

Mixed Race Pupils' Educational Achievement in England

An Empirical Analysis

Feyisa Demie
Andrew Hau

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MIXED RACE PUPILS' EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLAND

An Empirical Analysis of the National Pupil Database

Introduction

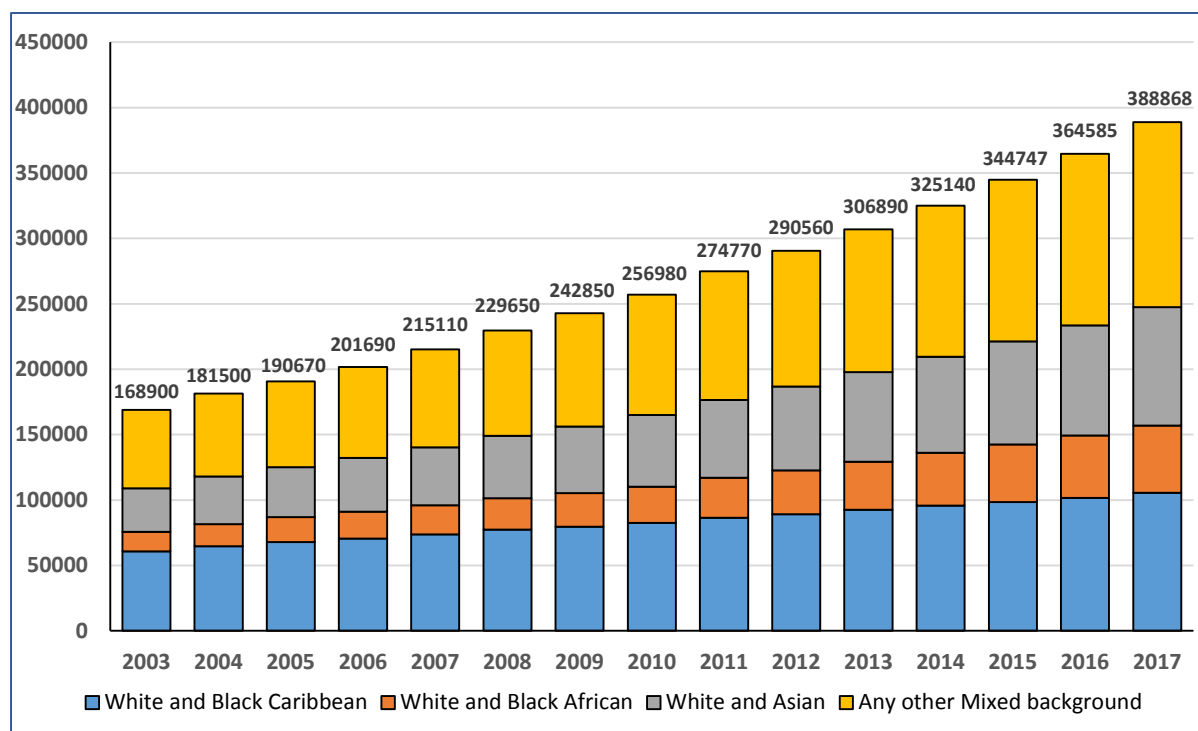
This paper examines the achievement of Mixed Race¹ students in British schools at the end of GCSE. Two methodological approaches are used. Firstly, the study looks at the pattern of the Mixed Race pupil population in English Local Authorities to establish the number of Mixed Race pupils in British schools. This is followed by detailed data analysis on the performance of Mixed Race pupils in England compared to the other main ethnic groups. The main questions posed are:

- What is the total number of Mixed Race children in schools in England?
- What does the data tell us about Mixed Race pupils' achievement?
- What are the factors influencing achievement?

The National Context

This research considers evidence from schools in England. England is one of the more ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse countries in Europe. About 32% of the school population are from Black and ethnic minority groups. The 2017 census shows that there were 7,088,784 pupils in schools in England. Of these, White British pupils formed the largest ethnic group with 68%, followed by White Other at 6%, Pakistani 4%, Black African 4%, Indian 3%, Bangladeshi 2%. The Black Caribbean school population is about 1% or 84,887 pupils. The Mixed Race school population has grown in size to 388,868 pupils in schools in England (see Figure 1). This makes up 5.5% of the total pupil population.

Figure 1. Growth of Mixed Race Pupils in Schools* in England 2003-2017



*State funded Primary, Secondary, Special Schools, PRUs and Alternative Provisions
 Source: Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics 2003-2017, DfE

Table 1. Number of Mixed Race Pupils in England Schools by Ethnic heritage 2003-2017

	Total Mixed Race	Mixed Race Pupils by Ethnic Heritage			
		White and Black Caribbean	White and Black African	White and Asian	Any other Mixed background
2003	168,900	60,700	15,000	33,300	60,000
2004	181,500	64,600	17,000	36,300	63,500
2005	190,670	67,850	19,160	38,200	65,450
2006	201,690	70,570	20,550	41,100	69,480
2007	215,110	73,790	22,240	44,370	74,730
2008	229,650	77,350	24,110	47,510	80,680
2009	242,850	79,530	25,830	50,800	86,700
2010	256,980	82,410	27,860	54,610	92,110
2011	274,770	86,325	30,730	59,340	98,385
2012	290,560	89,225	33,535	64,020	103,770
2013	306,890	92,505	36,730	68,605	109,060
2014	325,140	95,785	40,245	73,555	115,560
2015	344,747	98,520	43,995	78,694	123,538
2016	364,585	101,676	47,565	84,240	131,104
2017	388,868	105,408	51,404	90,632	141,424
% Mixed Race	100%	27%	13%	23%	36%
% Growth 2003-2017	130%	74%	243%	172%	136%

The variation in the number of Mixed Race students by ethnic heritage is shown in Table 1. The main findings of the data show that:

- 388,868 Mixed Race pupils attended primary, secondary, special schools, pupil referral unit and alternative provisions in England in 2017. Of these, 27% were White and Black Caribbean, 23% White and Asian, 13% White and Black African and 36% Any Other Mixed background.
- The empirical evidence also shows the mixed race population has increased from 168,900 in 2003 to 388,868 in 2017. This is a growth rate of 130%. Of these, there was a marked growth of White and Black African at 243%, followed by a 172% growth in White and Asian, 136% Other Mixed background and 74% Black Caribbean.

Mixed Race Pupils by Regions of England

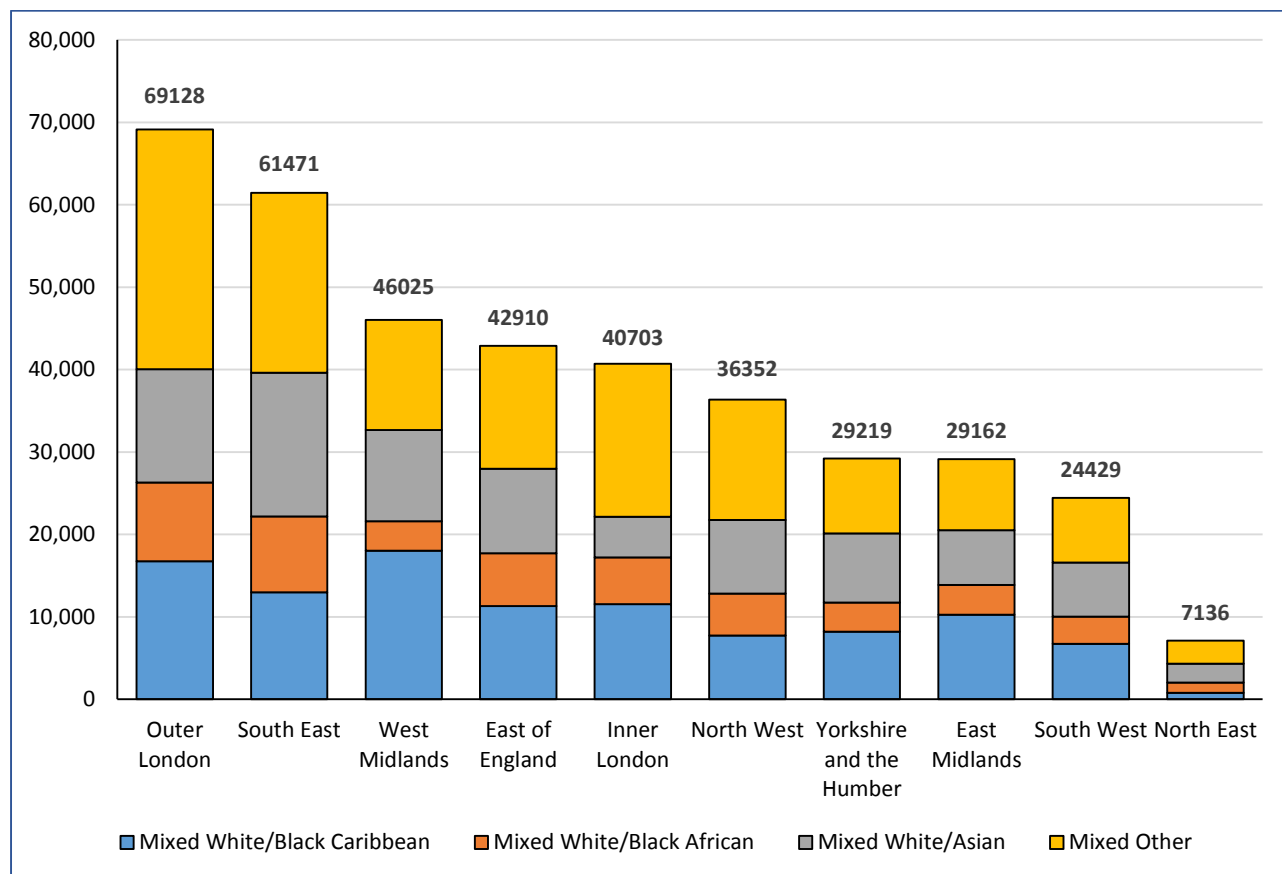
The analysis of the mixed race pupil population in England show variations by region. The highest numbers of mixed race pupils were found in Outer London (69,128 pupils) and the South East (61,471) although the highest concentration of mixed race pupils were found in Inner London (11% of the pupil population or around 1 in 9 pupils). Inner and Outer London had a particularly high number of Mixed Other and Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils, whilst the South East had high numbers of Mixed Other and Mixed White/Asian pupils.

Table 2. Number of Mixed Race Pupils in England Schools by Regions 2016

Region	Mixed All		Mixed White/Black Caribbean		Mixed White/Black African		Mixed White/Asian		Mixed Other	
	No.	% pupil pop.	No.	% pupil pop.	No.	% pupil pop.	No.	% pupil pop.	No.	% pupil pop.
North East	7,136	2.2%	792	0.2%	1,238	0.4%	2,304	0.7%	2,802	0.9%
North West	36,352	3.9%	7,729	0.8%	5,096	0.5%	8,950	0.9%	14,577	1.5%
Yorkshire and the Humber	29,219	4.1%	8,206	1.2%	3,524	0.5%	8,420	1.2%	9,069	1.3%
East Midlands	29,162	4.8%	10,282	1.7%	3,610	0.6%	6,648	1.1%	8,622	1.4%
West Midlands	46,025	5.9%	18,055	2.3%	3,539	0.4%	11,072	1.4%	13,359	1.7%
East of England	42,910	5.4%	11,324	1.4%	6,404	0.8%	10,252	1.3%	14,930	1.9%
Inner London	40,703	11.0%	11,555	3.1%	5,657	1.5%	4,937	1.3%	18,554	5.0%
Outer London	69,128	9.5%	16,745	2.3%	9,566	1.3%	13,757	1.9%	29,060	4.0%
South East	61,471	5.5%	12,996	1.2%	9,184	0.8%	17,443	1.6%	21,848	2.0%
South West	24,429	3.7%	6,722	1.0%	3,332	0.5%	6,544	1.0%	7,831	1.2%
England	386,535	5.5%	104,406	1.5%	51,150	0.7%	90,327	1.3%	140,65	2.0%

There were also significant numbers of mixed race pupils in the East Midlands (4.8% of the pupil population) and West Midlands (5.9%) made up predominantly of Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils. The East of England (5.4%) also had high numbers of Mixed White/Asian, Mixed White/Black Caribbean and Mixed Other pupils.

Figure 2. Numbers of Mixed Race Pupils in Schools in England by Region 2017

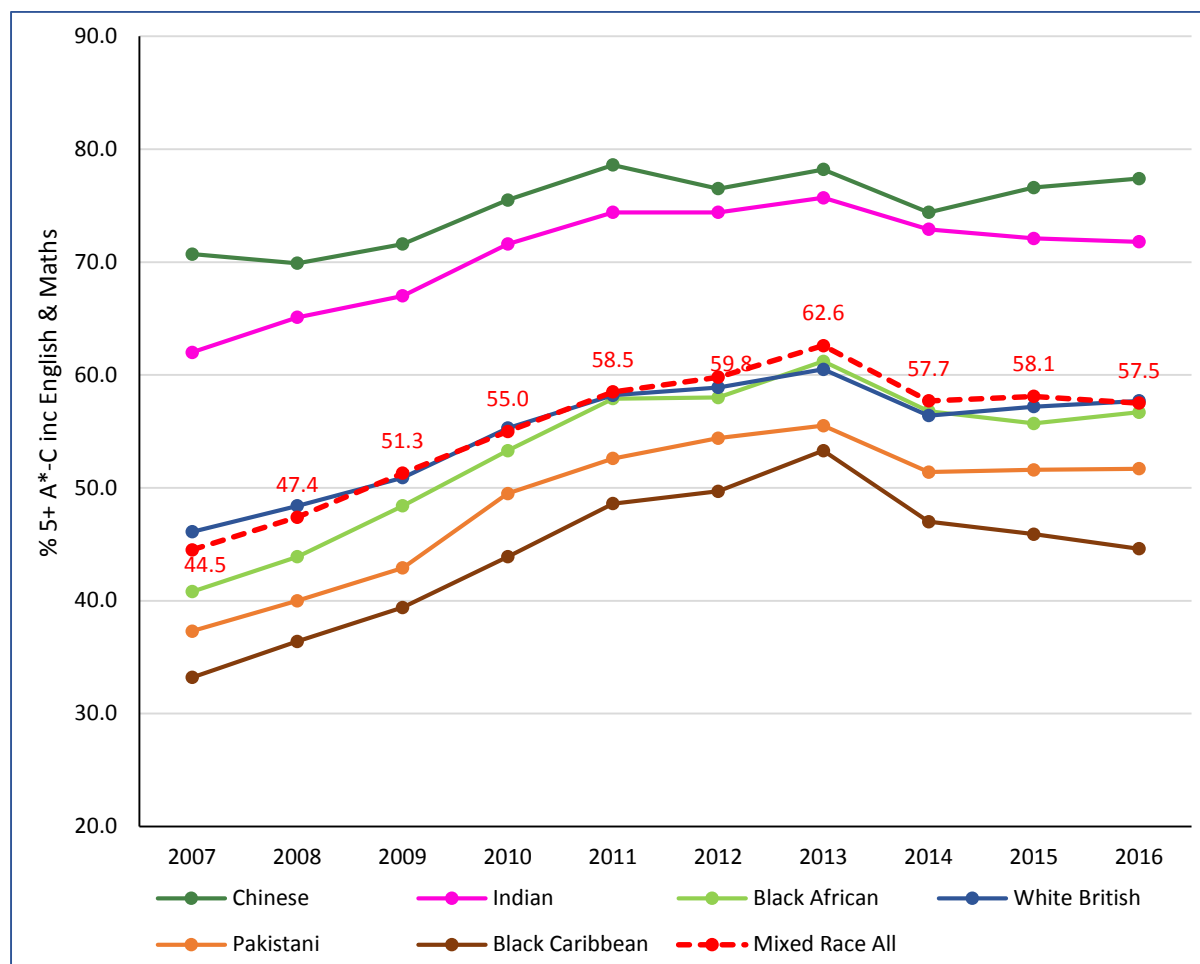


GCSE Attainment of Mixed Race Pupils in Schools in England

Since the 1990s, there has been a marked improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining five or more higher grade passes in GCSE examinations at the end of secondary education in England. The proportion of 15 years olds attaining at least five higher grade passes rose from 37% in 1998 to 60% in 2013 in England (Demie and McLean, 2015 p23).

