



**THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SOMALI PUPILS IN LAMBETH
SCHOOLS – EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE**

RESEARCH AND STATISTICS UNIT
LAMBETH EDUCATION, LEARNING & SKILLS
LONDON SW9 7QE

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Enquiries to: Feyisa Demie, Anne Taplin, Rebecca Butler, Robert Tong, James McDonald, and Andy Hau.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Background to Somali Communities in Britain

In recent years considerable attention has been devoted to the issue of underachievement of Black pupils in British schools. The first official recognition of the problem was The Rampton Report (Rampton 1981), the interim report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children of Ethnic Minority Groups. This report, and further research carried out in the 1980s and 1990s, focused specifically on the relative underachievement of Black Caribbean and African pupils (Mortimore et al, 1988; Nuttall et al, 1989; Kendall, 1998; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Demie, 2001; Demie, 2005).

In contrast to the above situation, research into the educational attainment of Somali children in British schools remains scant. It has also been noted by several commentators that little is known about the actual size of the Somali population resident in Britain, with the 2001 census figure for Somali-born London inhabitants alone being less than half the figure estimated by some recent studies (Harris, 2004). The 2001 census records 43,532 people born in Somalia being resident in the UK. But this is only a percentage of the full Somali population, as it does not take account of UK-born children of Somali parentage. A survey in 2004 also suggests there was a low level of participation by the Somali community in the 2001 census (survey results were reported orally at a Somali Community Meeting held at the House of Commons, 29th March 2004)¹. Estimates vary considerably as to the actual number of Somalis in the UK, with one estimate put at 250,000 in 2002 (Ioan Lewis, Liberation Meeting, London, 26th November 2002).

Abdul Diriye, in his 2006 article entitled 'The Ticking Bomb: The Educational Underachievement of Somali Children in British Schools', believes:

'They (Somalis) remain largely ignored and their needs neglected by the local and national policy-makers, largely because of the failure to recognise Somali as a distinct ethnic group'

This apparent lack of recognition seems paradoxical considering Somalis have been present in British society since the late 19th century, and were one of the first Black communities to settle in the UK. One reason for this put forward by other commentators and researchers is the 'social invisibility' of Somali people. Hermione Harris explains this in her 2004 study entitled *'The Somali Community in the UK: What we know and how we know it'* by comparing Somalis to the African-Caribbean community in Britain:

'Both groups suffer racism, but African-Caribbeans are perceived to be part of British society...It is not the volume of research on African-Caribbeans (although this is considerable) that gives them a public presence, but their high visibility in a wider society' (Harris 2004, pg.13)

She goes on to explain:

'Somalis too are rendered visible by their dress. But the social distance between Somalis and...British culture increases their isolation. There is therefore a dissonance between the amount of

¹ The source for this survey comment is Hermione Harris' 2004 paper *'The Somali Community in the UK: What we know and how we know it'*

information which actually exists, and what is believed to be known'
(Harris 2004, pg.13)

As a partial counter to the earlier statement by Diriye, Harris claims there is already a wealth of information available on the Somali community:

'ICAR (The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK) has identified 139 substantial items on Somalis in the UK published since 1990...Many locally-produced reports are never widely circulated, and new material is emerging all the time' (Harris 2004, pg.10)

But she also qualifies this later on in her report by commenting that it was the civil war in the 1980s, and the resultant diaspora of the indigenous Somalian population, that caused the Somali community in Britain to become a focus of concern. It was this wave of migration that set the current pattern of Somali settlement in the UK. It is important to note that the large increase in refugees who entered the UK in the 1980s and 1990s was mostly made up of women and children, some coming to join their husbands but the majority being single-parent families. This changed the makeup of Somali communities from being single male workers (who were present from the previous waves of immigration) to refugee communities with large numbers of children and young adults.

In recent years' the nature of Somali immigration to the UK has changed from being composed of refugees leaving Somalia itself, to those leaving other host countries (such as Sweden, Norway and Holland) for the UK. A major motivation for this is to join family members and settled Somalian communities in Britain. As Harris states:

'The UK hosts the largest Somali community outside Somalia, and the UK is described by Somalis as a 'meeting point', a 'more intercultural society' than many of the (European) states Somalis leave behind'
(Harris 2004, pg.24)

The Educational Context

Somali culture places an emphasis upon a high level of self-reliance and resourcefulness when faced with difficulties or obstacles, which some researchers have made pains to note. For example, Ali and Jones (2000) in their report *'Meeting the educational needs of Somali pupils in Camden schools'* offset underachievement with some positive comments made by teachers in regard to their Somali pupils. As a general comment towards all refugee pupils, they state:

'...most teachers who have refugee pupils in their class do not see them as problem pupils. Individual refugee pupils...may have various learning and other educational difficulties and needs, but they also bring into the classroom a range of opportunities and perspectives that can enrich the learning and understandings of all who are working there' (Ali and Jones 2000, pg.6)

But taking these positive viewpoints into account, Somali pupils still face a range of obstacles to learning that they can find very difficult to surmount – hence the general trend of underachievement. As a background factor to be considered in this debate, Diriye (*The Ticking Bomb*, 2006) makes the point that when a child comes to the UK from Somalia they are placed in classes based on their age group – and are immediately at a disadvantage to their peers in terms of their learning experience. It can also be the case that new arrivals to the UK have no experience of writing in any language whatsoever, as Somali home-based literacy tends to be largely oral and not written.

Diriye then goes on to explain four possible *'roots of underachievement'* :

1. Trauma – the civil war after-effects. Many of the children in British schools may not have experienced the actual war, but they still grew up in a long process of unsettlement which finally brought them to the UK.
2. Overcrowding. Many Somali families live in deprived neighbourhoods with overcrowded accommodation. The result is children have little or no space to organise their learning material, and excessive noise levels are not conducive to learning either.
3. Racism. Despite claims about diversity and racial equality in the media and among educational professionals, teachers are a part of a wider community which, as every community, has cultural prejudices and racist attitudes.
4. Language and literacy. The idea of bilingualism is new to Somalis. Where parents are unable to speak English themselves (which is the majority) this limits their ability to assist their children with their studies. This might also diminish Somali parents will to visit the school and speak to members of staff about their children.

By addressing some of the points above, local authorities have come up with a range of resources and initiatives to assist with the issue of Somali underachievement. For example, in the case of Lambeth, schools already have access to support for Somali pupils as part of EMAG (Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant) funding, which is used to assist underperforming ethnic groups and pupils with low levels of English fluency. In addition to this, the following support is also available:

- A primary EAL programme in 14 schools, including those with significant numbers of Somali pupils
- Additional allocation of Bilingual Teaching Assistant support from EMAT (the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team) for newly arrived Somali pupils, to help with induction and home to school liaison
- Free interpreting and translation service to help communication between parents and schools
- Training courses for primary teachers on issues relating to Somali pupils
- The imminent appointment (at the time of writing this report) of a Somali Education Officer to be part of EMAT. The post will include working with Lambeth's Somali communities, as well as supporting pupils and schools

In another London borough, Hounslow started the Somali enrichment project in 2003, which aims to provide positive role models from the local Somali community for 11-16 year old Somalis, as well as raising the motivation and self-esteem of this group of pupils.²

In their report to Camden LEA, Ali and Jones (2000)³ cite a range of strategies Camden schools have adopted in order to raise Somali attainment. These include:

- The employment of specialised staff e.g. Somali link workers
- Support for and encouragement of Somali language classes
- A clear and owned school policy for refugee and asylum seeking children
- A pastoral system that is responsive to the particular needs of Somali pupils
- Good home/school/community links, especially getting Somali parents involved with the school as much as possible
- Focused INSET for mainstream teachers, particularly newly qualified teachers, on how to best support their bilingual learners
- Maintaining an INSET programme that keeps all staff up to date with the issues involved with increasing Somali achievement

They go on to make the following important statement:

'Academic achievement is monitored with the usual range of measures, exams, SATs and GCSE results. But educational achievement is more than the measurable academic. Social skills and behaviour are also monitored through observation outside, in lessons, in the canteen and through communication with the pastoral team and families. This was seen as important for Somali pupils who, with other refugee pupils, have a range of adjustment issues to cope with in their new environment' (Ali and Jones 2000, pg.10)

To summarise, Somali pupils face many difficulties and challenges to learning, but together with the Somali community, schools and local authorities have been endeavouring to address these issues in order to provide Somali pupils with the education they deserve in order for them all to reach their full potential.

² Source: 'Tackling Underachievement', October 2003, DfES

³ Ali, E and Jones, C, (2000) *Meeting the Educational Needs of Somali Pupils in Camden Schools*, Institute of Education, London University.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

This research project aims to raise the achievement of Somali heritage pupils at all key stages. Specific objectives are:

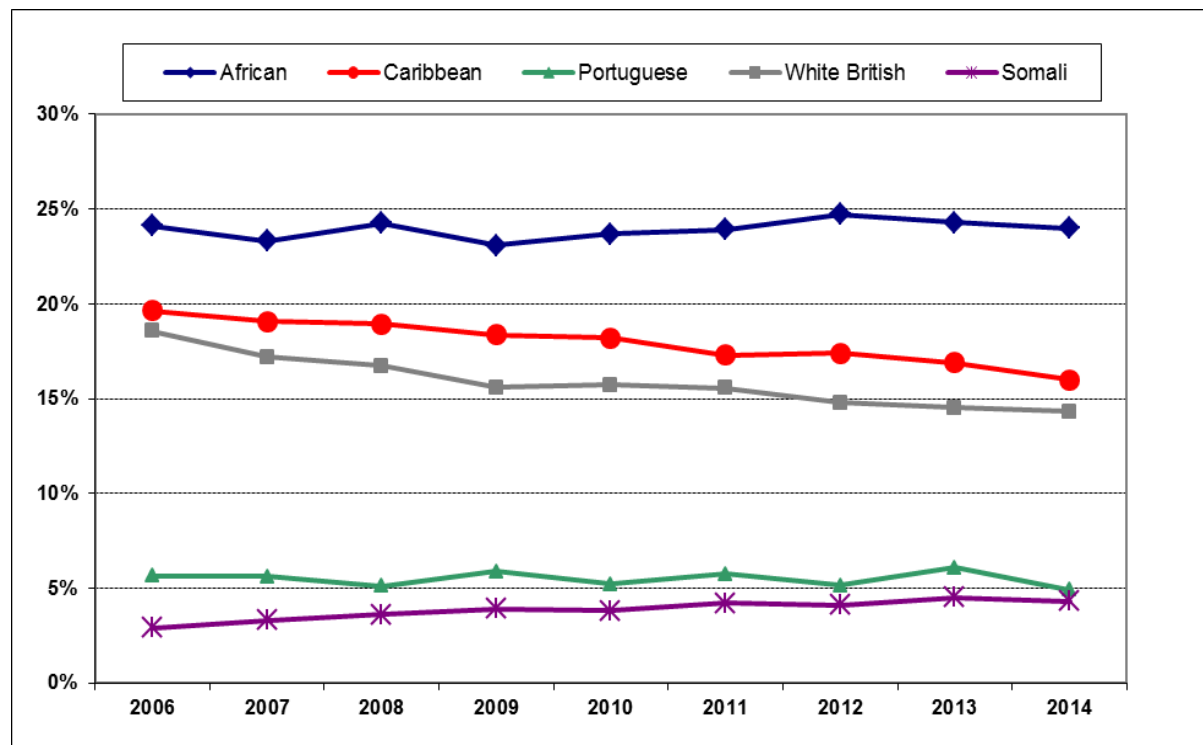
- To study the achievement of Somali heritage pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, and GCSE.
- To examine the school experiences of Somali heritage pupils.
- To identify reasons for underachievement.

3. THE LA CONTEXT

Number of Somali Pupils in Lambeth Schools

This research paper considers evidence from Lambeth, an inner London Authority. Lambeth LA is one of the most ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse boroughs in Britain. About 84% of pupils are from black and ethnic minority groups. The 2014 January Schools Census shows that there were 33,938 pupils in the LA's schools. Of these, African pupils formed the largest ethnic group with 24.7% followed by Black Caribbean (17.4%), White British (14.8%), White Other (7.5%), Portuguese (5.1%), and 'Any Other Group' (4.7%).

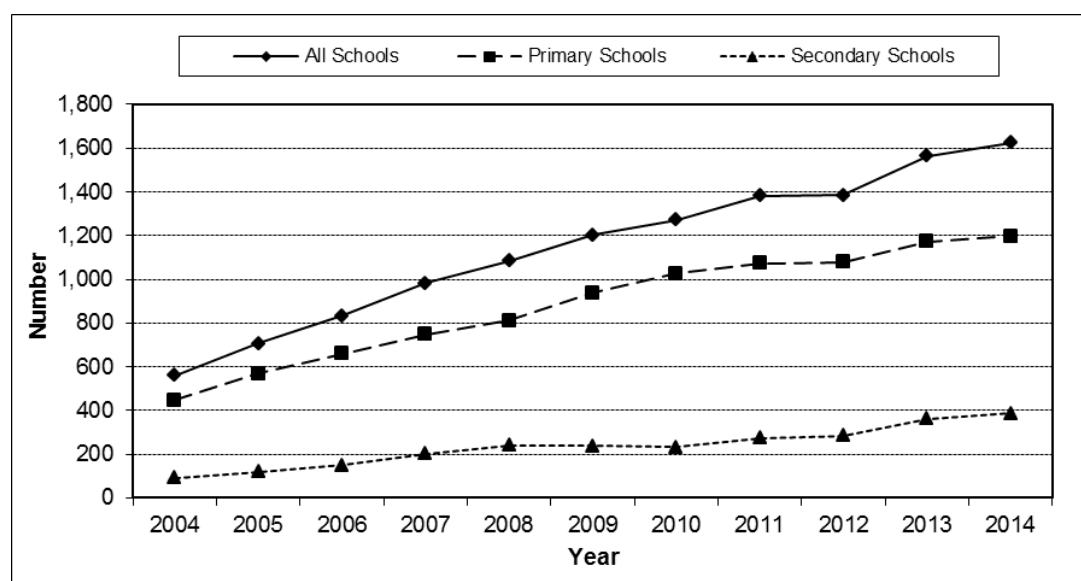
Figure 1. Changes in the School Composition in the LA by Main Ethnic Group



There has been a change in the overall composition of the black and ethnic minority population in Lambeth schools. The 1991 ONS census showed that overall 66% of pupils in the LA's schools belonged to black and other ethnic minority communities compared to 85% in 2011.

Of all English local authorities, Lambeth serves one of the largest proportion of Somali pupils, and findings from this study are therefore of significant importance for formulating policies and strategies aimed at raising the achievement of Somali pupils at both national and local level.

Figure 2. Number of Somali Pupils in Lambeth Schools (2004-2014)



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
All Schools	561	707	835	982	1,085	1,203	1,271	1,382	1,386	1,563	1,625
Primary	448	569	659	749	811	938	1,026	1,074	1,079	1,173	1,197
Secondary	91	119	151	202	241	237	232	275	286	361	386

The 'All Schools' figures include pupils in special and nursery schools, and pupil referral units.

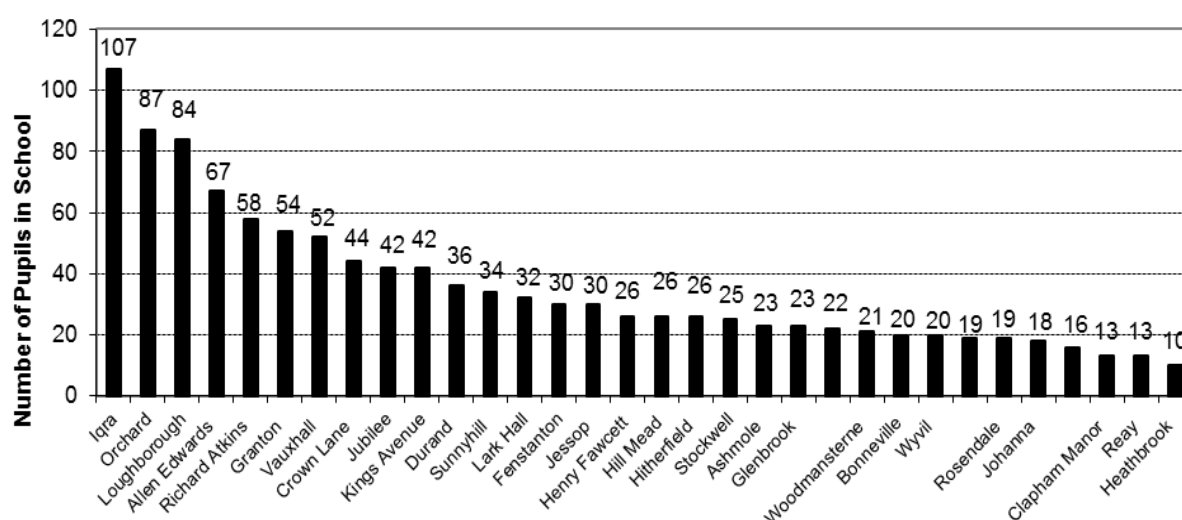
Source: Research & Statistics Unit Pupil Survey 2001-2008, DfE Schools Census 2009 onwards.

Figure 1 above clearly illustrates that the Somali population in all Lambeth schools has increased consistently, by approximately 100 pupils each year.

This trend is due to changes in the composition of the primary school Somali population rather than any significant increase in the number of Somalis attending secondary schools. The addition of two Muslim primary schools into LA maintained status has contributed to the greater than average primary increase seen between 2008 and 2009.

Figure 2 overleaf shows the primary schools where at least 10 or more Somali pupils were on roll as at January 2014. Of these schools, six were in North Lambeth town centre area, nine in Clapham & Stockwell, six in the Brixton TC area, four in Streatham and five in Norwood. These demographics have been largely the same over the last six years, with the focus being in the North and centre of the borough.

Figure 3. Number of Somali Pupils by Primary School, 2014



Only schools with more than 10 Somali pupils on roll are shown above.

Table 1. Ethnic Background of the Lambeth School Population, 2004-2014 (% of total)

Ethnic Group	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
African*	23.2	23.6	24.1	23.3	24.3	23.1	23.7	23.9	24.7	24.3	24.0
Somali	1.9	2.4	2.9	3.3	3.6	3.9	3.8	4.2	4.1	4.5	4.5
Caribbean	21.1	20.3	19.6	19.1	18.9	18.4	18.2	17.3	17.4	16.9	16.0
Portuguese	4.9	5.1	5.7	5.6	5.1	5.9	5.2	5.8	5.1	6.1	4.9
White British	19.3	18.7	18.6	17.2	16.7	15.6	15.7	15.5	14.8	14.5	14.3

*Includes Somali pupil statistics

Table 1 shows the four main ethnic groups (with Somali as a sub-set of African) who have previously been identified as underperforming in Lambeth schools. The African cohort has been increasing in size since 2004 and has constituted the single largest group during the whole eleven-year period – this corresponds with a decline in the proportion of Caribbean pupils. White British pupils have also shown a steady decline from 19.3% in 2004 to 14.3% in 2014. The Portuguese and Somali cohorts are relatively small in comparison, although the latter is almost three times the size it was in 2004 in terms of overall number.

Lambeth schools already have access to support for Somali pupils as part of EMAG (Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant) funding, which is used to assist underperforming ethnic groups and EAL pupils at stages 1 to 3 to raise their educational achievement. And in addition to this, schools can also use funding from their main school budgets to assist these groups.

The Dataset

The sample consisted of pupils who completed National Curriculum Assessment tests at the end of KS1, KS2, KS3 and KS4. In addition, all the LA's schools were asked to provide details of their pupils' backgrounds such as name, date of birth, gender, ethnic background, free school meal eligibility, date of admission or mobility data and level of fluency in English for contextual analysis. Where available we also drew evidence from national data published by the Department for Education (DfE).

Measures of Performance

It is important to note that in the English education system, pupils aged 5 to 16 years are taught National Curriculum subjects and are tested in English, mathematics and science. These tests are age dependent and divided into three key stages: KS1, KS2, and KS4. They are intended to show whether children have reached the National Curriculum learning targets standard which range from 1 to 6 between Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2). Pupils climb the levels as they get older and learn more. Thus, a typical seven-year-old is expected to achieve level 2B, and an eleven year-old level 4. At the end of KS4, most 15 and 16-year-olds also take General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams. These are the major qualifications taken by pupils at the end of compulsory schooling at the age of 15, and are a series of examinations in the individual subjects the pupils have been studying.

The measure of performance used in the analysis is level 2B or above for KS1, level 4 or above for KS2, and 5+A*-C including English and maths for GCSE. An overall indicator of pupil attainment in KS1 and KS2 was also derived by taking the average of the assessments – Reading, writing and maths at KS1, and the Reading and maths tests at KS2.

The next section examines the achievement of Somali students in Lambeth schools at the end of KS1, KS2, and GCSE. Two methodological approaches are used. Firstly, the study looks at the pattern of the performance in the LA to establish the achievement of Somali pupils in Lambeth schools compared to the other main ethnic groups. This is followed by detailed data analysis of factors affecting the performance of Somali pupils. The main questions posed are:

- How well do Somali pupils perform in Lambeth schools?
- What are the differences in level of attainment at the end of KS1, KS2, and GCSE between schools?
- What are the factors influencing performance?

4. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SOMALI PUPILS IN LAMBETH SCHOOLS

KS1 and KS2 Trend Evidence

Despite the lack of national data on Somali pupil achievement, in Lambeth we were able to identify such pupils using the language descriptor in the Lambeth Annual Pupil Survey (and now via the DfE Schools Census). The following section outlines outcomes and trends for Somali pupils and other ethnic groups within Lambeth over the past seven years.

Table 2. Average Key Stage 1 Attainment by Ethnic Group (2008-2014)

Ethnic Group	Key Stage 1 Average (% Level 2B+)								
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Change 08-14	Change 13-14
African	61	64	70	69	73	77	79	+18	+2
<i>Somali</i>	51	58	68	67	66	72	76	+15	+4
Caribbean	55	56	59	59	67	71	73	+18	+2
White British	72	75	73	78	83	83	87	+15	+4
Portuguese	46	50	54	53	56	62	64	+19	+2
White Other	64	62	70	73	73	78	78	+14	0
<i>Polish</i>	47	56	73	67	67	77	78	+31	+1
Black Other	59	62	61	62	75	72	74	+15	+2
Lambeth -all	62	64	67	68	73	75	78	+16	+3

Table 2 shows that Somali pupils have improved at a healthy rate and were only two percentage points adrift of the Lambeth average in 2014. They are three points below the African cohort but have closed the gap over the last seven years. Portuguese pupils remain the lowest achieving group.

The cohort size of Somalis has increased again despite experiencing a drop in 2011 (appendix 2 shows cohort sizes for the last five years).

Appendix 3 shows the proportion of Somali pupils at each stage of fluency in English. At KS1 in most years the majority of pupils have been at the early stages of English acquisition (stages 1 and 2), with 52% of pupils falling into this category in 2013. In 2014 this had fallen to 41% of the total cohort. These figures could go some way to explaining their relatively low levels of attainment.

Table 3 shows the subject level teacher assessment results for Somali pupils compared to all pupils across the Lambeth. Reading and maths tend to be their strongest subjects, outperforming the overall Lambeth cohort in both subjects in 2010 and 2011. However, they have experienced the greatest increase in writing, up by 11 percentage points over the five-year period.

