

## 4 Skills and Learning

### 4.1 Key Themes

**4.1.1** Education attainment in the South West is generally higher than the national average and has improved at most Key Stages in recent years. Notwithstanding this, attainment varies considerably by pupil characteristics and geography. Among those least likely to reach expected levels are children of Black ethnic origin (particularly boys), those known to be eligible for free school meals, individuals with special educational needs and those with a second language other than English. The most prosperous areas typically outperform the most disadvantaged and in many cases, children in rural areas achieve better results than their urban peers.

**4.1.2** Girls continue to achieve better results than boys at every qualification level although the attainment gap at GCSE has narrowed over the last four years. Girls are also more likely than boys to continue in education or training on leaving school and are more likely to enter Higher Education. Rising participation rates at age 17 have also exclusively benefited girls. Work-based learning is more popular among boys than girls.

**4.1.3** While participation in adult learning is higher in the South West than the England average, there is little evidence that participation nationally has increased or broadened over the last ten years. Within the South West, participation in work-related education or training remains highest among women, young people, those with higher education qualifications and those working in personal service or professional occupations, and the public sector.

**4.1.4** Qualification attainment among 19 year olds and adults remains high in the South West by national standards. Despite steady improvement in recent years, the South West is, however, unlikely to exceed the previous administration's 2011 targets. Qualification levels vary considerably across the region's local authority areas. For example, the proportions of residents with graduate-level qualifications (Level 4 or above) are highest in Bristol and Bath and North East Somerset and lowest in Cornwall, Plymouth, and Torbay.

### 4.2 Key Data

- More than a quarter (27%) of pupils in the South West who were known to be eligible for free school meals achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C including maths and English in 2009/10 compared with almost three-fifths (58%) of those not eligible ([Department for Education, GCSE attainment by pupil characteristics](#)). Pupils eligible for free school meals in the South West did not perform as well as eligible pupils nationally (31%).
- Almost 6% of young people aged 16-18 in the South West were not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) during 2009/10. Rates have not changed substantially over the last two years ([Department for Education, Connexions Data](#)).
- Around three-quarters of 19 year olds (77%) and adults of working age (73%) have a qualification at Level 2 or above. Just over half (51%) of both age groups have a qualification at Level 3 or above. Almost one-third (30%) of adults of working age have a graduate-level qualification (Level 4 or above).
- More than two-fifths (42%) of South West residents aged 17 and over who had finished full-time education were current or recent learners in 2009. One-in-seven (14%) of South West residents of working age had undertaken work-related training in the last four weeks in 2009.

### 4.3 Introduction

**4.3.1** Skills and learning are important for both social and economic reasons. Access to education and training is essential in providing the opportunity for people to fulfil their potential and to participate fully in society and the economy.

## 4.4 Early Years

### Participation

**4.4.1** Although compulsory schooling starts at age five, almost all three and four year olds now benefit from some free early education. The entitlement to free early education consists of a minimum of 12.5 hours of early education per week for thirty-eight weeks of the year. In January 2010, there were 107,955 filled part-time equivalent (PTE) free early education places in the South West, 5.5% more than the previous year (Department for Education, Provision for Children Under Five). Most PTE places filled by four year olds in the South West (71%) are in maintained nursery and primary schools while most PTE places filled by three year olds (84%) are with other maintained, private, voluntary or independent providers.

### Achievement

**4.4.2** Children's development is assessed at age five on the basis of learning practitioners' professional judgements about their achievements. In 2010, almost three-fifths (57%) of children in the South West were assessed as having achieved a good level of development at the end of their Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Education, Early Years Foundation Profile Results, 2009/10). This is one percentage point higher than the England average (56%), and nine percentage points higher than in 2007.

**4.4.3** A child's probability of achieving a good level of development at the end of this stage is influenced by a wide range of factors including the presence, or otherwise, of special educational needs, their ethnicity, use of English as first or second language, the material circumstances of their family, where they live and gender. At 4%, children with a statement of special educational needs are the least likely to reach a good level of development at this age, with children with less severe needs also considerably less likely than average to reach this level. Three-fifths (61%) of children with no identified special educational needs, by contrast, were judged to have achieved a good level of development.

**4.4.4** Other characteristics associated with particularly low levels of development include belonging to the Black ethnic minority group (39%), having a first language other than English (41%), being eligible for free school meals (41%) and living in one of the region's most deprived neighbourhoods (42%). Boys (48%) are also much less likely to achieve a good level of development than girls (66%). Black children in the South West are less likely to achieve a good level of development than average for Black children nationally, and, unlike other ethnic groups, have not improved over the last three years.

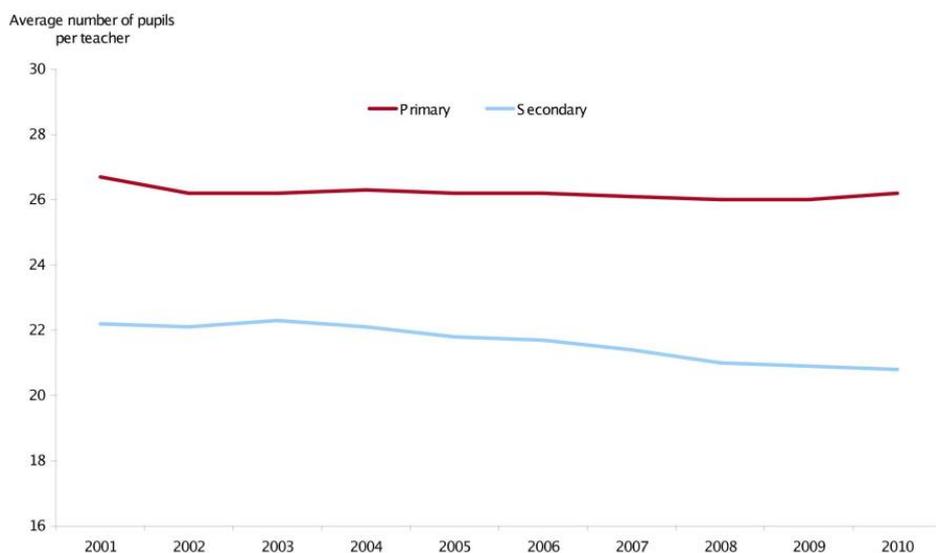
**4.4.5** Geographic patterns include more favourable levels of attainment in rural areas and, in particular, villages and isolated dwellings and hamlets and in more prosperous areas. Attainment levels vary by as much as 26 percentage points across the region's local authority areas with the highest levels in East Dorset (73.4%) and the lowest in Torridge (47%).

## 4.5 Primary Education

### Schools and Teachers

**4.5.1** According to the School Census, there were 1,889 primary schools in the South West in January 2010, 16 fewer than the previous year. Primary schools in the region tend to be slightly smaller than the England average, are more likely to have a religious affiliation and have marginally smaller class sizes. Local authority maintained primary and nursery schools in the region employ 18,300 teachers and have fewer unfilled teacher vacancies than any other region in England (Table 4.5.1). Average class sizes are on a par with the national average (Table 4.5.1) although slightly more children are in classes with 31 or more children (14%) than the national average (12%). Average class sizes have not changed substantially since 2001. Twenty four primary schools in the South West were subject to special measures in August 2010 (Ofsted, Data on Schools Causing Concern, Summer 2010).

**Figure 4.5.1 Average class size (taught by one teacher) in maintained primary and secondary schools: 2001 - 2010**



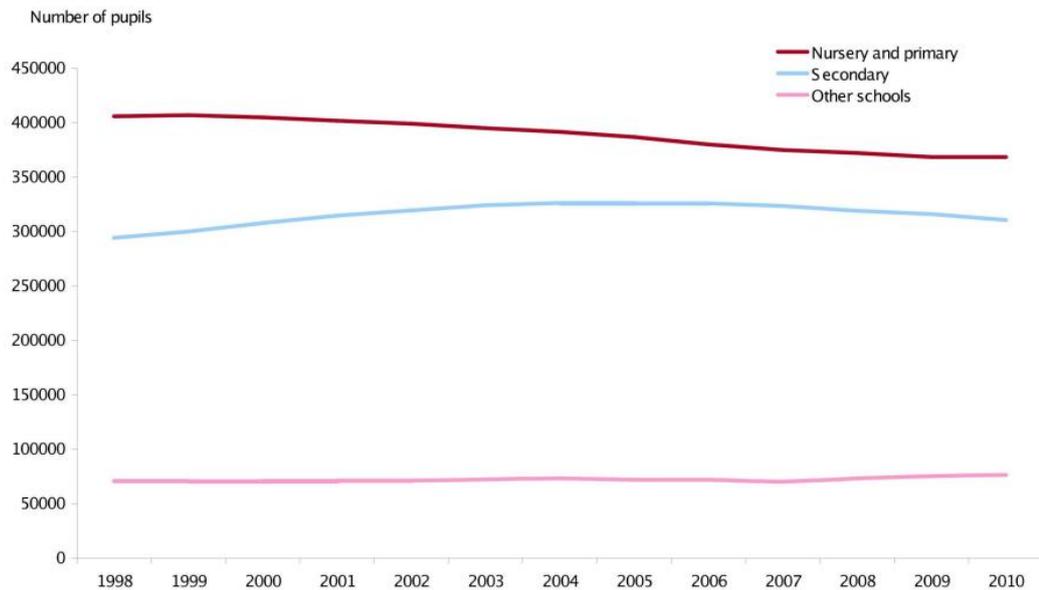
Source: Department for Education

### Pupil Characteristics

**4.5.2** The number of nursery and primary school pupils in the region has fallen slightly over the last decade ([Department for Education, Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, 2010](#), Figure 4.5.2) and, at 366,680, is 9% lower than a decade ago. Primary schools in the South West are less ethnically diverse than the England

average and consequently contain more pupils whose first language is English. Within the South West, the proportion of pupils with a first language other than English is highest in Bristol (16%) and Swindon (12%). More than one-in-ten (11%) nursery and primary school pupils in the region take free school meals despite 13% being eligible do so (Table 4.5.1). Eligibility for free school meals varies from 24% in the City of Bristol to 9% in Wiltshire and Dorset.

**Figure 4.5.2 Numbers of pupils by type of school: 1998 to 2010**



Source: Department for Education

### Attendance and Exclusions

**4.5.3** Attendance at primary schools is higher in the South West than the England average (Table 4.5.1) although unauthorised absence has increased over the last two years. The percentage of persistent absentees, however, has fallen, and is lower than the England average (Table 4.5.1). Within the South West, persistent truancy is most common in the City of Bristol (2.9%) and least common in Bath and North East Somerset (1.1%).

**4.5.4** During 2008/9, 70 primary school pupils were permanently excluded and a further 1,880 were excluded at least once for a fixed period of time (Department for Education, Attendance and Exclusions). When expressed as a proportion of the school population, exclusion rates in the South West are the same as the national average (Table 4.5.1). Within the South West, the percentage of permanent exclusions from primary schools is highest in Gloucestershire, Devon and Wiltshire.

**Table 4.5.1 Primary Schools, Teachers and Pupils: Selected Characteristics**

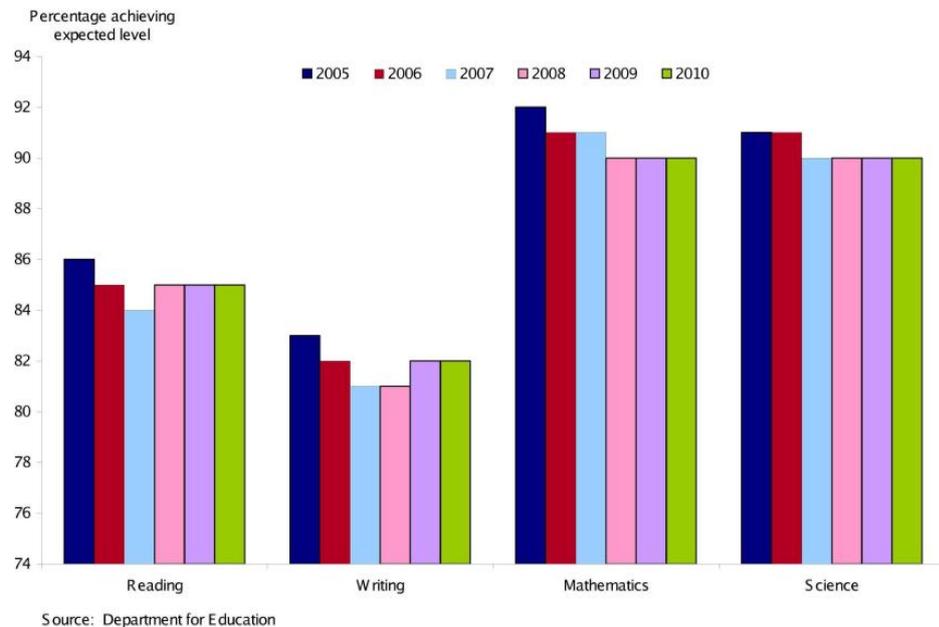
Characteristic	South West	England
Number of schools <sup>1</sup>	1,889	16,971
<i>% with up to 200 pupils<sup>1</sup></i>	58	43
<i>% with religious character<sup>1</sup></i>	43	37
Number of teachers (Full-time equivalents) <sup>2</sup>	18,300	197,00
Vacancies as a percentage of teachers in post <sup>2</sup>	0.1	0.4
Average class size (classes taught by 1 teacher) <sup>1</sup>	26.2	26.4
<u>Unauthorised absence</u> <sup>LA</sup> , % sessions missed <sup>3</sup>	0.48	0.68
Number of pupils <sup>1</sup>	366,380	4,093,710
<i>% ethnic minority origin<sup>1</sup></i>	7	21
<i>% whose first language is not English<sup>1</sup></i>	5	16
<i>% eligible for free school meals<sup>1</sup></i>	13	17
<i>% persistent absentees<sup>3</sup></i>	1.6	1.8
<i>% permanently excluded from school<sup>4</sup></i>	0.02	0.02
<i>% temporarily excluded from school at least once<sup>4</sup></i>	0.51	0.51
Sources: <sup>1</sup> DfE: Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2010; DCSF: School Workforce in England, January 2009 (Revised); <sup>3</sup> Department for Education: Pupil Absence in Schools in England: Autumn Term 2009 and Spring Term 2010; <sup>4</sup> DfE: Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2008/09.		

### **Achievement at ages 7 (Key Stage 1) and 11 (Key Stage 2)**

**4.5.5** Teachers report on primary school pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 when pupils are typically seven years old. The assessment measures pupils' attainment against the levels set by the National Curriculum for speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science.

**4.5.6** At this stage, 85% of pupils in the South West had reached the expected level in reading, 82% in writing, 90% in mathematics and 90% in science, with girls achieving better results than boys, particularly in writing and reading, in 2010. The South West results are one percentage point higher than the England average for writing, mathematics and science but the same for reading. The percentage of pupils achieving the expected level of competence was lower in 2010 than in 2005 across all subjects, with only the results for writing improving at all within the last three years (Department for Education, Key Stage 1 Attainment).

**Figure 4.5.3 Percentage of maintained schools pupils achieving Level 2 or above at Key Stage 1; South West, 2005 to 2010 (provisional)**



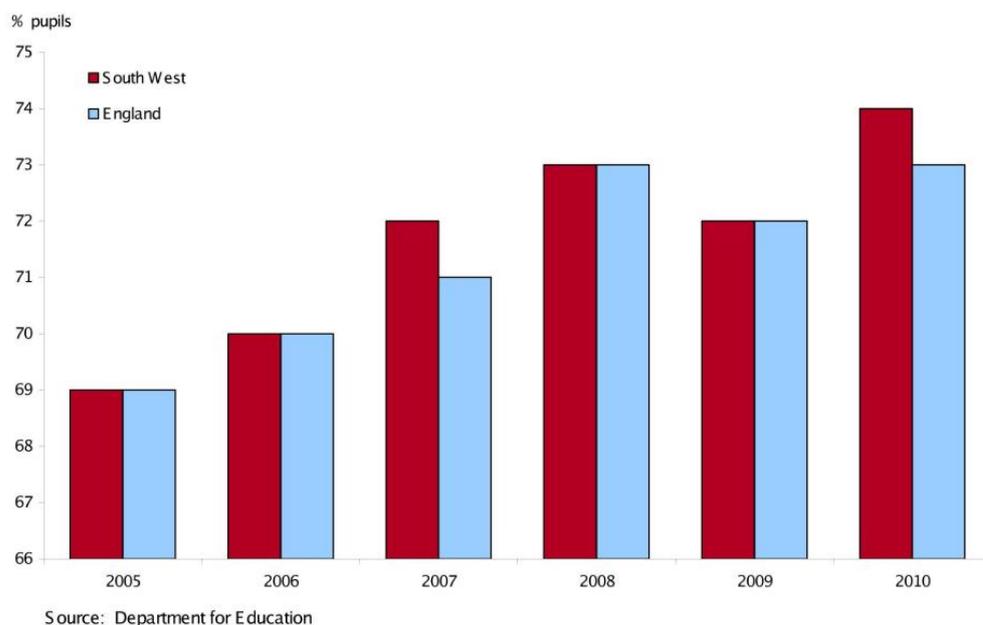
**4.5.7** As with other indicators of attainment, achievement varies considerably by pupil characteristics and geography. Among those least likely to reach expected standards are children with special educational needs, Black children, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a first language other than English. Chinese children, by contrast, do better than any other ethnic group in every subject except science and were, along with Black children, the most notable ‘improvers’ in reading and writing, and the only ‘improvers’ in maths and science between 2008 and 2010. The proportion of Black children reaching the desired standard in science, however, fell by six percentage points over the two year period.

**4.5.8** Pupils undertake written tests at age 11 to assess their abilities in English, reading, writing, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. Three-quarters (74%) of pupils in the South West achieved the desired standard (level 4) in English *and* maths at this stage in

2010 (Figure 4.5.4) compared with 73% of pupils in England. Girls (77%) are more likely to achieve the expected standards than boys (72%) (Department for Education: National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2). Children in care, those receiving free school meals or those with special educational needs, and those of Black ethnic origin are considerably less likely than average to achieve the standard. Pupils in the least deprived areas, as defined by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) outperform pupils resident in the most deprived areas (Department for Education, Key Stage 2 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics).

**4.5.9** Standards have improved since 2005 (Figure 4.5.4) although results in 2009 were slightly lower than the previous year. The improvements were replicated to a greater or lesser extent across many of the pupil characteristics with the most notable improvers being pupils of Black or Asian origin, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

**Figure 4.5.4 Percentage of maintained school pupils achieving Level 4 or above in both English and Mathematics in Key Stage 2 tests; South West and England: 2005 to 2010**



## 4.6 Secondary Education

### Schools and Teachers

**4.6.1** There are 325 state-maintained secondary schools in the South West the majority (78%) of which are comprehensives.

The region has a greater share of large secondary schools than the national average but has fewer faith schools (Table 4.6.1). Two secondary schools in the region were subject to special measures in August 2010 ([Ofsted, Data on Schools Causing Concern, Summer 2010](#)). The region's secondary schools employ 20,800 full-time equivalent teachers, and are less likely to have teacher vacancies than the England average (Table 4.6.1). Class sizes are marginally smaller than the England average and have fallen consistently in recent years (Figure 4.5.1).

### Pupil Characteristics

**4.6.2** The number of secondary school pupils in the South West has fallen since 2004 (Figure 4.5.2) and currently stands at over 320,000 pupils (Table 4.6.1). As with primary schools, secondary school pupils in the South West are less ethnically diverse than the average for England with only the City of Bristol (23 %

having a higher proportion of pupils from an ethnic minority group than the national average. 3% of secondary school pupils do not have English as their first language although this varies from less than 1% in Cornwall to 13% in the City of Bristol.

**4.6.3** One-tenth of secondary school pupils are eligible for free school meals (Table 4.6.1) although fewer than this (7%) actually take them. Eligibility varies considerably across the region with the highest rates in the City of Bristol (21%) and the lowest in Wiltshire (6%).

### Attendance and Exclusions

**4.6.4** State-funded secondary schools in the region have a better attendance record than the national average (Table 4.6.1) and have fewer persistent truants. Permanent exclusions are relatively rare with 490 recorded by state-funded secondary schools during 2008/9. These were most commonly for persistent disruptive behaviour (38%), physical assault (22%) and verbal abuse or threatening behaviour (14%). During the same year, 14,480 pupils were temporarily excluded from school on at least one occasion with, on average, each excluded pupil missing 4.49 days from school ([Department for Education, Attendance and Exclusions](#)).

**Table 4.6.1 Secondary Schools and Pupils: Selected Characteristics 2010**

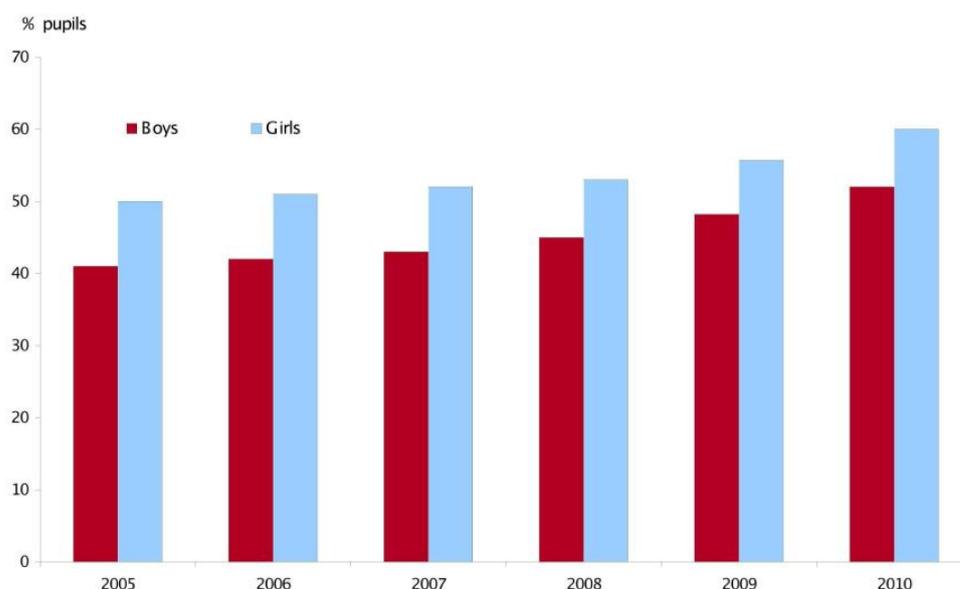
<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>South West</i>	<i>England</i>
Number of schools <sup>1</sup>	325	3,333
% with up to 1,000 pupils <sup>1</sup>	49	46
% with religious character <sup>1</sup>	13	18
Total number of teachers <sup>2</sup>	20,800	210,300
Vacancies as a percentage of teachers in post <sup>2</sup>	0.3	0.5
Average class size (classes taught by one teacher) <sup>1</sup>	20.8	20.5
<u>Unauthorised absence</u> , % sessions missed <sup>3</sup>	1.09	1.40
Number of pupils <sup>1</sup>	321,800	3,252,140
% ethnic minority origin <sup>1</sup>	6	19
% whose first language is not English <sup>1</sup>	3	12
% eligible for free school meals <sup>1</sup>	10	14
% persistent absentees <sup>3</sup>	4.2	4.5
% permanently excluded from school <sup>4</sup>	0.15	0.17
% temporarily excluded from school at least once <sup>4</sup>	4.48	5.13
Sources: <sup>1</sup> DfE: Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2010; DCSF: School Workforce in England, January 2009 (Revised); <sup>3</sup> DfE: Pupil Absence in Schools in England: Autumn Term 2009 and Spring Term 2010; <sup>4</sup> DfE: Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2008/09		

### **GCSE Attainment**

**4.6.5** More than half (55%) of pupils in the South West achieved five or more A\* to C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and mathematics (PSA 10 Indicator 4) in 2009/10. This is higher than the England average of 53%

and three percentage points higher than the previous year. It is also two percentage points clear of the 2011 national target. Three-fifths (59.5%) of girls gained qualifications at this level compared with over half (52%) of boys. Standards have improved over time for both boys and girls (Figure 4.6.1) and the gender gap has narrowed by one percentage point since 2005.

**Figure 4.6.1 Percentage of pupils at maintained secondary schools achieving 5 or more A\* - C grades, including English and Mathematics, by gender, South West, 2005 to 2010**



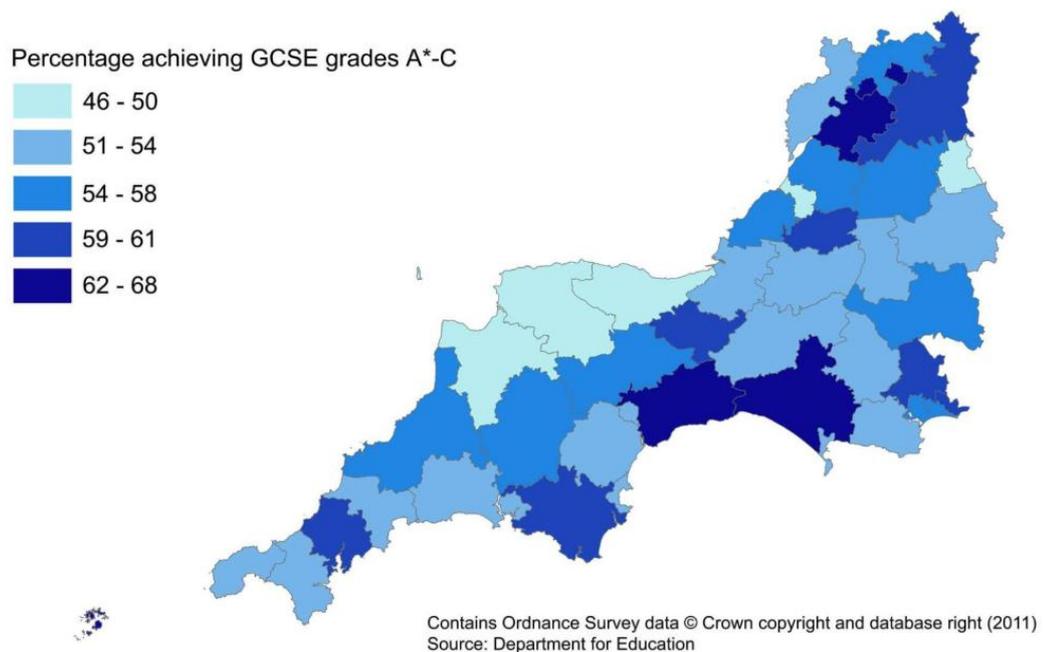
Source: Department for Education

**4.6.6** Disparities in educational attainment by pupil characteristics that are evident in younger age groups persist at GCSE. For example, few pupils (8%) with special educational needs leave school with five good GCSE passes (including maths and English), and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals are significantly less likely than their peers to leave school similarly equipped (27% compared with 58%). At 77%, Chinese pupils are more than twice as likely as Black pupils (36%) to achieve the expected level at GCSE. Interestingly,

achievement levels for most of the disadvantaged groups are lower in the South West than they are nationally.

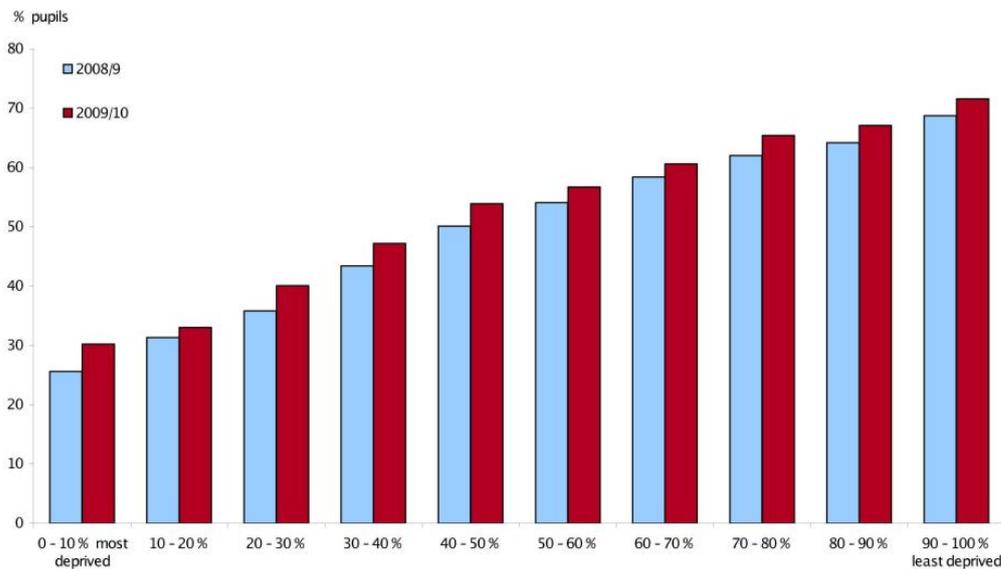
**4.6.7** Geographically, children living in the region's most prosperous areas are more than twice as likely to leave school with five good GCSE results than those leaving in the most disadvantaged areas (72% compared with 30%). Results also tend to be lower in the region's urban areas. Pupils living in the Isles of Scilly (68%) and West Dorset (67%) were most likely to achieve qualifications at this level (Figure 4.6.2) while those in the City of Bristol (46%) or Torridge (46%) were least likely.

**Figure 4.6.2 Percentage of pupils at maintained secondary schools achieving five or more grade A\* - C at GCSE, 2010**



**4.6.8** To some extent, these sub-regional variations are influenced by patterns of local deprivation with GCSE performance related positively to affluence (Figure 4.6.3) but with all areas seeing an improvement over the last year.

**Figure 4.6.3 Percentage of pupils at maintained secondary schools gaining 5 or more A\* - C passes at GCSE, including English and Maths, by IMD 07 Decile**



Source: Department for Education

## 4.7 Special Needs and Special Schools

**4.7.1** Schools meet most children's learning needs through tailoring their approaches to suit individual pupil's different learning needs and styles. Where children do not make adequate progress within this approach, schools do something additional or different. This is usually further action within the school such as additional adult support ('school action') but they may also bring in help from health or social work professionals ('school action plus') or for pupils with the most severe learning, sensory or physical difficulties, the school will make and implement a 'Statement of Special Educational Needs' which sets out the child's needs in detail and the special education provision to be made for them (referred as 'statemented pupils' hereafter).

**4.7.2** One-fifth (20%) of pupils at maintained primary and secondary schools in the South West has special educational needs (totalling almost 135,000 pupils). Most of these pupils (63%) are supported by further action within the school (school action) while three-in-ten (29%)

require support from health or social professionals (school action plus). Fewer than one-in-ten (9%) has a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Mainstream schools accommodate almost three-fifths (57%) of statemented pupils in the South West with most of the remaining (39% of statemented pupils) pupils educated in special schools (Department for Education, Special Educational Needs in England, January 2010).

**4.7.3** Across all provision, there were 20,190 pupils in the South West with a Statement of Special Educational Need in 2010. At 3%, this represents the same proportion of the total pupil population as the national average.

**4.7.4** The South West had 92 special schools in 2010, two fewer than in 2007. The number of young people attending a special school increased marginally, however, over the period, rising from 7,240 in 2007 to 7,410 in 2010. Special schools educate less than two-fifths (39%) of the 20,640 young people in the South West who have a statement of Special Educational Needs. More than half (55%) of young people attending special schools in the South West have a learning difficulty, one-in-six (17%) have behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties, almost one-fifth (17%) has an autistic

spectrum disorder and one-in-ten (11%) has a visual impairment, physical disability or other difficulty. More than one quarter (28%) of pupils attending a special school are known to be eligible for free school meals (compared with 13% of primary schools pupils and 10% of secondary school pupils).

#### **4.8 Pupil Referral Units**

**4.8.1** Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) school children who are unable, for any period, to attend a mainstream or special school, often because of illness or exclusion. The South West had 52 PRUs in 2010, three fewer than in 2007. The number of children attending these units fell sharply over the last 12 months, reducing the roll from 1,420 to 990 children.

#### **4.9 Independent Schools**

**4.9.1** The region had 245 independent schools in 2010, 12 fewer than 10 years previously. The number of young people educated in independent schools increased during the early 2000s, peaking at 62,760 in 2003 and 2004 but has fallen (almost) every year subsequently. Currently, 57,190 young people are educated in an independent school in the South West.

#### **4.10 Further Education and Training**

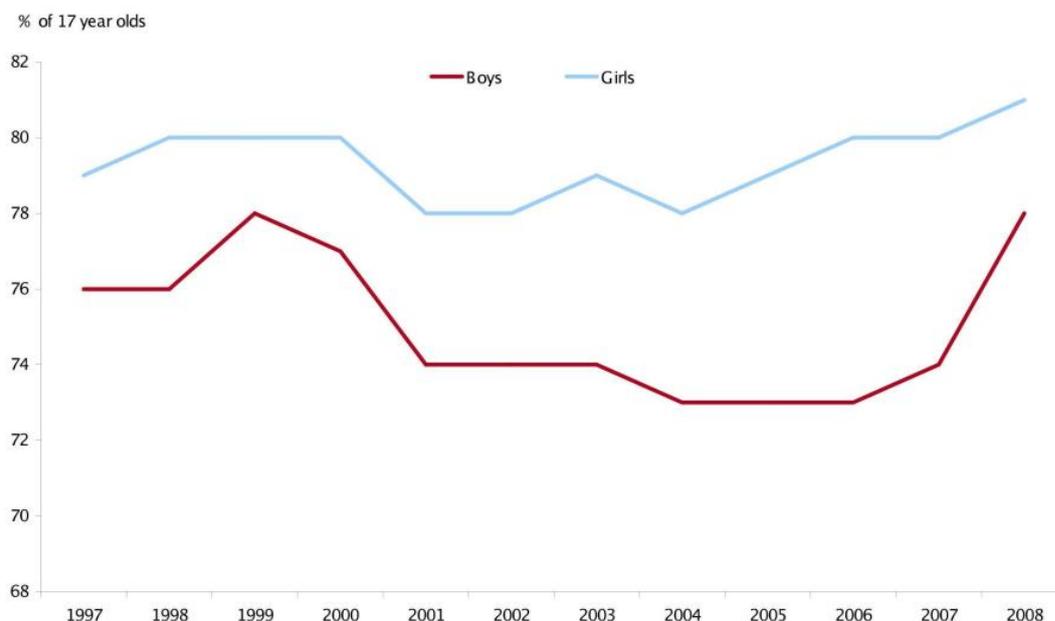
**4.10.1** According to the Careers Service Activity Survey<sup>(1)</sup>, 60,800 pupils in the South West left maintained school during 2008. The vast majority of these school leavers stayed on in education (82%), with much smaller numbers starting government-supported training courses (5%), entering work (5%), being unemployed or not available for work (5%) or having unknown outcomes (2%). Staying on rates in the region are the same as the England average with girls more likely to stay on in education (86%) than boys (79%).

**4.10.2** The Department for Children, Schools and Families also draws together information from the different post-16 learning options to give a comprehensive picture of the participation of 16 to 18 year olds. This is the source used to measure the local authority for the percentage of 17 year olds in education or training. In the South West, almost four-fifths (79%) of 17 year olds were in education or training in 2008, marginally below the England average of 80%. Within the South West, staying on rates varied from 91% in Bath & North East Somerset to 74% in Poole.

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1 <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/VOL/v000891/UKVolume2009.pdf>.

**Figure 4.10.1 Percentage of 17 year olds participating in education or training by gender, 1997 to 2008**



Source: Department for Education

## Participation in Further Education

**4.10.3** The proportion of young people entering Further Education (FE) has expanded in recent years. In 2008, more than two-thirds (67%) of 17 year olds in the region were in full-time education compared with 56% in 2001. However, the regional participation rate remains one percentage point below the national average. Rising participation rates have increased the number of 17 year olds in full-time education by more than a quarter (26%) since 2001. In 2008, 45,400 17 year olds in the region were studying full-time.

**4.10.4** Young people's participation in FE is generally funded by the Government. Provisional data for 2009/10 suggests that there were 103,900 government-funded learners aged 16 to 18 in the South West studying in FE colleges or school sixth forms, an increase of almost 2% on the previous year ([The Data Service, Further Education and Skills](#)). 45% of these learners were on courses leading to Skills for Life

qualifications, 38% were on courses leading to full Level 3 qualifications and 31% were studying for full Level 2 qualifications.

**4.10.5** During 2008/9, 74,000 16 to 18 year olds in the region achieved qualifications following a government-funded education ([The Data Service, Further Education and Skills](#)). This included 30,300 basic skills (Skills for Life) qualifications, 15,000 full Level 2 qualifications and 15,200 full Level 3 qualifications. Success rates for FE are not disaggregated by age at the regional level. However, national estimates suggest that young people are equally as likely as older learners (aged 19 and over) to achieve their learning aims. Four-fifths of FE learners of any age in the South West achieved their learning aims in 2008/9. This is marginally below the England average of 81%.

### A and AS level results

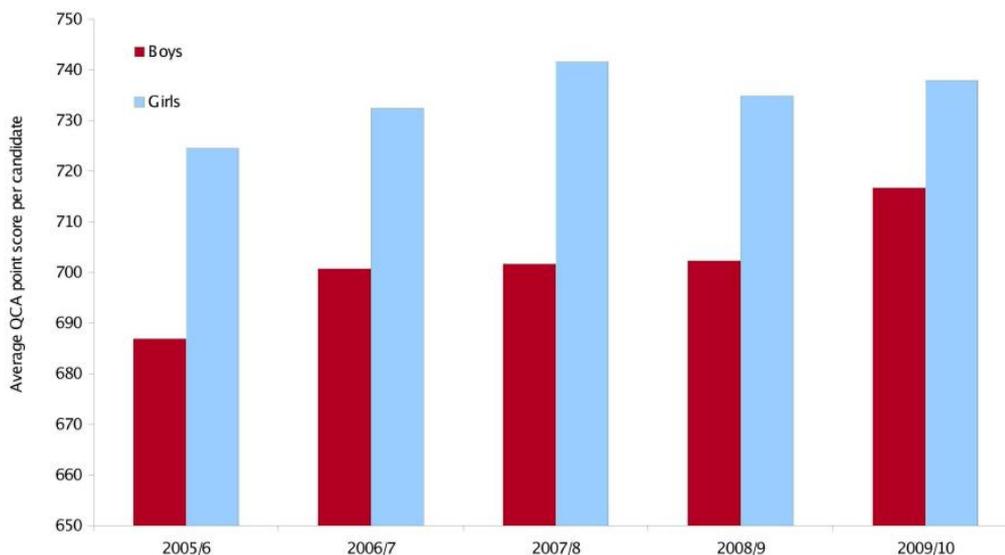
**4.10.6** A and AS level results are slightly lower in the South West than the England average. In 2009/10, the average point score<sup>(2)</sup> per candidate entered for Level 3 qualifications was 728.0 ([Department for Education, GCE/Applied](#)

2 Points for A levels: A (270 points); B (240 points); C (210 points); D (180 points) and E (150 points)

GCE A/AS and equivalent results). This is slightly better than the equivalent of two A grades and one D, or three B grades. While better than the average point score for the previous year of 719.7 points, it is lower than the England average of 744.8 points. As with other qualification levels, girls (737.9 points) achieved better results than boys (716.7 points).

One-in-ten candidates (10%) achieved three or more 'A' grades in the South West compared with the England average of 13%. The percentage of boys achieving the highest grades (9.9%) is broadly similar to the percentage of girls (10.1%) achieving the same level (Figure 4.10.2).

**Figure 4.10.2 GCE A and AS level results for 16-18 year olds (average QCA point score1) by gender; South West, 2005/6 to 2009/10**



Source: Department for Education

**4.10.7** Average point scores are highest for candidates living in the region's villages (856.1 points) and rural towns and fringes (770.1 points). Candidates living in hamlets and isolated dwellings (715.1 points) and urban areas (720.8 points) performed less well. The percentage of students achieving the three or more A grades also varied considerably by area type, ranging from almost one-fifth (18.6%) of students living in villages to almost one-in-ten candidates living in rural town and fringes (8.7%). Results at local authority district level reflect this variation with the highest points recorded by candidates in Salisbury (922.1 points) and the lowest in Torridge (569.4 points).

**4.10.8** Local authorities monitor the number of young people taking A levels in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biological Sciences. The number of young people studying these subjects has increased in recent years.

Compared with 2007/8, the number of A level entries in 2009/10 was 13% higher for Physics, 11% higher for Chemistry, 6% higher for Biology and 20% higher for Mathematics.

#### Participation in Work-Based Learning

**4.10.9** Fewer than one-in-ten (8%) of 17 year olds living in the South West were in work-based learning in 2008. Work-based learning is more popular among boys (10%) than girls (6%) but has been declining in popularity in recent years. The proportion of 17 year olds pursuing this route has fallen by two percentage points since 2001, with the learner volumes also 15% lower than their 2003 peak.

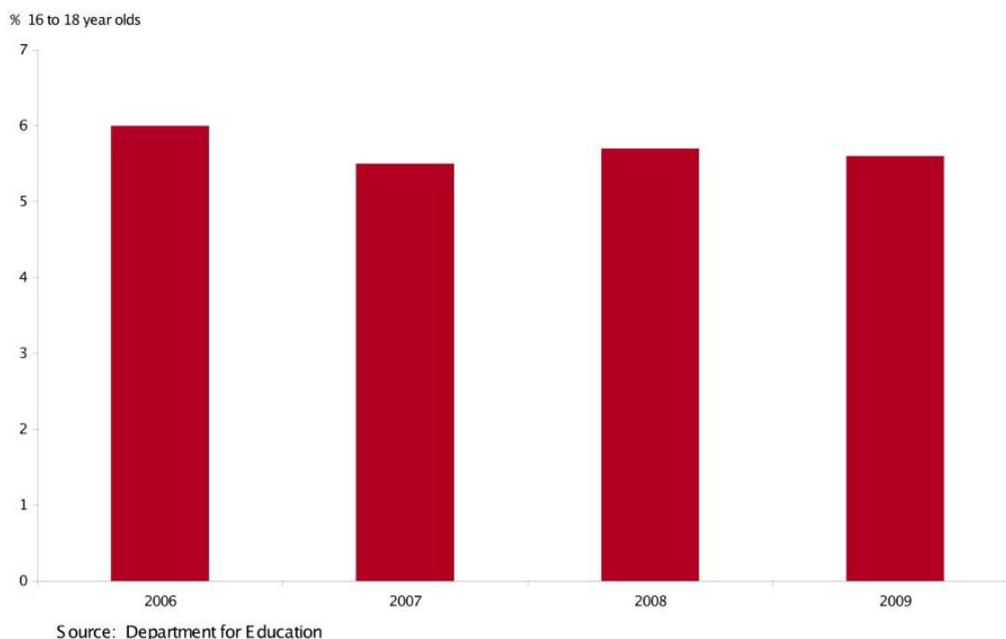
**4.10.10** During 2008/9, 10,600 learners aged 18 or under in the South West started a government-funded Apprenticeship, 1,100 fewer starts than the previous year. Young apprentices

(i.e. those aged 18 or under) account for almost two-fifths (38%) of all apprentices in the South West. Three-quarters of young apprentices started programmes leading to full Level 2 qualifications while the remainder started Advanced Apprenticeships. 7,800 young people in the region completed an apprenticeship during 2008/9. This was 1,000 more than the previous year with over three-quarters (76%) at Level 2 and one-quarter (24%) at Level 3. Apprenticeship success rates are not available by age at the regional level but are generally slightly lower for young people than those aged 19 and over ([The Data Service, Success Rates SFR Supplementary Tables](#)). The 2008/9 all-age success rate in the South West (73%) is the second highest in England and is comfortably above the national average (70%).

### Young People not in Education, Employment or Training

**4.10.11** Almost 6% of young people aged 16 to 18 in the South West were not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) during 2009/10. The South West has one of the lowest NEET rates of all Government Office regions. The NEET rate in the worst performing local authority area – Swindon – was more than twice that in the best performing area Torbay in 2009/10. Estimates show that the proportion of NEET young people aged 16 to 18 remained low during the 2008/2009 recession (Figure 4.10.3) mainly due to an extension of existing guarantee arrangements that offered a training place to all 16 and 17 year olds if they were NEET in January.

**Figure 4.10.3 Percentage of 16 - 18 year olds not in employment, education or training in the South West, 2006 - 2009**



**4.10.12** Young offenders are less likely than other young people to be engaged in employment, education or training. During 2006/7, almost three-quarters (72%) of young offenders (aged 10 to 17) were in suitable employment, education or training, down from 80% the year previously.

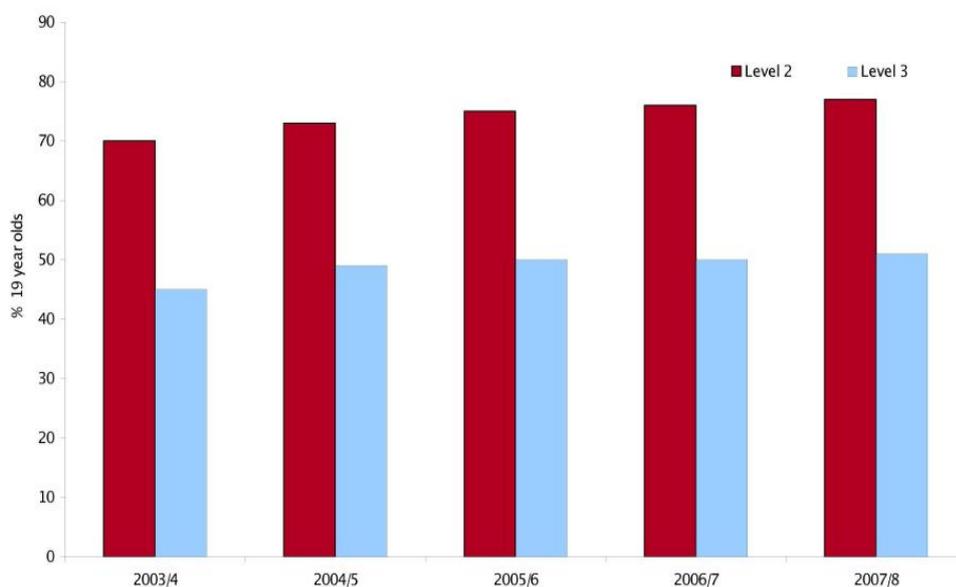
**4.10.13** While the learning guarantee appears to have mitigated the negative impact of the recession on the NEET rate for 16 to 18 year olds, the rate for 18 to 24 year olds was not similarly protected. Estimates suggest that 17% of 18 to 24 year olds in the South West were NEET during the final quarter of the recession<sup>(3)</sup>.

The latest estimate, for the third quarter of 2010, suggests that the rate *may* have fallen (to 16%) although it is not possible to determine this with any statistical certainty due to the relatively large error margin associated with the survey estimate.

### Qualifications at age 19

**4.10.14** More than three-quarters (77%) of 19 year olds in the South West were qualified to Level 2 in 2008. This is the same proportion as the England average and has increased in recent years (Figure 4.10.4).

**Figure 4.10.4 Percentage of 19 year olds qualified to Level 2 and Level 3; South West, 2003/4 to 2007/8**



Source: DCSF.

**4.10.15** Within the South West, the percentage of 19 year olds reaching this qualification is highest in the Isles of Scilly (83%) and Bath & North East Somerset (80%), and is lowest in Bristol (65%) and Swindon (65%). Local authorities are also tasked with monitoring the inequality in the achievement of this objective with progress being measured by changes in the percentage of young people claiming free school meals who reach this qualification level. Only two local authority areas – Dorset and Poole – performed worse on this measure in 2006/7 than in 2005/6.

average and has risen slowly over the last four years (Figure 4.10.4). The national target is for 54% of young people to achieve a Level 3 qualification at 19 by 2011. Three local authority areas in the South West – the Isles of Scilly (67%), Bath and North East Somerset (55%) and Wiltshire (55%) – have already exceeded the national target. Plymouth, by contrast, has the lowest levels of attainment at this level at 39%. The equality gap at Level 3 worsened between 2005/6 and 2006/7 both regionally and in most local authority areas.

**4.10.16** Just over half (51%) of young people have achieved a qualification to at least Level 3 by the age of 19<sup>(4)</sup>. The regional figure is one percentage point higher than the England

## 4.11 Higher Education

### Participation in Higher Education

**4.11.1** More than two-fifths (45%) of young people aged 17 to 30 in England participated in Higher Education (HE)<sup>(5)</sup> in 2008/9, with girls (51%) substantially more likely to study at this level than boys (40%). The participation rate has increased by three percentage points since 2006/7 with student numbers increasing by 10% over the same period. The national aspiration is for 50% of 18 to 30 year olds to be in HE by 2011 (PSA 2 Indicator 6).

**4.11.2** Around 156,000 students domiciled in the South West were participating in HE in 2008/09. Student numbers had fallen slightly in the year to 2007/08 due to changes in HE funding, which affected the number of post-graduates, many of whom are part-time. The number of undergraduates, particularly those who are full-time, has continued to grow year on year, and has seen overall student numbers rise again in 2008/09

**4.11.3** The South West has a lower percentage of young full time first degree entrants (aged 21 or under) from under-represented groups than the national average. Just 7% of young entrants are from low participation neighbourhoods (compared with 10% nationally), over one quarter (28%) are from lower socio-economic classes (compared with 32% nationally) and 84% are from state schools or colleges (compared with 88% nationally).

### Provision

**4.11.4** The South West has 12 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Together, they educate more than 162,000 students of whom 158,900 are studying HE-level qualifications (Table 3). They generated income of £1,487 million in 2008/9. The number of HE students attending institutions in the South West increased by 8,900 (or 6%) between 2008/9 and 2007/8. Most of this growth was among home domiciled students (74%), undergraduates (63%) and full-time students (71%). However, the fastest growing groups in percentage terms were international students (14%) and postgraduates (10%) and, in particular, postgraduates studying full-time (12%).

**Characteristics of Higher Education Institutions in the South West: 2008/9**

**Table 4.11.1**

	Higher education students		Full-time first degree entrants			
	Total	% non-UK domiciled	Total	% who are young	% from state schools or colleges	% from low participation neighbourhoods
University of the West of England	31,645	9	5,450	80	89	9
The University of Plymouth	30,930	7	4,895	72	95	10
The University of Bristol	21,000	19	3,140	95	60	3
Bournemouth University	17,965	11	3,135	78	95	7
The University of Exeter	16,195	19	3,395	92	71	4
The University of Bath	13,380	28	1,895	92	76	4
University of Gloucestershire	9,255	7	1,880	79	96	9
Bath Spa University	8,160	3	1,395	80	95	8
UC Plymouth St Mark and St John	4,080	3	650	64	100	13
University College Falmouth	3,030	6	915	79	97	10
The Arts Institute at Bournemouth	2,295	10	730	83	98	6
Royal Agricultural College	970	13	215	89	42	3
Total: South West	158,905	12	27,695	82	84	7
Total: England	2,005,840	15	293,205	78	88	10
Source: HESA data						

## Achievement and Destinations

**4.11.5** During 2008/09, 44,100 students obtained HE qualifications in HEIs in the South West, down by 3% on the previous year. More than half (56%) of students obtained a first degree, just under one quarter (23%), a postgraduate qualification; 8% gained a Foundation Degree and around 13% achieved other qualifications. