



**THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SOMALI PUPILS IN LAMBETH
SCHOOLS – EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE 2019**

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

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'*

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:

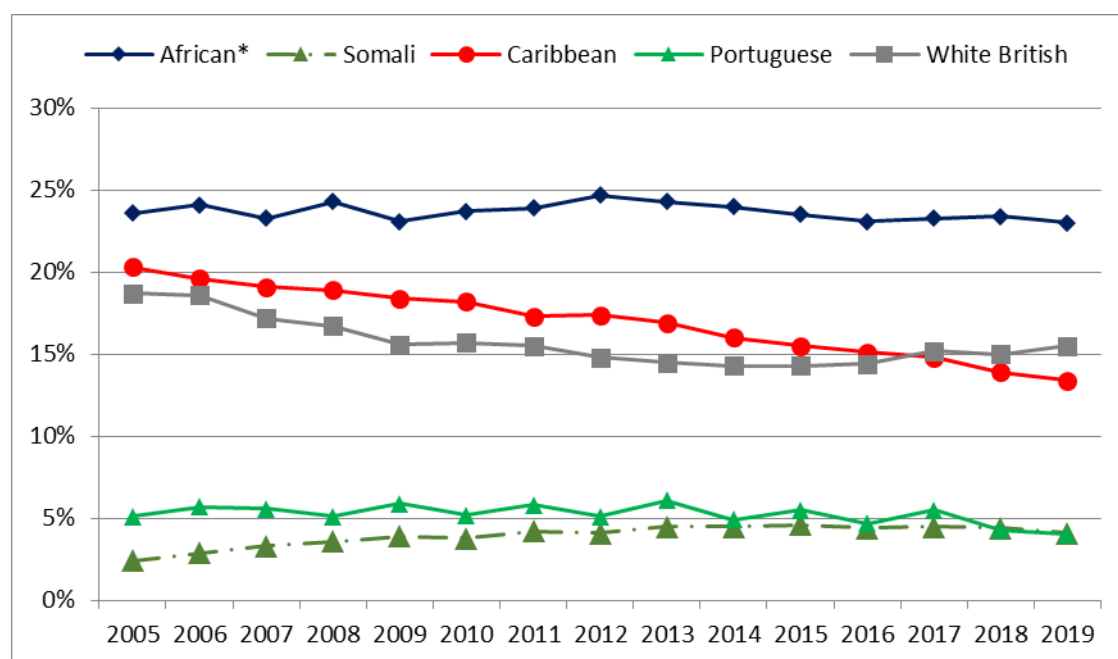
- To study the achievement of Somali heritage pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, and GCSE.
- To examine the school experiences of Somali heritage pupils.
- To identify reasons for underachievement.

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 85% of pupils are from black and ethnic minority groups. The 2019 January Schools Census shows that there were 38,071 pupils in the LA's schools. Of these, African pupils formed the largest ethnic group with 23% followed by White British (15.5%), Black Caribbean (13.4%), White Other (11.3%), Mixed Other (6.8%), and Portuguese (4.0%).