Table 3. Key Stage 1 Attainment by Subject (2010-2014)

Year	Key Stage 1 - % at Level 2B+						
	Somali Cohort No.	Reading		Writing		Maths	
		Somali	All	Somali	All	Somali	All
2010	149	72%	69%	60%	61%	72%	70%
2011	135	71%	70%	57%	61%	74%	72%
2012	155	70%	76%	59%	67%	69%	76%
2013	180	76%	78%	64%	70%	76%	77%
2014	134	78%	80%	71%	74%	80%	80%
10-14 Change	-13	+6%	+11%	+11%	+13%	+8%	+10%

Table 4. Average Key Stage 2 Test Attainment by Ethnic Group (2010-2014)

Ethnic Group	Reading and maths average						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Change 10-14	Change 13-14
African	84	85	88	90	90	+6	-
<i>Somali</i>	76	85	89	92	91	+15	-1
Caribbean	79	79	85	87	86	+7	-1
White British	87	89	93	96	95	+8	-1
White Other	92	88	91	92	95	+3	+3
Portuguese	77	78	88	88	85	+8	-3
<i>Polish</i>	89	92	92	98	95	+6	-3
Black Other	81	85	91	91	85	+4	-6
Lambeth	83	84	89	90	90	+7	-

The DfE changed the KS2 tests in 2013 to no longer include an overall English level, so the reading and maths average is now shown here.

Historically at KS2, Somali pupils have performed below both the LA expectations and the outcomes seen by the African cohort overall. However, significant improvement (15 percentage points over the five-year period) has led them to surpass the LA result in recent years.

Of the KS2 Somali cohort, 25 percent had low levels of English fluency (stages 1 and 2) in 2010, this has fallen to 12 percent in 2014. The total 'non-fluent' cohort (stages 1 to 3) is now 50 percent of the overall cohort compared to 68 percent five years ago.

KS2 was changed in 2013 to no longer include an English test, so Reading and maths are shown in table 5. Somalis have shown excellent improvement over the five year period so they now equal the Lambeth outcome in Reading and have surpassed it in maths for the fourth year in a row.

Table 5. Key Stage 2 Test Attainment by Subject (2010-2014)

Year	Key Stage 2 Tests (% at Level 4+)				
	Somali Cohort No.	Reading		Maths	
		Somali	All	Somali	All
2010	68	56%	86%	74%	81%
2011	111	81%	85%	86%	84%
2012	119	87%	90%	90%	88%
2013	124	90%	90%	94%	91%
2014	151	91%	91%	91%	88%
10-14 Change	+83	+35%	+5%	+17%	+7%

GCSE Trend Evidence

Table 6. GCSE Attainment 2014 Main Indicators

Ethnic Group	Cohort	5A*C inc. English and Maths	English Baccalaureate	English Progress KS2 to KS4	Maths Progress KS2 to KS4
African	456	61	27	75	73
<i>Somali</i>	55	60	27	76	67
Caribbean	357	48	17	71	59
White British	235	59	29	74	65
White Other	113	66	40	81	72
<i>Polish</i>	33	67	48	76	70
Portuguese	127	49	26	67	59
Black Other	85	47	19	69	62
Lambeth		57	27	78	69
National		53	23	72	66

With the large amount of changes to GCSE examinations in 2014 following the “Wolf Report” recommendations, it is no longer possible to compare GCSE results with previous years.

At GCSE African pupils are the highest achieving group of the major ethnicities. African pupils achieved 61% at 5 A* to C including English and Maths this year. The smaller number of Somali pupils have closed the gap with Lambeth and are now above the Lambeth and national average.

5. FACTORS AFFECTING ACHIEVEMENT OF SOMALI PUPILS

The four factors shown in table 7 are helpful in understanding achievement patterns of Somali pupils in Lambeth schools. The data confirms that Somali pupils are a disadvantaged group. For example, 49% of KS2 pupils were eligible for FSM, and 69% of GCSE pupils. The national figures for FSM eligibility are considerably lower at each key stage.

Table 7 Social Characteristics of Somali pupils in Lambeth schools by Key Stage Cohorts 2014

Key Stages	Total Cohort	Gender		FSM (%)	EAL	
		Boys (%)	Girls (%)		Stage 1-3 Not fluent in English	Stage 4 Fully fluent in English
Key Stage 1	134	60%	40%	51%	87%	13%
Key Stage 2	151	51%	49%	49%	49%	51%
Key Stage 4	55	54%	46%	69%	25%	62%

At GCSE, stage of English was not known for eight pupils

Gender Differences and Achievement

In general terms nationally, girls tend to outperform boys. In Lambeth this is also true for African and Caribbean pupils at all key stages, however in recent years White British boys at GCSE performed above the level of girls (Demie et al 2006). For the Somali cohort in Lambeth, table 8 shows girls in most instances outperform the boys cohort, with the greatest differences being in the proportion gaining Level 2B+ in writing and reading at KS1. This year boys either equalled or surpassed girls in each of the key indicators at GCSE.

Table 8: Somali Pupils KS1, KS2, and GCSE Performance in Lambeth by Gender - 2014

Key Stage		All Somali pupils	Boys	Girls	Gap Girls-Boys
KS1 - Level 2B+	Reading	76%	70%	82%	+12%
	Writing	64%	54%	73%	+19%
	Maths	76%	72%	79%	+7%
	Average	72%	66%	78%	+12%
KS2 – Level 4+	Reading	90%	87%	91%	+4%
	Maths	94%	89%	99%	+10%
	Average	92%	88%	95%	+7%
GCSE	5+ A*-C EM	60%	60%	60%	0%
	5+ A*-C	78%	77%	65%	-12%
	EBacc	27%	30%	26%	-4%

Table 9 overleaf shows the outcomes by gender for other notable ethnic groups within Lambeth schools.