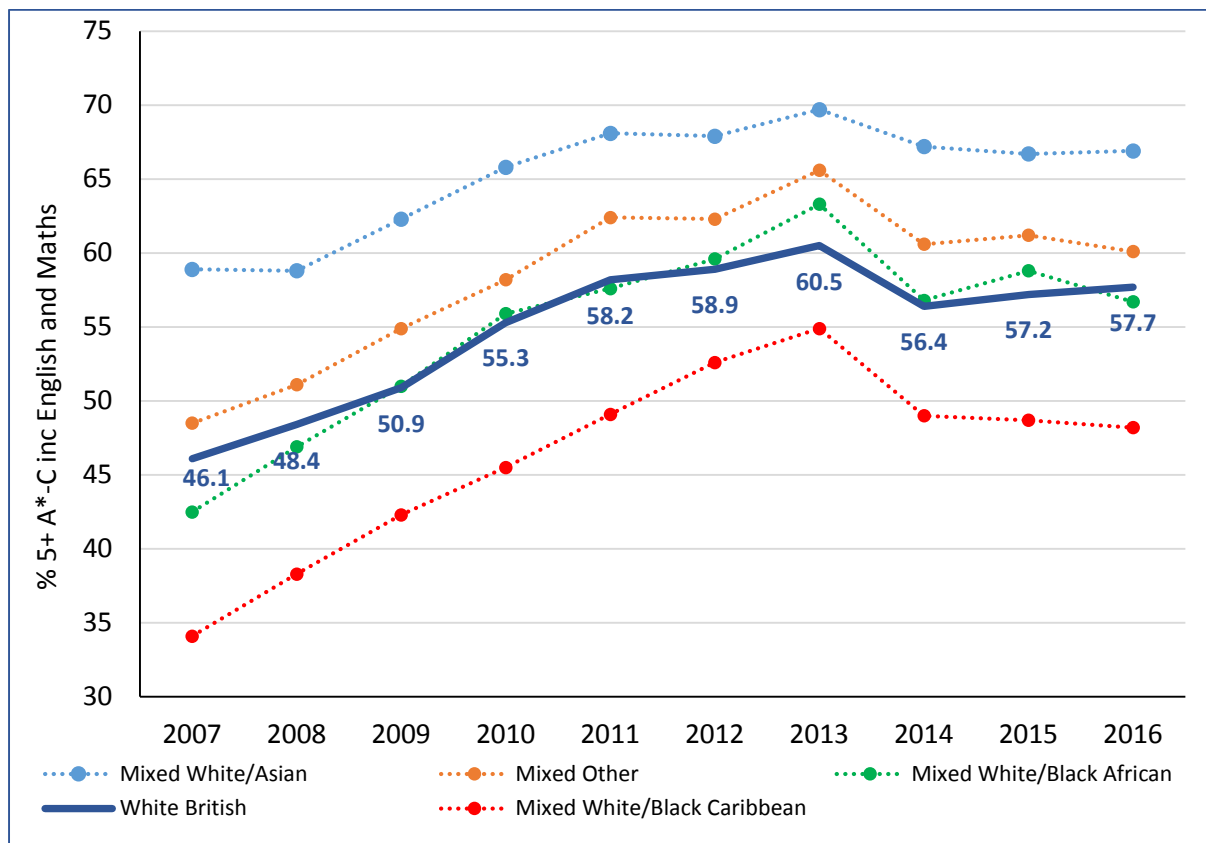
It is difficult to ascribe the above pattern of improvement to education reform alone but previous research confirms how significant the government policy measures were in raising standards (Demie and McLean, 2015). However, not all ethnic groups shared equally in the overall improvement in attainment at the 5+A*-C level (See Figure 2). Broadly speaking, Chinese and Indian pupils are the highest achieving groups at GCSE. Mixed race children have been achieving above the national average since 2011.

Figure 2. GCSE Performance in England by Main Ethnic Background (%) 2016



However, within the mixed race ethnic group, there are also variations in attainment based on the ethnic heritage (Figure 3). Figure 3 disaggregates the mixed race group and the main findings show that Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils were one of the lowest achieving groups at GCSE with a similar attainment pattern to the Black Caribbean ethnic group and sustaining a significant attainment gap with White British pupils. The attainment of Mixed White and Black African pupils was similar to the national average. In contrast, Mixed Other and in particular Mixed White and Asian pupils were consistently achieving above the national average.

Figure 3. GCSE Mixed Race Pupil Performance in England (%) 2016



Analysis of the data shows that:

- At GCSE in 2016, 45% of Black Caribbean pupils achieved 5+A*-C including English and Maths compared to the national average of 58% (Table 3). Similarly, 48% of Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils achieved 5+ A*-C including English and Maths, well below the national average.
- Since 2007, the attainment gap for Mixed White/Black Caribbean has failed to narrow with either White British pupils or the highest achieving ethnic groups, or indeed other mixed race pupils, all of whom were working at or above the national average.
- Mixed White and Asian pupils were performing around 10 percentage points or more above average consistently over the same period and nearly 20 percentage points higher than Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils.
- The attainment of Mixed White/Black African pupils over the years has been very much in line with the attainment of White British pupils. Only in 2013 was there a discernible gap in performance when they performed 3% higher than their White British peers.

Mixed Race Pupil Attainment by Social Background

The free school meals variable is often used as a proxy measure of the extent of social deprivation in the backgrounds of pupils and has been linked to underachievement in a number of studies (see Gillborn and Youdell 2002; Demie 2001).

The proportion of pupils taking GCSE in 2016 that were eligible for free school meals was 13.4% (Table 3). 18.5% of mixed race pupils were eligible for free school meals with Mixed White/Black Caribbean the likeliest to be on FSM (22.7%), followed by Mixed White/Black African (19.7%). Mixed White/Asian were less likely to be on FSM (14.3%).

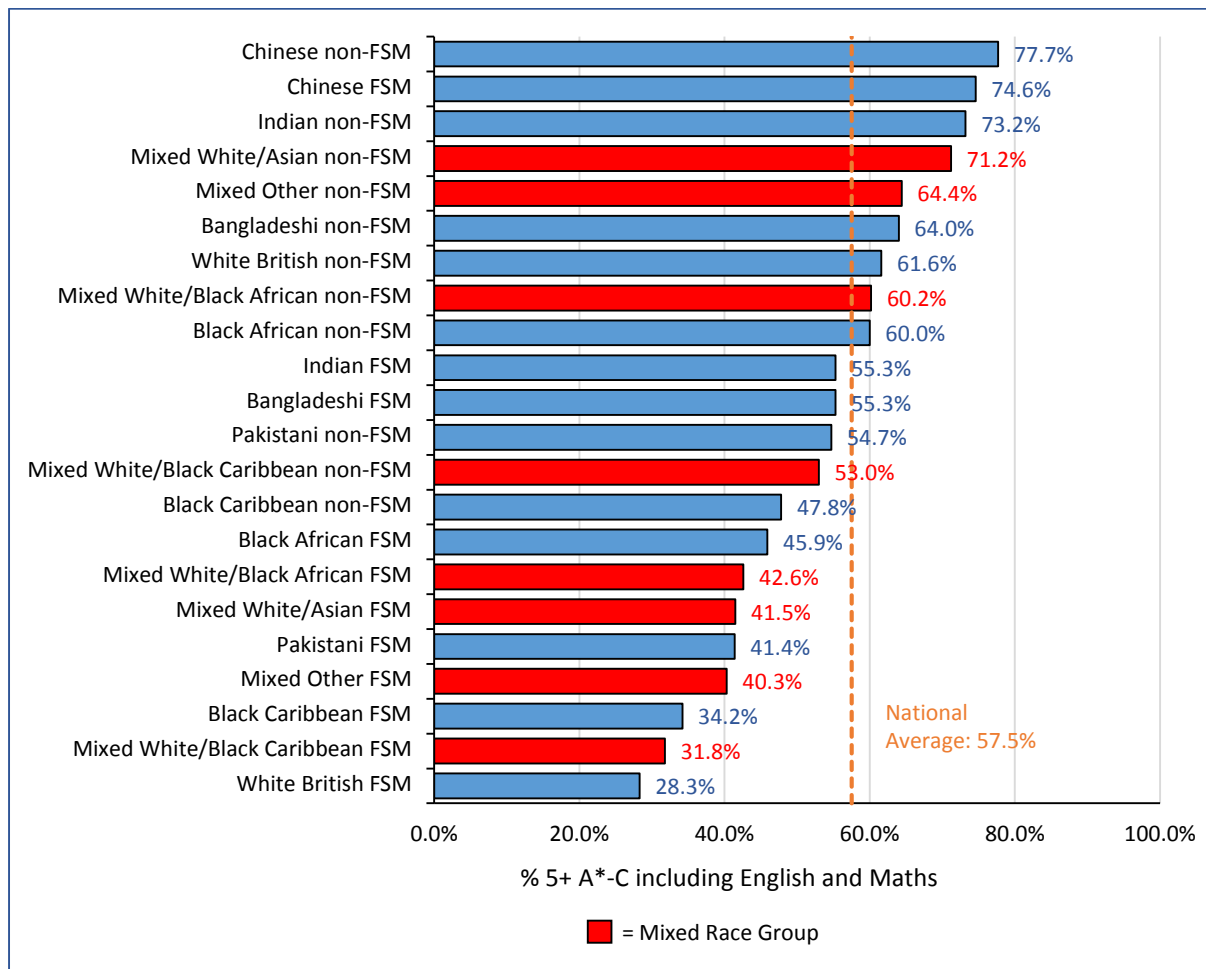
Table 3 indicates that there is a marked difference in GCSE performance between pupils eligible for free school meals and the most economically advantaged groups in schools. At the end of secondary education, 38% of mixed race pupils on FSM achieved 5+A*-C including English and Maths. Within this group, only 32% of Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils who were eligible for FSM achieved the measure and were the lowest attainers along with White British FSM and Black Caribbean FSM. There is a significant gap of 21% with those who were not eligible for FSM (53% 5+A*-C inc EM), albeit this group were also performing below the national average, whereas for all other mixed race groups, those who were not eligible for FSM were above the national average. However, the evidence also shows that Mixed Other, Mixed White/Black African and Mixed White/Asian all had significant achievement gaps between their FSM and non-FSM pupils. The largest gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils in the mixed race group were Mixed White/Asian pupils, with those who were not eligible for FSM performing at similar levels to the highest-achieving Indian and Chinese pupils.

Table 3. GCSE Mixed Race Performance in England by Social Background (%) 2016

Ethnicity	% FSM	5+ A*-C including English and Maths			
		ALL	No FSM	FSM	Gap
White British	11.7%	57.7%	61.6%	28.3%	33.3%
Mixed Race - All	18.5%	57.6%	62.1%	37.5%	24.6%
Mixed Any Other Background	17.0%	60.3%	64.4%	40.3%	24.1%
Mixed White and Asian	14.3%	67.0%	71.2%	41.5%	29.7%
Mixed White and Black African	19.7%	56.7%	60.2%	42.6%	17.6%
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	22.7%	48.2%	53.0%	31.8%	21.2%
Bangladeshi	29.6%	61.4%	64.0%	55.3%	8.7%
Indian	7.4%	71.9%	73.2%	55.3%	17.9%
Pakistani	22.2%	51.7%	54.7%	41.4%	13.3%
Black African	23.6%	56.7%	60.0%	45.9%	14.1%
Black Caribbean	23.4%	44.6%	47.8%	34.2%	13.6%
Chinese	6.4%	77.5%	77.7%	74.6%	3.1%
Total	13.4%	57.5%	61.2%	33.5%	27.7%

There are also some striking differences within the other main ethnic groups. Table 3 shows that at GCSE, 28% of White British pupils eligible for free school meals achieved 5+ A*-C including English and Maths, compared with 62% of pupils who were not eligible. The White British difference is the highest with a gap of 33% at GCSE followed by all mixed race pupils with a 24% gap.

Figure 4: GCSE Mixed Race Pupil Performance by Eligibility for FSM in England (%) 2016



However, the gap is narrower for Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black African at GCSE. This is despite a high number of pupils on free school meals compared to White British. This finding underlines the importance of treating any measure of school performance which does not allow for the influence of background factors such as social class and deprivation with skepticism. Social class data is particularly essential for the analysis of performance of White British and Black Caribbean pupils in addition to other disadvantage factors. Overall the evidence from analyzing free school meals data is that:

- 18.5% of Mixed Race pupils at GCSE in 2016 were eligible for free school meals, compared to the average of 13.4%. In particular, 22.7% of Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils were eligible for free school meals.
- 37.5% of all Mixed Race pupils eligible for free school meals achieved 5+ A*-C including English and Maths, compared with 62.1% of pupils who were not eligible. The national average was 57.5%.
- Black Caribbean, Mixed White and Black Caribbean and White British pupils from low income households were the lowest performing groups
- The attainment gap between those pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are not is wider for White British and Mixed Race pupils than any other ethnic group

Mixed Race Pupil Attainment by Gender

The association between gender and pupil achievement has been well documented. Girls have consistently outperformed boys and were more likely to achieve 5 A*-C including English and Maths at GCSE.

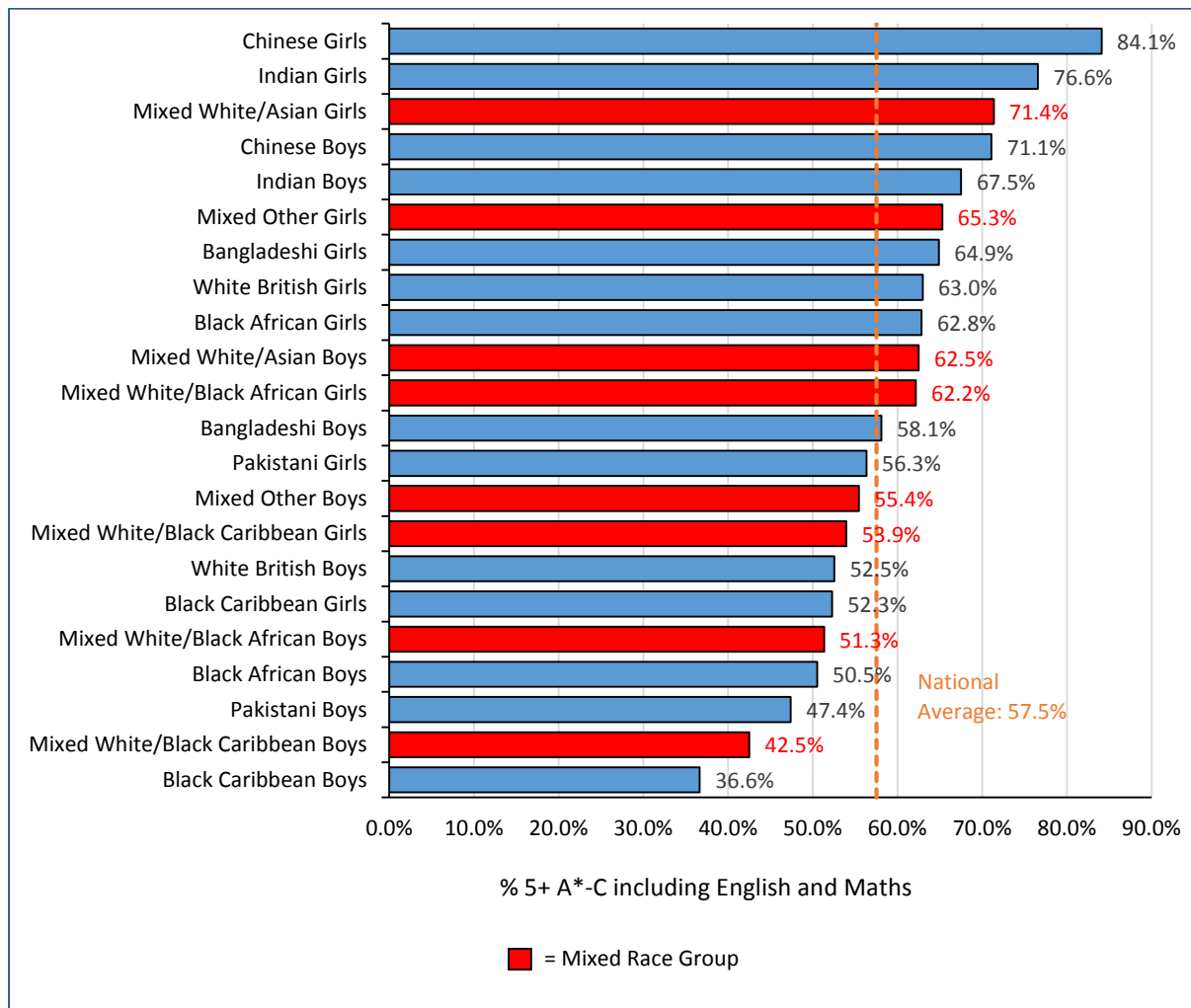
Table 4. GCSE Attainment of Mixed Race Pupils by Gender 2016

Ethnicity	5+ A*-C including English and Maths		
	Female	Male	Gap
White British	63.0%	52.5%	10.4%
Mixed Race - All	62.7%	52.4%	10.3%
Mixed Any Other Background	65.3%	55.4%	9.9%
Mixed White and Asian	71.4%	62.5%	8.9%
Mixed White and Black African	62.2%	51.3%	10.8%
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	53.9%	42.5%	11.4%
Bangladeshi	64.9%	58.1%	6.8%
Indian	76.6%	67.5%	9.1%
Pakistani	56.3%	47.4%	8.9%
Black African	62.8%	50.5%	12.3%
Black Caribbean	52.3%	36.6%	15.6%
Chinese	84.1%	71.1%	13.0%
Total	62.6%	52.3%	10.3%

Overall in 2016, girls sitting GCSE outperformed boys by 10 percentage points. Table 4 indicates that at GCSE, 62.7% of Mixed Race girls achieved 5+ A*-C including English and Maths compared to 52.4% of Mixed Race boys. Both Mixed Race girls and boys were achieving more or less the national average for their gender and the gap was the same as national.

Within this group, Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils had a wider gender achievement gap than nationally. Mixed White/Black Caribbean boys were the most underperforming and were among the lowest attainers overall, above only Black Caribbean boys. Mixed White/Black Caribbean girls, however, were performing 11 percentage points better, only a few points below the national average. Mixed White/Black African pupils also showed a wide gap between boys and girls. Whilst only 51.3% of Mixed White/Black African boys were achieving the required measure, Mixed White/Black African girls were performing above the national average. Mixed Other and Mixed White/Asian pupils showed a slightly smaller achievement gap between genders and both boys and girls from these ethnic groups were achieving above the national average. Mixed White/Asian girls in particular were performing well above the national average and were only behind Chinese girls and Indian girls.

Figure 5: GCSE Mixed Race Pupil Performance by Gender in England (%) 2016



When studying the data by gender, the evidence overall shows:

- Mixed Race girls' and boys' performance was similar to White British boys and girls and also the national averages for their gender with an identical gap between genders of 10.3%
- The gap between Mixed Race White/Black Caribbean boys and girls was wider than the national gender gap (11.4%). Mixed Race White/Black Caribbean girls (53.9%) were just below the national average overall, whilst Mixed White/Caribbean boys (42.5%) were one of the lowest attaining groups, only above Black Caribbean boys (36.6%).
- Mixed White/Black African boys (51.3%) were below the national average, whilst Mixed White/Black African girls (62.2%) were performing above the national average.
- The highest attaining groups were Chinese girls (84.1%), Indian girls (76.6%) and then Mixed White Asian girls (71.4%), who performed better than Chinese boys (71.1%) and Indian boys (67.5%).

Mixed Race Pupils' Attainment by Region of England

Using the empirical data from the 2016 NPD, the achievement of GCSE pupils was examined by the region of England they live in (Table 5).

Table 5. GCSE Attainment of Mixed Race Pupils by Region 2016

Region	GCSE (% 5+ A*-C) including English and Maths							
	Mixed Race Cohort	Black Caribbean	White British	Mixed All	White and Black Caribbean	White and African	White and Asian	Any Other Mixed background
East	2624	45.0%	58.1%	56.6%	45.4%	60.2%	69.3%	57.0%
East Midlands	1753	40.1%	55.1%	52.5%	44.4%	50.0%	63.6%	55.4%
Inner London	2413	43.8%	61.4%	59.6%	55.0%	58.7%	73.8%	60.1%
North East	366	50.0%	56.2%	64.5%	58.9%	72.9%	67.8%	60.3%
North West	2189	47.3%	56.7%	56.0%	47.9%	53.7%	62.9%	57.9%
Outer London	4107	47.4%	60.7%	61.3%	50.6%	59.2%	74.1%	63.9%
South East	3587	41.2%	60.0%	60.9%	48.6%	48.2%	73.1%	64.6%
South West	1413	39.3%	58.5%	60.7%	51.5%	61.9%	69.5%	62.3%
West Midlands	2715	42.5%	55.3%	52.1%	45.0%	56.2%	58.7%	57.0%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1676	43.0%	57.5%	51.4%	44.9%	60.8%	52.6%	55.2%
National	22843	44.6%	57.7%	57.5%	48.2%	56.7%	66.9%	60.3%

Key findings from the data show that:

- Mixed Race pupils in Outer London showed the highest performance with 61.3% achieving 5 or more A*-C including English and Maths, outperforming White British pupils and also mixed race pupils in other parts of the country.
- Mixed Race pupils in the East and West Midlands had lower attainment, with 52.1% and 52.5% respectively achieving 5 A*-C including English and Maths. The large representation in these regions from Mixed White/Black Caribbean, already identified as an underachieving group, may be a contributory factor.
- Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils were consistently the lowest achievers of mixed race pupils in nearly all regions of England. Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils in Inner London, performed slightly better, although were still working below their peers and the national average.
- Mixed White/Asian pupils were the highest achievers of the mixed race cohort, particularly in Inner London, Outer London and the South East where they were performing over ten percentage points higher than the national average. The South East had the highest numbers of Mixed White/Asian pupils in the country.
- Although there were only 366 mixed race pupils sitting GCSE in the North East in 2016, they performed above the national average and White British pupils. Mixed race pupils in the North West were working at a similar level to White British pupils in this region.

Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

The national data in England suggest a huge growth of the mixed race pupil population in schools in England. The empirical evidence confirms that:

- Mixed race pupils overall in 2016 were performing at the national average at GCSE.
- Mixed White and Asian pupils were achieving around 10 percentage points or more above average consistently over the same period, particularly in Inner and Outer London and the South East of England and nearly 20 percentage points higher than Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils.
- The attainment of Mixed White/Black African pupils over the years has been very much in line with the attainment of White British pupils. Only in 2013 was there a discernible gap in performance when they performed 3% higher than their White British peers.

However, the data also suggests that Mixed White/Black Caribbean underachievement is real and persistent and they are consistently the lowest performing Mixed Race group in the country, particularly Mixed White/Black Caribbean boys. Evidence from the national data also suggests that the gap in performance is widening and Mixed White/Black Caribbean children in England's schools are not sharing the higher educational standards achieved over the last decade in England. This is further supported by previous studies which concluded:

'...White/Black Caribbean Pupils are the group most at risk of underachieving, and the attainment of White/Black African pupils is slightly below average in secondary schools, and the attainment of White/Asian pupils is above average.' (2004:8)

Where it is apparent that the underachievement of Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils is a particular cause for concern, it is important to address the performance of all mixed heritage pupils and the impact of socio-economic factors on these groups. This includes those who are performing well, such as Mixed White/Asian, but who also show a significant achievement gap with those who are on free-school meals. Notably, 36% of Mixed Race pupils in the country are from a Mixed Other background, but more needs to be known about the backgrounds of these pupils in order to better understand the educational requirements of this group.

Despite the growing number of mixed race children and underachievement of some mixed race groups in UK schools, there is very little research into the experiences of mixed race children in terms of identity issues and their 'invisibility' at school, lack of awareness of the needs of and issues faced by mixed heritage pupils, teachers' perceptions and expectations of mixed heritage children at school and experiences when joining their friendship groups. A number of researchers have argued that teachers need to be more aware of the needs of mixed race children (Smith 2006; Mirza 2008; Williams 2009; Morley 2016). Education research is yet to, 'uncover the factors that influence the academic achievement of these pupils' (Williams 2009: 777). Williams (2009) suggests that a lack of awareness of mixed race children's needs and experiences might be due to a lack of data about them and the fact that they are often categorised as black in schools. She states that few empirical studies address the concerns of mixed race children's schooling directly and believes that this highlights the need for more effective racial categorisation methods in schools to help identify and address the specific concerns of mixed race students. So, if mixed heritage identities are not acknowledged and children are often categorised as black, thus rendering their identities as marginalised and invisible in the school system, it is unsurprising that despite their growth in numbers, still little is known about their experiences at school.

Some research into teachers' and parents' expectations of mixed heritage children at school identified issues of low teacher and parent expectations. For example Tikly et al. (2004) have suggested that the achievement of Mixed White/Black Caribbean heritage children is negatively affected by low teacher expectations. In their evaluation of the 'Aiming High: African Caribbean Achievement Project', Tikly et al. (2006) suggest that '*an overwhelming majority of both high and low achieving African Caribbean pupils indicated that they were aware of the lower academic expectations that some teachers had of them.*' (2006:9)

Most recent research also concurs that mixed race pupils are being subjected to low expectations by teachers and that '*conscious or unconscious stereotypes and assumptions about mixed race pupils can impact negatively on pupils' achievements*' (Demie and Mclean 2017). There is an urgent need to increase our understanding of the factors which lie behind teachers' low expectations of mixed race pupils and indeed ethnic minorities in the classroom.

Such evidence reinforces serious concerns about the extent to which the education system and schools are meeting the needs of mixed race children (Demie 2003, 2005, 2017). These concerns persist and there is a need to undertake research into the experiences of mixed race pupils in schools. The recommendations from this paper for future research are to look into three research questions including:

- What are the school experience of mixed race children in terms of identity issues, teacher's perceptions and expectations and joining friendship groups in schools?
- To what extent the education systems and schools are meeting the needs of mixed children?
- What are the policy implication for policy and practice?

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^[1]**Terminology:** The existence of mixed race people are now officially acknowledged in statistics and it is the term used in the UK Census to refer to a person whose parents belong different racial or ethnic groups. The census includes a section entitled 'Mixed' which was split further into *White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian, White and Black African* and *Other Mixed*. The census was '*critical to putting mixed race on the national map*' and as a result of the use in national census '*there is now a surge in the use of the terminology and scholarly interest in mixed race in UK.*' (Aspinall 2015:5)

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