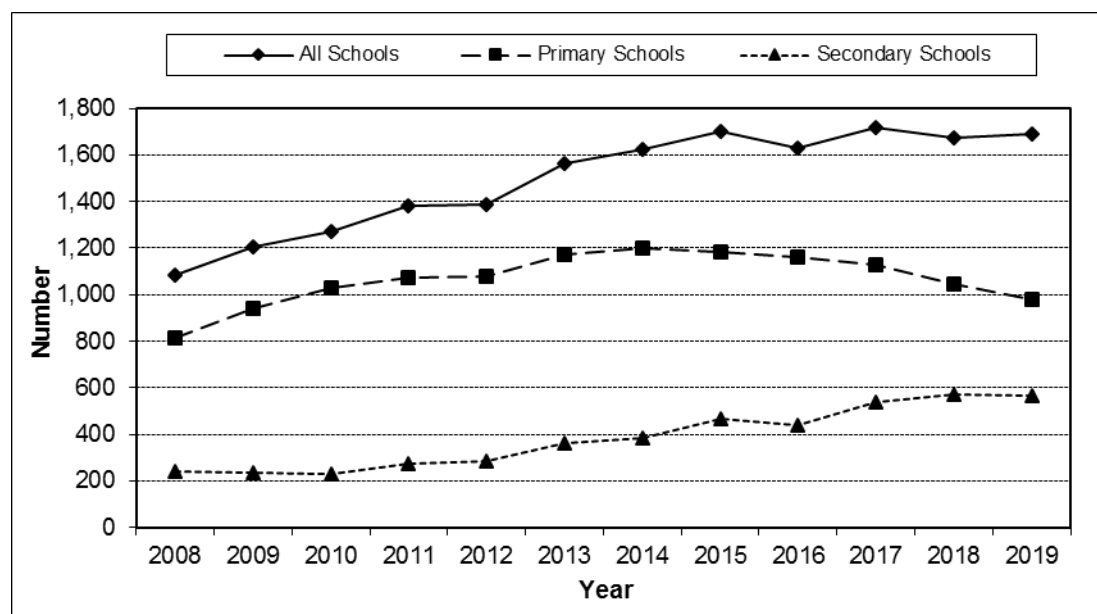
Figure 1. Changes in the School Composition in the LA by Main Ethnic Group



*African total includes Somali pupils

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.

Figure 2. Number of Somali Pupils in Lambeth Schools (2008-2019)



	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All Schools	1,085	1,203	1,271	1,382	1,386	1,563	1,625	1,699	1,630	1,716	1,672	1,689
Primary	811	938	1,026	1,074	1,079	1,173	1,197	1,185	1,159	1,128	1,046	979
Secondary	241	237	232	275	286	361	386	466	439	536	571	564

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

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

Figure 2 above clearly illustrates that up until 2017 the Somali population in all Lambeth schools has increased consistently, by approximately 100 pupils each year. Since then it has levelled off.

For the first time in 10 years, the primary population fell below the 1,000 pupils mark (979 in 2019), with secondary numbers in 2019 remaining similar to the previous year.

Table 1. Ethnic Background of the Lambeth School Population, 2008-2019 (% of total)

Ethnic Group	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
African*	24.3	23.1	23.7	23.9	24.7	24.3	24.0	24.5	23.4	23.2	22.4	23.0
Somali	3.6	3.9	3.8	4.2	4.1	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.4
Caribbean	18.9	18.4	18.2	17.3	17.4	16.9	16.0	15.7	15.3	14.5	13.9	13.4
Portuguese	5.1	5.9	5.2	5.8	5.1	6.1	4.9	4.9	4.7	4.6	4.3	4.0
White British	16.7	15.6	15.7	15.5	14.8	14.5	14.3	14.3	14.6	14.9	15.0	16.0

**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. In general terms the African cohort has remained at a similar level over the past twelve years, and constitutes the single largest ethnic group in Lambeth. The Caribbean cohort has been decreasing year on year, with White British pupils showing a slight decline in the intervening years, but from 2015 onwards started to increase again. The Portuguese and Somali cohorts are relatively small in comparison, although the latter has increased by over 50% in terms of overall number since 2008.

The Dataset

The sample consisted of pupils who completed National Curriculum Assessment tests at the end of KS1, KS2, 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 four key stages: KS1, KS2 and KS4. They are intended to show whether children have reached the National Curriculum learning targets standard which range between Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2).

As of 2016, KS1 results are no longer reported using levels and have been replaced by scaled scores. Scaled scores are based on the total number of marks a pupil receives in a test or teacher assessment i.e. their 'raw' score, and this score is then translated into a scaled score using a conversion table. A scaled score of 100 will always represent the 'expected standard'.

Scaled scores enable results to be reported consistently from one year to the next, and therefore maintain their meaning over time so that two pupils achieving the same scaled score in different years will have demonstrated the same attainment.

