the development of a vicious cycle.

This suggestion has been taken up by some recent ethnographic studies which seek to show how societal definitions of both ethnicity and gender impact upon the schooling experiences of black pupils and create a vicious cycle. Connolly provides one example from his study of a multi- ethnic primary school. Here 'the over disciplining

of Black boys tends to construct an image of them among their peers, as being “bad” and quintessentially masculine. This, in turn, provides the context where Black boys are more likely to be drawn into fights and to develop “hardened” identities, which then means they are more likely to be noticed by teachers and disciplined for being aggressive. The cycle is thus complete’ (Connolly, 1998a: 114).

While Connolly attributes primary responsibility for the generation of this cycle to teachers, Sewell in a study of a boys’ secondary school challenges the notion ‘that teacher racism alone’ leads Caribbean boys ‘to adopt a culture of resistance to schooling’ (Sewell, 1997: 170). While he acknowledges that teachers tend to accept what Gillborn (1990) labels ‘the myth of an African Caribbean challenge’ and see boys in particular as threatening their authority, he also emphasises the role of the black pupils’ subculture which ‘helps to feed the stereotype that African-Caribbean boys are more openly aggressive/rude than their “weak” white counterparts’ (Sewell, 1997: 104).

Both the teachers and pupils are envisaged as influenced by cultural representations of black males acquired outside the classroom. The teachers tended to share the ethnocentric assumptions of the wider society and assume ‘that African-Caribbean boys were instinctively against authority while Asian boys were the complete opposite’ (Sewell, 1997: 61). The result was that Caribbean boys received a disproportionate amount of control and criticism compared to other ethnic groups. At the same time the black subculture in the school drew on a wider street culture and placed emphasis ‘on a Black collectivist anti-school ideology, on pro-consumerism and phallocentrism’ (Sewell, 1997: 108). While this subculture enabled the boys to resist the racism of the wider society and maintain a positive black identity, its adoption of a macho form of masculinity was not conducive to academic success. The equation, found in a previous study (Mac an Ghaill, 1994), for some boys to identify academic achievement with being gay or effeminate was also evident here and constituted a significant barrier to those pupils seeking educational qualifications.

The focus of conflict between teachers and black pupils often revolved around displays of ethnicity from the boys. Black hairstyles were a particular bone of contention. The school sought to ban black boys from having patterns in their hair while no such prohibition was made in relation to white boys who wore ponytails. The result was that black hairstyles became ‘a key factor in the display of an African-Caribbean masculine subculture that became an alternative to schooling’ (Sewell, 1997: 166). In this way a vicious cycle can develop, in which what is perceived as a lack of respect from teachers is met by an aggressive response from pupils who in turn are punished for their behaviour.

Such a cycle can, as in this school, have devastating consequences resulting in ‘black young people [being] proportionately more likely to be excluded than members of other ethnic groups’ (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996: 52). Permanent exclusions are the most extreme sanction schools have. The sanction is now not only being more widely used for disobedience of various kinds but is being used disproportionately with black pupils, especially Caribbeans. ‘In 2004, Black Caribbean pupils were 3 times more likely to be excluded from school than White pupils and, even when eligibility for FSMs and Special educational Needs (SEN) were taken into account, were still 2.6 times more likely to be excluded than White Pupils’ (DfES, 2006: 132). In addition to the greater likelihood of Black Caribbeans and White & Black Caribbean having a much greater likelihood of being excluded from school (both permanently and for a fixed period) than White British pupils, the same groups ‘are around 1.5 times as

likely to be identified as having Behavioural, Emotional and Social difficulties as White British pupils' (DfES, 2006: 6). Although these labels and sanctions apply to only a small proportion of black pupils, such disproportionality may be symptomatic of a tendency for teachers to underestimate the ability of black pupils. 'If the behaviour of Black Caribbean pupils is more challenging, or even if it is simply that teachers *perceive* their behaviour as more problematic, there may be a tendency to underestimate the academic ability of these pupils'. Placement in a lower tier can follow with subsequent demotivation and underachievement from Black Caribbean pupils (Stroud, 2007:5).

