
Attainment by disadvantage status

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Pupils are defined as disadvantaged if they are known to have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the past six years (from year 6 to year 11), if they are recorded as having been looked after for at least one day or if they are recorded as having been adopted from care.

The proportion of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 in state-funded schools recorded as disadvantaged has been stable in recent year (26.5% in 2018/19, 26.3% in 2022/23 and 26.5% in 2023/24). For more information on changes to the disadvantaged cohort please visit our [methodology document](#).

The disadvantage gap index reduced between 2011 and 2014 from 4.07 to 3.74 (indicating that the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils was becoming smaller). It then widened slightly in 2015 and 2016 to around 3.8, before narrowing to its joint lowest level at 3.66 in 2017. Before the pandemic, the gap index widened again going from 3.66 to 3.70 between 2017 and 2019. It narrowed slightly in 2020 to 3.66 when CAGs were used to award grades, before widening again in 2021, 2022 and 2023 to 3.94 and has now decreased in 2024 to 3.92.

The disadvantage gap index summarises the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and all other pupils

The disadvantage gap index has been created to be a more resilient measure (than the binary category of disadvantage) of changes over time in attainment that may have been affected by, for example, the GCSE reforms introduced in 2017 and associated changes to headline measures (e.g. moving away from 5 or more GCSEs to average Attainment 8 scores).