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 in the UK. This is followed by detailed data analysis of factors affecting the performance of African pupils. The main questions posed are:

- How well do African 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 (2012-2019)

Ethnic Group	Key Stage 1 Average (Reading, Writing, Maths)								
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
African	69%	73%	77%	79%	81%	74%	78%	78%	77%
<i>Somali</i>	67%	66%	72%	76%	78%	75%	77%	74%	75%
Black Other	62%	75%	72%	74%	86%	71%	71%	66%	71%
Caribbean	59%	67%	71%	73%	76%	71%	70%	73%	68%
<i>Polish</i>	67%	67%	77%	78%	82%	72%	86%	79%	82%
Portuguese	53%	56%	62%	64%	62%	63%	61%	69%	67%
White British	78%	83%	83%	87%	86%	83%	85%	83%	84%
White Other	73%	73%	78%	78%	80%	74%	79%	77%	80%
Lambeth -all	68%	73%	75%	78%	79%	75%	77%	78%	76%

Note: For KS1 from 2011 onwards the average is calculated using the teacher assessment outcomes at Level 2B+ in reading, writing and maths. There are no levels after 2015 and pupils are calculated whether they have met the “expected” for their age group.

Table 2 shows that Somali pupils have improved at a healthy rate over the nine year period, and in recent years have mostly been on a par with the overall Lambeth result. Portuguese pupils remain the lowest achieving group.

Table 3. KS2 Attainment by Ethnic Background (2011-2019)

Ethnic Group	Reading and maths average					RWM average			
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
African	85%	88%	90%	90%	92%	60%	70%	69%	72%
<i>Somali</i>	85%	89%	92%	91%	92%	62%	71%	72%	68%
Black Other	85%	91%	91%	85%	94%	65%	67%	66%	61%
Caribbean	79%	85%	87%	86%	87%	51%	62%	57%	60%
<i>Polish</i>	92%	92%	98%	95%	94%	58%	62%	80%	78%
Portuguese	78%	88%	88%	85%	86%	43%	54%	55%	54%
White British	89%	93%	96%	95%	96%	79%	80%	82%	80%
White Other	88%	91%	92%	95%	92%	63%	71%	74%	74%
Lambeth	84%	89%	90%	90%	92%	61%	70%	70%	71%

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. Also, there are no levels after 2015 and pupils are calculated on whether they have met the “expected” standard for their age group.

Table 3a KS2 Attainment by Ethnic Background (2018-2019)

	2018				2019				RWM +/-
	Reading	Writ TA	Maths	RWM	Reading	Writ TA	Maths	RWM	
African	76%	83%	81%	69%	78%	85%	83%	72%	+3%
<i>Somali</i>	76%	83%	87%	71%	76%	87%	83%	68%	-3%
Black Other	79%	82%	79%	66%	71%	76%	79%	61%	-5%
Caribbean	72%	78%	68%	57%	69%	75%	73%	60%	+3%
<i>Polish</i>	86%	88%	91%	80%	84%	93%	87%	78%	-2%
Portuguese	66%	71%	71%	54%	61%	70%	69%	54%	0%
White British	90%	89%	89%	82%	87%	89%	87%	80%	+2%
White Other	81%	83%	84%	73%	80%	87%	82%	74%	+3%
Lambeth	79%	81%	84%	70%	79%	81%	84%	71%	+1%

There are no levels after 2015 and pupils are calculated on whether they have met the "expected" for their age group.

Historically at KS2, Somali pupils have performed below both the LA expectations and the outcomes seen by the African cohort overall. However, significant improvement led them to equal or surpass the LA result in recent years.

Results in writing TA improved this year (up by four percentage points), whereas the reverse was true in maths. Although the overall RW&M outcome has fallen this year, Somalis are still only three points below the corresponding Lambeth figure.