To acknowledge that the evidence for indirect discrimination at the level of the school and to acknowledge that the evidence for differential treatment at the level of the classroom are stronger than Foster et al. suggest does not mean that it is schools which are most central 'in generating inequalities in education outcomes between...ethnic groups' (Foster et al., 1996: 174). Foster et al. are correct in reminding us that we cannot generalise from particular schools and particular classrooms to all schools and all classrooms. Indeed it is questionable whether the rationale for ethnographic research is to generate generalisations at all (Connolly, 1998b). And even if there are common school processes - as suggested by the similar picture conveyed by most ethnographic studies - we cannot reach an informed judgement about the 'causal efficacy' of school processes in the absence of a comparison with the contribution of extra school factors. The research on school effectiveness, which does seek to control for factors such as prior attainment and social class, suggests that variations between schools do make a difference but that extra school factors are generally much more significant in determining student progress (Drew & Demack, 1998). Although this research is concerned with differences between schools rather than purportedly common discriminatory practices within schools and thus cannot be used to refute the suggestion that racism in schools is of critical importance in accounting for ethnic differences in achievement, it does suggest that we should be extremely circumspect before reaching a definitive judgement.

The need for caution is reinforced when we remember the complexity in patterns of ethnic educational achievement, which indicates that, while some minority ethnic groups are doing better than Whites, Caribbean boys are underachieving and that both Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils are performing no better (Modood et al., 1997). The role of racism in accounting for this complex pattern is unclear. Are all minority ethnic groups subject to discriminatory treatment? If so, how do some groups and indeed some individuals successfully resist such treatment? Evidence of racism in schools may be stronger than Foster et al. suggest, but this does not mean that such racism is the major factor in accounting for ethnic differentials in educational achievement.

The debate, which we have been examining, about the contribution which school processes play in accounting for Caribbean underachievement is part of a wider debate about the purposes of educational research. Foster et al. adopt a 'methodological purist' stance, stressing that 'the purpose of research in this area should be to produce knowledge relevant to public debates, not to eradicate inequality' (Foster et al., 1996: 40). By contrast, Troyna and others adopt a partisan, or what Gillborn (1998) prefers to call a 'critical' position, seeing the purpose of research as that of documenting what is going on in order to challenge injustices (Troyna, 1995). The methodological purists contend that researchers who adopt an avowedly anti racist position too readily accept evidence pointing to indirect discrimination and

differential treatment. The latter retort that at least they are explicit about their value commitments, whereas the methodological purists, by imposing extremely stringent criteria to evaluate studies pointing to indirect discrimination and differential treatment, are implicitly concerned to defend teachers.

Despite disagreement between those who adopt a methodological purist and a partisan stance, both in fact are opposed to 'falsifying data and suppressing "unhelpful" findings' (Gillborn, 1998, p51) and both recognise the need for 'assessment of factual claims in terms of logical consistency and empirical adequacy' (Foster et al., 1996: 40). Where methodological purists and partisan researchers disagree is over whether the research on school processes meet these criteria. The former adopt extremely stringent criteria, argue that existing studies do not convince them 'beyond reasonable doubt' and on that basis conclude that 'it seems unfair and unwise to criticise current practices' (Foster, 1993b: 551). By contrast, the latter show that it is always possible to challenge researchers' interpretations, argue that their ethnographic studies present convincing interpretations and on that basis conclude that it is incumbent on schools to re-examine their current practices. The political implications of the positions adopted by the two sides are clear. The first leans to a conservative privileging of current practices; the latter leads to a radical challenging of current practises. Somewhat ironically, given the explicit adherence of methodological purists to a scientific methodology, it is the partisan researchers who remain closer to a Popperian philosophy of social science. For at least they do put forward a theory to account for Caribbean underachievement. By contrast, the methodological purists content themselves with critiques 'mostly constructed in negative terms' (Gillborn, 1995: 56) and do not at least in their joint book put forward any theory at all.

When we explore divergent explanations for ethnic differentials in educational attainment (the primary focus of which here has been that of the underachievement of Black Caribbean children) we enter a politically highly charged terrain. Although sociologists are now less inclined to fall into the trap of the 'fallacy of the single factor' (Parekh, 1983) and frequently acknowledge that a range of factors operating in a complex way are needed to explain Black Caribbean underachievement, there is still a tendency to prioritise some factors to the exclusion of others. In particular we have noted the inclination of some to dismiss cultural factors and of others to reject the role of school processes. Steering a path through these tortuous rapids, we can conclude that IQ is not a major factor but that there is evidence to suggest that a range of social factors are significant: economic deprivation, which itself stems at least in part from racial discrimination; cultural factors, which need to be carefully contextualised to avoid 'blaming the victim'; the increased marketisation of education; ineffective schools, which themselves are often located in disadvantaged areas; and (the often unintentional) racial discrimination in schools.

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