**Table 9: Lambeth KS2 and GCSE Performance by Ethnicity and Gender
2010 to 2014**

Ethnic Group	Year	KS2 (Average Level 4+)				GCSE (5+ A*-C inc English & Maths)			
		All	Boys	Girls	Gap	All	Boys	Girls	Gap
African	2010	84%	83%	84%	+1%	66%	59%	69%	+10%
	2011	85%	81%	89%	+8%	71%	68%	73%	+5%
	2012	88%	85%	91%	+6%	66%	58%	72%	+14%
	2013	90%	90%	90%	0%	75%	74%	75%	+1%
	2014	90%	89%	91%	+2%	61%	55%	66%	+11%
Somali	2010	76%	79%	72%	-7%	50%	43%	52%	+9%
	2011	85%	83%	87%	+4%	61%	54%	67%	+13%
	2012	89%	91%	88%	-3%	61%	58%	64%	+6%
	2013	92%	88%	95%	+7%	67%	61%	75%	0%
	2014	91%	87%	95%	+8%	60%	60%	60%	0%
Caribbean	2010	79%	77%	81%	+4%	45%	38%	50%	+12%
	2011	79%	71%	87%	+16%	49%	43%	52%	+9%
	2012	85%	80%	90%	+10%	53%	49%	57%	+8%
	2013	87%	84%	89%	+5%	56%	51%	60%	+9%
	2014	86%	85%	88%	+3%	48%	41%	55%	+14%
Portuguese	2010	77%	70%	83%	+13%	42%	36%	45%	+9%
	2011	78%	77%	79%	+2%	52%	40%	57%	+17%
	2012	88%	90%	85%	-5%	56%	40%	69%	+29%
	2013	88%	90%	86%	-4%	55%	45%	63%	+8%
	2014	85%	85%	85%	0%	49%	40%	54%	+14%
Polish	2010	88%	85%	91%	+6%	15%	9%	50%	+41%
	2011	91%	87%	96%	+9%	63%	63%	64%	+1%
	2012	93%	95%	90%	-5%	79%	87%	71%	-16%
	2013	98%	96%	100%	+4%	98%	96%	100%	+4%
	2014	94%	94%	95%	+1%	67%	60%	70%	+10%
White British	2010	87%	84%	90%	+6%	46%	42%	51%	+9%
	2011	89%	88%	91%	+3%	57%	54%	65%	+11%
	2012	93%	91%	94%	+3%	61%	58%	67%	+9%
	2013	96%	97%	95%	-2%	69%	68%	70%	+2%
	2014	95%	94%	96%	+2%	59%	58%	60%	+2%
Lambeth	2010	84%	81%	86%	+5%	53%	47%	58%	+11%
	2011	84%	81%	88%	+7%	60%	57%	63%	+6%
	2012	89%	87%	91%	+4%	62%	59%	66%	+7%
	2013	90%	90%	91%	+1%	66%	63%	67%	+4%
	2014	90%	89%	91%	+2%	57%	52%	62%	+10%
National	2010	81%	80%	83%	+3%	54%	49%	58%	+9%
	2011	82%	80%	84%	+4%	59%	55%	63%	+8%
	2012	86%	84%	87%	+3%	59%	55%	64%	+9%
	2013	86%	84%	87%	+3%	62%	55%	65%	+10%
	2014	88%	87%	89%	+2%	53%	48%	59%	+11%

Note: The KS2 average prior to 2013 relates to English, maths and science, whereas due to changes in 2013 it now refers to the reading and maths tests only.

Social Background and Achievement

The free school meals indicator is often used as a proxy measure of social deprivation in pupils' backgrounds, and has been linked to underachievement in a number of studies (Gillborn and Youdell, 2002; Demie, 2001). School level data demonstrates a clear relationship between the concentration of poverty levels in schools and tests and examination results. The proportion of Somali pupils taking KS2 in 2014 who were eligible for free school meals was 49%, and for the GCSE cohort it was 69% (see table 7 on page 12).

Table 10 indicates there is a marked difference in performance between the free and paid meal cohorts, although there is no consistent pattern of one cohort outperforming the other.

Table 10. Performance of Somali pupils by Free School Meal status (2013 & 2014)

Key Stage		2013			2014		
		Free Meals	Paid Meals	Gap	Free Meals	Paid Meals	Gap
KS1 - Level 2B+	Reading	76%	76%	0%	78%	80%	+2%
	Writing	65%	61%	-4%	71%	72%	+1%
	Maths	74%	79%	+5%	80%	81%	+1%
	Average	72%	72%	0%	76%	78%	+2%
KS2 - Level 4+	Reading	88%	92%	+4%	86%	92%	+6%
	Maths	93%	96%	+3%	89%	90%	+1%
	Average	90%	94%	+4%	88%	91%	+3%
GCSE	5+ A*-C EM	-	-	-	72%	37%	-35%
	5+ A*-C	-	-	--	81%	38%	-23%
	EBacc	-	-	-	28%	26%	-2%

Due to the significant changes to GCSE reporting this year, the 2013 results are not shown as they are no longer comparable.

There are also some notable differences within the main ethnic groups when the data is analysed by eligibility for free school meals. Table 11 shows that at GCSE, 65% of White British pupils eligible for free school meals achieved 5+A*-C including English and maths, compared with 37% of the paid meal cohort, a gap of 28 percentage points. For Somalis, who form a sub-set of the African cohort, the outcome is reversed and the gap is larger with the paid meals cohort 35 points below. An important point to note is the majority of Somalis are eligible for FSM at GCSE, and half the cohort at KS2, whereas the opposite is true for the African group overall.

These findings underline the importance of treating any measure of school or LA performance which does not include the influence of background factors, such as social class and deprivation, with scepticism.

Table 11. Performance by Key Stage, FSM and Ethnic Background in Lambeth, 2014

	Key Stage 2 (% level 4+)			GCSE(% 5+A*-C inc EM)		
	% of pupils eligible	Eligible	Not Eligible	% of pupils eligible	Eligible	Not Eligible
African	39%	85%	93%	36%	58%	63%
Somali	51%	88%	91%	69%	72%	37%
Caribbean	42%	84%	89%	38%	47%	49%
Portuguese	21%	75%	88%	24%	33%	54%
Polish	10%	70%	98%	15%	40%	71%
White British	19%	92%	96%	22%	37%	65%
Lambeth	33%	85%	92%	32%	49%	61%

English Language Acquisition and Achievement

Another important factor relating to ethnic background and Somali achievement is English fluency. For students to have access to the curriculum it is clear that they need to be fluent in the language of instruction. Some students of Somali heritage are fluent in English while others may not be.

