

Educational standards and provision in Hertfordshire continue to improve

In the 2010 examinations and assessments, Hertfordshire remains one of the highest performing local authorities in England, and for 5A*-C at GCSE including English and mathematics, third in relation to its statistical neighbours. For most measures at GCSE, Hertfordshire is the highest performing local authority in the East of England.

In September 2009 a fresh cycle of Ofsted inspections started with a new framework. The evaluation schedule is more rigorous and it is not possible to make direct comparisons with outcomes under the previous framework. Harsher judgements have resulted in fewer outstanding schools being identified both in Hertfordshire and across the country and it is possible that schools which have maintained the same standard of provision will be judged a grade lower than before. The expectations of schools are increased particularly in relation to attainment, narrowing the achievement gap, safeguarding and the work of governors.

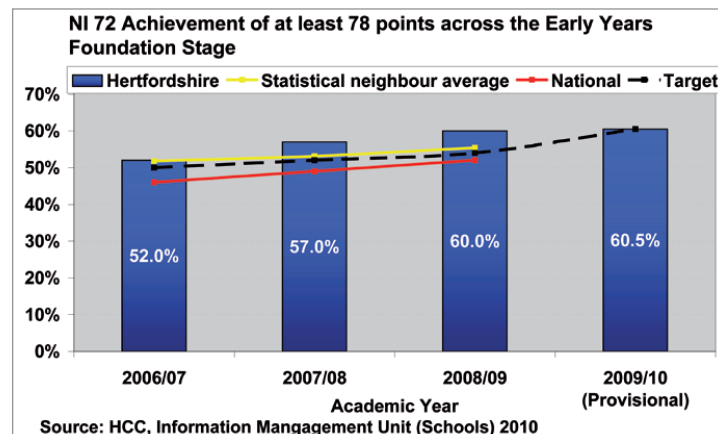
'The majority of teaching is outstanding and it is never less than good. Teaching is characterised by extremely high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge so that they are able to respond to the pupils and develop the depth of their thinking through carefully targeted questioning.'

Ofsted, March 2010

In 2009/10, 123 Hertfordshire schools were inspected by Ofsted. The proportion of schools judged as outstanding was 15%, good 44%, satisfactory 37% and 4% (five schools) judged inadequate. The proportion of good or better primary schools was significantly better than that for secondary. The profile for special schools (77% outstanding) and education support centres (ESCs), (100% outstanding) was exceptionally good. Half of Hertfordshire's special schools (13) were inspected and one ESC.

The 17 subject and survey inspections in 2009/10 covered a range of subjects and themes: art and design, design and technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, PE, geography, history, ICT and science. There were seven visits to primary schools and nine to secondary; of these 69% were judged to be good or better and the rest satisfactory.

NI 72 - achievement of at least 78 points across the early years foundation stage (EYFS) with at least six in each of the scales in personal social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy



There has been a continued improvement over the last three years in all foundation stage areas of learning with the percentage of children achieving 78 points overall (including 6+ points in personal, social, emotional development and communication, language and literacy) improving from 57% in 2008 to 61% in 2010.



Last year's high standards have been sustained and the achievement of boys as well as girls has improved. In almost all aspects of the EYFS profile 80% of children attained the expected 6+. Securing further improvement in early reading, writing and calculating is a key priority for all training and support activities. A comprehensive training programme supports all early years providers in raising the quality of their provision.

The Every Child a Talker project, funded by the primary national strategy has had a positive impact. A targeted training programme supported professional development in 22 settings and early language development was

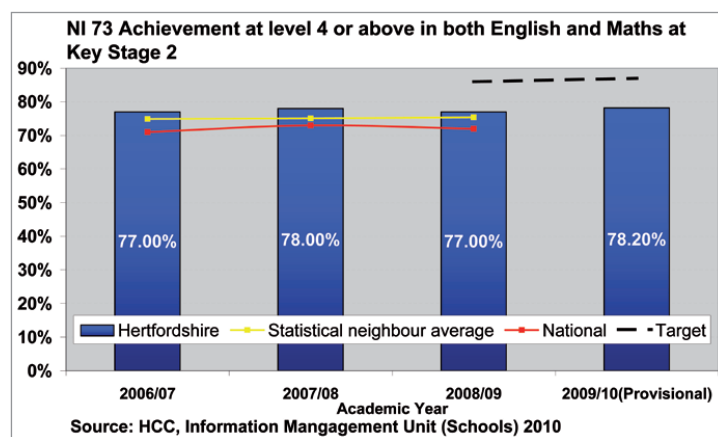


monitored for 568 children. Their risk of delay decreased from 51% to 17% over the year. The project now continues universally across Hertfordshire.



NI 73 - achievement at level 4 or above in both English and maths at key stage 2

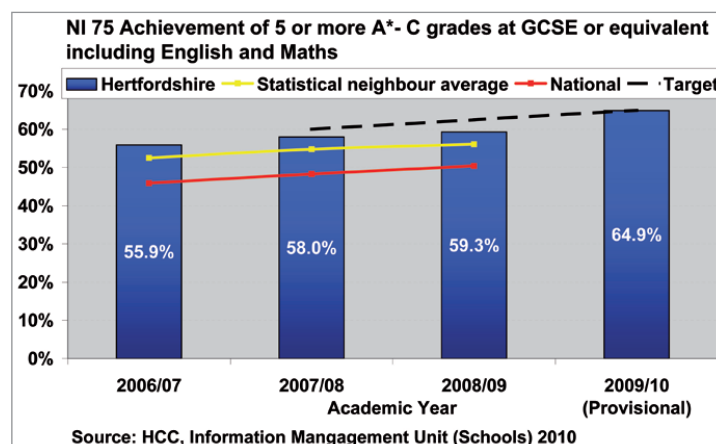
Hertfordshire's results for pupils at the end of the primary phase continue to be well above national averages. In 2010, 78% of pupils achieved level 4+ in both English and mathematics. This was 4% points above the provisional national average. The higher level 5 was achieved by 29% of pupils in both English and mathematics, an increase of 4% from 2009 and 6% above the 2010 national average. Hertfordshire pupils also made good progress between key stages 1 and 2. The expected two levels of progress in English and in mathematics was made by 85% of pupils, an increase of 1% point compared to 2009.