The performance of African pupils has been on or around the borough average in each of the last seven years including 2019. African pupils comprise a third of the major ethnicities, with 72% at the expected standard compared to White British at 80%. Caribbean pupils, generally a lower performing group, were 11 percentage points below the borough average this year.

GCSE Trend Evidence

Table 4. English and Maths 9 to 4/A*-C Attainment by Ethnic Background (2014 – 2019)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	+/- 18-19
African	64%	61%	66%	61%	65%	64%	-1%
<i>Somali</i>	62%	57%	81%	60%	78%	59%	-19%
Black Other	49%	52%	62%	53%	62%	37%	-25%
Caribbean	52%	47%	45%	50%	43%	47%	+4%
<i>Polish</i>	67%	71%	68%	56%	76%	78%	+2%
Portuguese	50%	51%	59%	58%	47%	50%	+3%
White British	61%	66%	67%	60%	63%	64%	+1%
White Other	69%	65%	71%	65%	71%	67%	-4%
Lambeth	60%	59%	62%	60%	60%	59%	-1%
National	56%	56%	59%	59%	59%	60%	+1%

With the large number of changes to GCSE examinations in 2014 following the “Wolf Report” recommendations, it is no longer possible to compare GCSE results with previous years. From 2017 grade 9 to 4 is the equivalent of A to C.*

The performance of Somali pupils has fluctuated over the six-year period shown, with their highest result recorded in 2016. However, despite a decline in attainment this year they are still in line with the Lambeth and national outcomes.

Of the largest ethnic cohorts in Lambeth, African and White British pupils have had similar performance since 2016, with no appreciable improvement over the six-year period. Caribbean pupils remain well below the borough outcome, despite improving by four percentage points this year. The increasingly large number of Polish pupils are well above both the Lambeth and national results (19 points above the borough figure this year).

The new GCSE indicators mean that “5 or more A* to C including English and Maths” has now been superseded by new indicators, so the DfE are not releasing national data at a socio-economic level any more. Instead, the new progress measures of Attainment 8 and Progress 8 have been introduced. Table 5 shows the achievement over the last 2 years in these indicators for the main ethnic groups. However, data for Portuguese pupils is not available nationally.

Table 5. Attainment 8 and Progress 8 by Ethnic Background (2018 & 2019)

	Attainment 8				Progress 8			
	Lambeth		National		Lambeth		National	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
African	46.0	45.5	47.5	47.3	0.08	0.13	0.31	0.33
<i>Somali</i>	48.1	41.6	n/a	n/a	0.17	-0.13	n/a	n/a
Black Other	42.7	35.6	43.0	43.0	-0.26	-0.40	0.08	0.08
Caribbean	36.3	36.4	39.6	39.4	-0.60	-0.61	-0.30	-0.31
<i>Polish</i>	57.1	57.8	n/a	n/a	0.85	1.09	n/a	n/a
Portuguese	43.1	43.5	n/a	n/a	0.10	0.28	n/a	n/a
White British	47.1	47.4	46.1	46.2	-0.22	-0.11	-0.14	-0.14
White Other	51.0	50.2	47.0	46.8	0.69	0.50	0.51	0.45
Lambeth	44.6	44.1	44.5	44.7	-0.05	-0.04	-0.02	-0.03

The Attainment 8 measure is calculated using a pupil's best eight GCSE results, then averaging the results for the school, LA and different socio-economic factors. It is worth noting that if the Attainment 8 score is divided by 10 this gives an average grade. Therefore, an Attainment 8 score of 50 is equivalent to an average grade of 4 across all eight subjects.

African and White British pupils scored above the Lambeth and national averages, with the Caribbean cohort being well below at 36.4. Somali pupils fared reasonably well, despite a decrease in their attainment 8 score in 2019.

Progress 8 is a value added measure of the progress a student makes from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 by comparing the pupil's average grade and the average grade achieved by those pupils on a similar starting point/prior attainment. A positive score shows a higher progress than similar pupils. Likewise, a negative score shows lower progress. Nationally, Progress 8 is always statistically close to zero. When interpreting scores it is important to note that a score of +1.00 is equivalent to a pupil, institution or socio-economic group achieving on average one grade higher than pupils with a similar KS2 starting point nationally. Equally, -1.00 is one grade lower, +0.20 one fifth grade higher, -0.53 about a half grade lower etc.

Somali pupils had a positive score in 2018, but recorded a negative score this year. Portuguese pupils had positive progress scores for both years shown, being the third highest in 2019 behind the Polish and 'White Other' groups. White British and Caribbean pupils showed negative progress scores for both years shown.

5. FACTORS AFFECTING ACHIEVEMENT OF SOMALI PUPILS

The four factors shown in table 6 are helpful in understanding achievement patterns of Somali pupils in Lambeth schools. The data confirms that Somali pupils are a disadvantaged group. For example, 36% of KS2 pupils were eligible for FSM, and 41% of GCSE pupils. The national figures for FSM eligibility are considerably lower at each key stage.

Table 6 Social Characteristics of Somali pupils in Lambeth schools by Key Stage Cohorts, 2019

Key Stages	Total Cohort	Gender		FSM (%)	EAL		Mobility rate
		Boys (%)	Girls (%)		Stage A-D Not fluent in English	Stage E Fully fluent in English	
Key Stage 1	121	53%	47%	40%	92%	5%	10%
Key Stage 2	161	47%	53%	36%	72%	27%	14%
Key Stage 4	107	56%	44%	41%	43%	42%	13%

Fluency may not add to 100% because of pupils not given a level

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 2019, boys outperformed girls by a considerable margin at KS1, whereas the reverse is true at KS2 and GCSE. Historically, Somali girls have outperformed boys in all key stages.

Table 7: Somali Pupils KS1, KS2, and GCSE Performance in Lambeth by Gender, 2019

Key Stage		All Somali pupils	Boys	Girls	Gap
KS1 – at Expected Standard	Reading	74%	86%	65%	+21%
	Writing	76%	83%	68%	+15%
	Maths	76%	81%	65%	+16%
	Average	75%	83%	66%	+17%
KS2 – at Expected Standard	Reading	76%	71%	81%	-10%
	Writing TA	87%	74%	91%	-17%
	Maths	83%	84%	89%	-5%
	All RWM	68%	59%	75%	-16%
GCSE	9 to 4 English and Maths	59%	47%	74%	-27%
	Attainment 8	41.6	37.0	47.6	-10.6
	Progress 8	-0.13	-0.38	0.19	-0.57

Table 8 overleaf shows the outcomes by gender for other notable ethnic groups within Lambeth schools.

Table 8: Lambeth KS2 and GCSE Performance by Ethnicity and Gender 2016 to 2019

Ethnic Group	Year	KS2 (Reading, Writing, Maths)				9 to 4 (A*-C) English and Maths			
		All	Boys	Girls	Gap	All	Boys	Girls	Gap
African	2016	60%	57%	62%	+5%	66%	59%	73%	+14%
	2017	70%	65%	74%	+9%	61%	51%	70%	+19%
	2018	69%	67%	72%	+5%	65%	62%	69%	+7%
	2019	72%	66%	78%	+12%	64%	57%	69%	+12%
Somali	2016	63%	60%	65%	+5%	81%	69%	89%	+20%
	2017	71%	64%	78%	+14%	60%	57%	65%	+7%
	2018	72%	70%	74%	+4%	78%	74%	81%	+6%
	2019	68%	59%	75%	+16%	59%	47%	74%	+27%
Caribbean	2016	51%	49%	53%	+4%	45%	36%	55%	+19%
	2017	62%	58%	65%	+7%	50%	46%	55%	+9%
	2018	57%	54%	59%	+5%	43%	36%	49%	+14%
	2019	60%	55%	65%	+10%	47%	44%	50%	+6%
Portuguese	2016	43%	41%	45%	+4%	59%	49%	67%	+18%
	2017	54%	53%	56%	+3%	58%	57%	59%	+2%
	2018	55%	49%	61%	+12%	47%	47%	48%	+1%
	2019	55%	51%	60%	+9%	50%	45%	56%	+11%
Polish	2016	59%	63%	54%	-9%	68%	61%	77%	+16%
	2017	62%	61%	62%	-1%	56%	62%	50%	-12%
	2018	80%	70%	87%	+17%	76%	59%	90%	+31%
	2019	78%	85%	92%	+7%	78%	79%	76%	-3%
White British	2016	79%	77%	81%	+4%	67%	69%	65%	-3%
	2017	80%	78%	82%	+4%	60%	56%	67%	+11%
	2018	82%	76%	88%	+12%	63%	59%	66%	+7%
	2019	80%	82%	79%	-3%	64%	60%	70%	+10%
Lambeth	2016	62%	60%	63%	+3%	62%	58%	66%	+8%
	2017	69%	67%	72%	+5%	60%	54%	65%	+11%
	2018	70%	66%	74%	+8%	60%	57%	63%	+6%
	2019	71%	68%	74%	+6%	59%	55%	62%	+7%
National	2016	54%	50%	57%	+7%	59%	55%	64%	+9%
	2017	61%	58%	65%	+7%	59%	55%	63%	+8%
	2018	64%	61%	68%	+7%	59%	56%	64%	+8%
	2019	65%	60%	70%	+10%	60%	56%	64%	+8%

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 2019 who were eligible for free school meals was 36%, and for the GCSE cohort it was 41% (see table 6 on page 14).

In most instances at KS1 and KS2, FSM Somali pupils performed below their paid meal peers. The reverse was true at GCSE, with FSM pupils 19 percentage points above the paid meal cohort in the 9 to 4 indicator. Both cohorts had negative progress 8 scores, and the difference between the two was negligible.

Table 9. Performance of Somali pupils by Free School Meal status, 2019

Key Stage		All Somali pupils	Free Meals	Paid Meals	Gap
KS1 – at Expected Standard	Reading	74%	75%	77%	-2%
	Writing	76%	69%	77%	-8%
	Maths	76%	71%	79%	-8%
	Average	75%	72%	78%	-6%
KS2 – at Expected Standard	Reading	76%	72%	79%	-7%
	Writing TA	87%	84%	88%	-4%
	Maths	83%	83%	83%	0%
	All RWM	68%	64%	70%	-6%
GCSE	9 to 4 English and Maths	59%	70%	51%	+19%
	Attainment 8	41.6	42.0	41.4	+0.6
	Progress 8	-0.13	-0.16	-0.12	-0.04

There are also some striking differences within the main ethnic groups when the data is further analysed by eligibility for free school meals. Table 10 shows that at GCSE, 47% of Caribbean pupils not eligible for free school meals achieved 9 to 4 grades inc. English and Maths, compared with 32% of pupils who were eligible; a gap of 15 percentage points. There was a similar gap for Portuguese pupils, but White British pupils had a very large gap of 33 points.

This finding underlines 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 10. Performance by Key Stage, FSM and Ethnic Background in Lambeth, 2019

	Reading Writing Maths (% Expected)			9 to 4 English and Maths		
	% of pupils eligible	Eligible	Not Eligible	% of pupils eligible	Eligible	Not Eligible
African	32%	68%	74%	27%	60%	65%
<i>Somali</i>	36%	64%	70%	41%	70%	51%
Caribbean	36%	51%	65%	31%	46%	47%
Portuguese	23%	42%	59%	20%	36%	54%
White British	12%	64%	83%	23%	35%	72%
Lambeth	26%	60%	75%	26%	51%	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 11 and 12 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 C (developing competence) and stage D (fully fluent) pupils performed above the LA average. However, the six stage E pupils at KS1 are a notable exception this year.

Table 11. Average Key Stage 1 Attainment of Somali Pupils by Stage of English Fluency, 2019

Proficiency	Somali		African		Polish		Portuguese		White British	
	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result
Stage A - New to English	9	22%	21	40%	3	46%	8	58%	2	50%
Stage B - Early Acquisition	32	73%	101	64%	27	79%	37	53%	3	78%
Stage C - Developing Competence	51	80%	156	79%	40	80%	29	80%	9	59%
Stage D - Competent	19	96%	113	89%	26	96%	12	89%	12	92%
Stage E - Fluent	6	72%	92	88%	15	90%	9	63%	12	92%
Non - Fluent (Stage A-D)	111	76%	391	76%	96	81%	86	68%	26	76%
English Only	0	n/a	98	71%	0	n/a	0	n/a	562	85%
All Pupils	121	75%	606	77%	111	82%	97	67%	603	84%

Table 12. Average Key Stage 2 Attainment of Somali Pupils by Stage of English Fluency, 2019

Proficiency	Somali		African		Polish		Portuguese		White British	
	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result
Stage A - New to English	0	n/a	2	0%	1	0%	0	n/a	0	n/a
Stage B - Early Acquisition	14	36%	28	21%	5	0%	13	8%	1	0%
Stage C - Developing Competence	49	57%	126	47%	25	72%	38	45%	4	50%
Stage D - Competent	53	72%	200	74%	42	79%	37	73%	4	75%
Stage E - Fluent	44	84%	238	89%	34	97%	24	71%	14	93%
Non - Fluent (Stage A-D)	116	61%	356	60%	73	70%	88	9%	56	9%
English Only	0	n/a	128	74%	n/a	n/a	1	0%	404	80%
All Pupils	161	68%	754	72%	110	78%	113	55%	427	80%

Analysis of GCSE results also shows that fluency in English continues to have an influence on the performance of pupils with EAL (see table 13 below). However, as the cohort sizes are smaller in secondary schools, meaningful conclusions can only be drawn from the stage D and E (fully fluent) outcomes.

Tables 13. GCSE 9 to 4 grades inc E&M Attainment of Somali pupils by Stage of English Fluency, 2019

Proficiency	Somali		African		Polish		Portuguese		White British	
	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result	Cohort	Result
Stage A - New to English	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a	3	0%	0	n/a
Stage B - Early Acquisition	3	0%	10	0%	1	0%	5	0%	0	n/a
Stage C - Developing Competence	12	50%	34	38%	12	58%	20	30%	3	0%
Stage D - Competent	31	58%	90	59%	17	88%	27	56%	4	25%
Stage E - Fluent	45	64%	231	68%	9	89%	38	63%	21	71%
Non - Fluent (Stage A-D)	46	52%	134	49%	30	73%	55	38%	7	14%
English Only	0	n/a	165	67%	0	n/a	2	50%	218	64%
All Pupils*	107	59%	583	64%	40	78%	111	50%	250	64%

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 12 and 13 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.

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 effect 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 2019

Key Stage		2019		
		Non-mobile	Mobile	Gap
KS2 % expected	Reading	77%	72%	-5%
	Writing TA	84%	72%	-12%
	Maths	85%	100%	+15%
	RWM	69%	61%	-7%
GCSE % achieving	A*-C (9 -4) EM	59%	50%	-9%
	Attainment 8	41.7	39.0	-2.7
	Progress 8	-0.12	-0.64	-0.52

Note: the non-mobile cohort at GCSE relates to only one pupil.

In general terms, non-mobile Somali pupils were more likely than their mobile peers to gain the expected threshold at each key stage. Tables 17 illustrates this point.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is clear to see that Somali pupils have improved from an underperforming group in Lambeth some years ago at each stage of the National Curriculum, and at GCSE level. 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 and Reading at KS1.

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 E 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 1,085 in 2008 to 1,689 in 2019, 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 not a particular cause within Lambeth. There is a need for strategies to be developed to raise levels of achievement of this group and to reverse trends at the national level.

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