A number of studies have explored the relationship between English fluency and pupil attainment. Demie and Strand (2005) examined the results at KS2 and GCSE whilst at the same time controlling for age, gender, free school meals, ethnic background and mobility rate. The results indicated that pupils who spoke English as an additional language scored significantly lower than those who spoke English as first language or were fluent in English.

Table 12 and 13 gives the average KS1 and KS2 performance by level of fluency in English. Similar to expectation, Somali pupils' performance at KS1 and KS2 increases as the stage of proficiency in English increases. The stage 3 (non-fluent) and stage 4 (fully fluent) pupils have in most cases performed above the LA average for the last five years, thus it is the non-fluent stage 1 and 2 pupils who contributed towards any under-performance for the cohort overall.

Table 12. Average Key Stage 1 Attainment of Somali Pupils by Stage of English Fluency (2010 - 2014)

Fluency Stage	Key Stage 1 Average (% Level 2B+)					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	% Change 10-14
Beginner Stage 1	20%	42%	22%	33%	33%	+13%
Stage 2	63%	54%	47%	61%	57%	-6%
Stage 3	79%	83%	82%	85%	91%	+12%
Fully Fluent Stage 4	94%	89%	93%	98%	98%	+4%
All Somali pupils	68%	67%	66%	72%	76%	+8%

Table 13. Average Key Stage 2 Attainment of Somali Pupils by Stage of English Fluency (2010 - 2014)

Fluency Stage	Key Stage 2 Average (% Level 4+)					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	% Change 09-13
Beginner Stage 1	50%	0%	n/a	n/a	0%	-50%
Stage 2	41%	55%	92%	74%	54%	+13%
Stage 3	75%	90%	80%	91%	90%	+15%
Fully Fluent Stage 4	87%	96%	95%	99%	99%	+12%
All Somali pupils	74%	84%	88%	92%	91%	+17%

Analysis of GCSE results also shows that fluency in English continues to have an influence on the performance of pupils with EAL (see table 14 below). However, as the cohort sizes are smaller in secondary schools, meaningful conclusions can only be drawn from the stage 3 and 4 (fully fluent) outcomes. The differences can be stark, for example in 2011 a 41 percentage points gap between the stage 3 and 4 pupils.

Tables 14. GCSE 5+ A*-C inc E&M Attainment of Somali pupils by Stage of English Fluency (2010 - 2014)

Fluency Stage	GCSE (% 5+ A*-C inc English and Maths)				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Beginner Stage 1	0%	n/a	0%	33%	n/a
Stage 2	8%	n/a	50%	0%	0%
Stage 3	60%	57%	73%	100%	44%
Fully Fluent Stage 4	70%	90%	98%	91%	64%
All Somali pupils	79%	82%	88%	88%	60%

As mentioned before, because of changes to GCSE in 2014 this year's results cannot be compared to this previous year's. Previous year's results have been included to display the EAL gap.

There are also some striking differences within the main ethnic groups when the KS2 and GCSE data is further analysed by levels of fluency in English. Tables 15 and 16 show that performance for all main ethnic groups increases when combined with improved English acquisition amongst the bilingual cohort. These findings support a number of studies that have explored the relationship between English fluency and pupil attainment. Demie and Strand (2005) examined the results at KS2 and GCSE whilst at the same time controlling for age, gender, free school meals, ethnic background and mobility rate.

The results indicated that pupils who were at the early stages of fluency achieved significantly lower outcomes than those who spoke English as a first language, or were fully fluent in English.

Table 15. KS2 Average Attainment by Ethnicity and Fluency in English – 2014

Fluency Stage	African		Caribbean		Somali		Portuguese		White British	
	Cohort	L4+	Cohort	L4+	Cohort	L4+	Cohort	L4+	Cohort	L4+
Beginner Stage 1	6	25%	1	100%	4	0%	0	n/a	0	n/a
Stage 2	34	53%	0	n/a	13	54%	4	25%	0	n/a
Stage 3	168	84%	3	100%	57	90%	23	54%	3	100%
Fully Fluent	358	96%	1	100%	77	99%	51	94%	13	100%
English	80	93%	497	86%	0	n/a	0	n/a	339	95%
All Pupils	646	90%	502	86%	151	91%	78	85%	355	95%

Table 16. GCSE 5+ A*-C including English and Maths Attainment by Ethnicity and Fluency in English – 2014

Fluency Stage	African		Caribbean		Somali		Portuguese		White British	
	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result
Beginner Stage 1	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a	1	0%	0	n/a
Stage 2	4	0%	0	n/a	2	0%	3	0%	0	n/a
Stage 3	46	28%	2	50%	9	44%	22	23%	0	n/a
Fully Fluent	209	65%	7	71%	36	64%	76	59%	6	100%
English	154	65%	348	48%	0	n/a	2	50%	229	58%
All Pupils	456	61%	357	48%	52	60%	127	49%	235	59%

These findings offer much encouragement for policy makers and school improvement practitioners. They demonstrate that once the language barrier is overcome, it is possible to attain good levels of achievement for all key stages.

Pupil Mobility and Achievement

It is now widely recognised that mobility can have an adverse affect on educational achievement. Mobile pupils in this context are defined as those who joined school at a point other than the start of the respective key stage. For example, at KS2 a pupil who joins in year 3 is deemed 'non-mobile', whereas a year 5 entrant is classed as 'mobile'. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector reported that high pupil mobility was one of the greatest problems, if not the greatest problem that any school can face.

Table 17. Attainment of Somali Pupils by Mobility (2013 & 2014)

Key Stage		2013			2014		
		Non-mobile	Mobile	Gap	Non-mobile	Mobile	Gap
KS2 - Level 4+	Reading	90%	86%	-36%	95%	64%	-31%
	Maths	94%	100%	-26%	92%	79%	-13%
	Average	92%	93%	-35%	93%	71%	-22%
GCSE % achieving	5+ A*-C EM	-	-	-	63%	33%	-30%
	5+ A*-C	-	-	-	78%	33%	-45%
	EBacc	-	-	-	29%	17%	-12%

Non-mobile Somali pupils were more likely than their mobile peers to gain the expected threshold at each key stage. Tables 17 and 18 illustrate this point and show significant differences in some cases, for example a 31 percentage points gap in reading at KS2, and 45 points in the 5+ A*-C indicator at GCSE.

Table 18. Somali Pupil Average Attainment by Length of Time Spent in School, 2013 & 2014

Key stage	Mobility by Length of Time Spent in School	Number		Performance	
		2013	2014	2013	2014
KS2 - Level 4+	Joined in Year 3 or before	110	123	90%	93%
	Joined in Year 4&5	8	26	94%	75%
	Joined in Year 6	6	2	92%	50%
GCSE - 5+ A*-C inc English and Maths	Joined in Year 7	-	49	-	63%
	Joined in Year 8&9	-	5	-	40%
	Joined in Year 10	-	1	-	0%
	Joined in Year 11	-	0	-	n/a

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is clear to see that Somali pupils have formed an underperforming group in Lambeth at each stage of the National Curriculum, and at GCSE level. However, they continue to narrow the achievement gap to their peers and in a few instances have exceeded the Lambeth outcomes, most notably in maths at KS2 for the last three years, and in the 5+ A*-C including English and maths indicator at GCSE.

One reason for historical Somali pupil underachievement is the language barrier. At KS1 and KS2 the majority of Somalis are non-fluent in English, and has been the case over the last five years. Whereas at GCSE the opposite is true, with the stage 4 fully fluent pupils forming the majority of the cohort each year.

Somali pupils also face other challenges, such as the very high proportion who are eligible for free school meals (which is seen as a proxy for social deprivation). But despite these challenges Somali pupils continue to narrow the gap to their peers.

The total Somali population present in Lambeth schools has increased considerably, from 561 in 2004 to 1,625 in 2014, with the majority of this change reflected in primary schools. The achievement of Somali pupils will continue to assume greater importance if this rate of increase is maintained, and the good news is the issues surrounding them have been recognised and are being addressed within the borough's schools.

Overall the achievement of Somali pupils is a particular cause for concern and the data shows they are a significant underachieving group. There is a need for strategies to be developed to raise levels of achievement of this group and to reverse trends in the LA and at the national level.

Policy Implications

The challenge from this research for national policy makers is that both the LA and government need to recognise the underachievement of Somali pupils as an important part of raising standards in schools. Unfortunately it is an unacknowledged problem at national level and there are no specific initiatives to address the situation.

Implications for Future Research

The LA data shows that Somali children are largely underachieving. Recent research into groups including Somali, Black African and Black Caribbean by the LA (McKenely et al 2003; Demie et al 2004 and 2007) has identified characteristics of successful schools and discussed in detail these features including strong and purposeful leadership, high expectation for all pupils and teachers, effective use of data, effective teaching and learning, and developing an inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of underachieving groups.

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Appendix 1

Key Stage 1 Cohort Sizes per Main Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	Key Stage 1 Cohort Sizes				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
African	679	694	700	747	754
<i>Somali</i>	149	135	155	180	151
Caribbean	516	479	482	475	452
Portuguese	134	153	123	156	131
White British	451	407	472	470	563
Lambeth	2,748	2,819	2,906	3,035	3,107

Key Stage 2 Cohort Sizes per Main Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	Key Stage 2 Cohort Sizes				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
African	486	600	587	611	653
<i>Somali</i>	68	111	119	124	134
Caribbean	339	473	469	456	510
Portuguese	166	171	126	156	175
White British	248	371	355	287	347
Lambeth	1,860	2,483	2,461	2,462	2,697

25% of Lambeth schools boycotted the tests in 2010, hence the lower figures.

GCSE Cohort Sizes per Main Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	GCSE Cohort Sizes				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
African	376	411	435	408	458
<i>Somali</i>	28	56	57	52	52
Caribbean	343	326	365	391	357
Portuguese	72	93	94	125	127
White British	259	254	265	239	235
Lambeth	1,618	1,598	1,800	1,892	1,844

Appendix 2

Stage of English Fluency – Key Stage 1 Somali Cohort

		English Fluency Stage				
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total EAL
2010	Cohort	15	66	52	16	149
	% of total	10%	44%	35%	11%	-
2011	Cohort	19	47	48	15	135
	% of total	14%	35%	36%	11%	-
2012	Cohort	9	63	59	24	155
	% of total	6%	41%	38%	15%	-
2013	Cohort	19	74	59	28	180
	% of total	11%	41%	33%	16%	-
2014	Cohort	8	45	63	17	134
	% of total	6%	34%	47%	13%	-

In 2009 EAL status was not known for two pupils, and for six pupils in 2011.

Stage of English Fluency – Key Stage 2 Somali Cohort

		English Fluency Stage				
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total EAL
2010	Cohort	1	11	30	26	68
	% of total	2%	23%	43%	31%	-
2011	Cohort	2	19	53	34	111
	% of total	2%	17%	48%	31%	-
2012	Cohort	0	6	53	60	119
	% of total	-	5%	45%	50%	-
2013	Cohort	0	21	44	53	118
	% of total	-	17%	35%	43%	-
2014	Cohort	4	13	57	77	151
	% of total	3%	9%	38%	51%	-

In 2011 EAL status was not known for three pupils.

Stage of English Fluency – GCSE Somali Cohort

		English Fluency Stage				
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total EAL
2010	Cohort	0	1	10	17	28
	% of total	-	4%	36%	61%	-
2011	Cohort	0	0	14	42	56
	% of total	-	-	25%	75%	-
2012	Cohort	1	2	11	42	56
	% of total	2%	4%	20%	75%	-
2013	Cohort	3	3	7	32	45
	% of total	6%	6%	13%	62%	-
2014	Cohort	0	2	9	36	55
	% of total	-	4%	16%	65%	-

In 2009 EAL status was not known for one pupil, 2012 for five pupils, and 2014 for eight pupils.