There are clear priorities for the improvement of standards and achievement. Firstly, improving reading and writing particularly for boys across the primary phase continues to be a priority as does improving the achievement of girls in mathematics at higher levels. Secondly, achievement at key stage 2 is still too low for some groups of pupils, and in some districts within Hertfordshire.

NI 75 - achievement of five or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and maths

Results at key stage 4 continue to show significant improvement in all statutory indicators. The proportion of students attaining 5A*-C including English and mathematics was 63.9%, an increase of 4.6% in comparison to 2009. Nationally this indicator increased by 3.3% to 53.1%. Of the 74 maintained Hertfordshire schools, 56 improved on this measure, the greatest improvement being 45%. The attainment in this measure in 17 schools was 80% or more.



The proportion of students in Hertfordshire gaining 5A*-C in any subject increased by 5.5% in 2009 to 79.6%. The national increase was 4.8%, bringing the national outcome for this indicator to 75.6%. Of the 74 maintained secondary schools, 53 improved on this measure, with five schools improving by 20% or more. The national average was attained by 52 Hertfordshire schools with 16 schools at 90% or higher.

NI 87 - secondary school persistent absence rate

Reducing persistent absence of pupils remains a key focus for Hertfordshire. A child is considered to be a persistent absentee if their absence from school is 20% or more whether authorised or unauthorised. The attendance and pupil support service working in partnership with the National Strategy behaviour and attendance consultants continue to support schools in decreasing persistent absence.

‘Concerted work on improving behaviour and attendance has had a very positive impact on the outcomes for individuals and for the school.’
Ofsted, October 2009

Persistent absence in primary schools has further reduced this year to 1.5% and is below the national level of 1.8% for 2009/10. Over the last four years the rate of persistent secondary absence in Hertfordshire has reduced year-on-year from 5.9% in 2006/07 to 3.8% in 2009/10. This reduction demonstrates progress which has been judged by the National Strategies to be outstanding and places Hertfordshire significantly below the national persistent absence figure of 4.5% in 2009/10.

Every Child a Reader¹

This specialist programme supported 190 children in 24 schools during 2009/10, targeting vulnerable pupils in disadvantaged areas. It provides specialist training for a teacher in Reading Recovery² and supports layering of interventions for the lowest performing 20% of pupils in key stage 1 in early reading and writing. For the academic year 2010/11 the number of Reading Recovery teachers will increase to 42, with the number of children served expected to reach over 350.

For 2009/10 reading ages averaged below that expected on entry to the foundation stage. Of these children, 75% made accelerated progress attaining standards in line with age-related expectations for Year 1. This meant that these children made two years of reading age progress in 20 weeks, four times the expected rate of progress of their average peers. Those identified as needing further support still averaged twice the rate of progress of their average peers. Closing the gaps for these children has increased whole cohort attainment at key stage 1 by on average 10%, and is expected to increase to at least 15% for 2010/11.

The progress made by vulnerable pupils indicates a closing of the achievement gap. Boys, children looked after, ethnic minorities, and those from poorer socio-economic groups, achieved at least as well as other pupils. The largest proportion of children supported were identified as male, white, eligible for free school meals and with English as a first language.



Making Good Progress³

During 2009/10 Hertfordshire successfully rolled out the Making Good Progress one-to-one tuition programme to all mainstream schools with Year 6 pupils. The uptake of tuition reflects the high levels of engagement and commitment from the vast majority of schools. Schools have used a wide variety of delivery methods, including arranging provision before, during and after school, at weekends and in school holidays.

Hertfordshire carried out quality assurance visits to 20% of these schools. Feedback from these visits indicates that the programme has successfully been implemented at school level, with high levels of engagement from schools, tutors, students and parents/carers.

"Thank you for the opportunity for my child to participate, he has really enjoyed himself, and to have one-to-one tuition has been fantastic." Parent, Year 6 pupil.

Towards Outstanding Project

Twenty schools participated in the Towards Outstanding Project (TOP). Each school identified an English or mathematics focus and concentrated upon two key elements within this. The first was to accelerate the progress of pupils and raise attainment and the second enhanced the systems of leadership to support sustained improvement in teaching and learning. Across the project there was an equal split between English and mathematics.

The progress of pupils on the project has improved. In each year group, the percentage of pupils who are now reaching age-related expectations in English and mathematics has increased, on average, by 11.3%. In Year 6, there was an increase of 17.8% in the school's identified curricular focus. Compared to the previous year, for mathematics 25% more pupils made at least good progress and for English this was 14%. Schools responded positively to the ambitious targets set for pupil progress at the start of the year and highlighted the project's role in securing this progress.

¹For more information on 'Every Child a Reader' programme see: www.everychildachancetrust.org/ecar/index.cfm

²For more information on 'Reading Recovery' Programme see: <http://readingrecovery.ioe.ac.uk>

³For more information on 'Making Good Progress' project in Hertfordshire see the Hertfordshire Learning Grid: www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/mgp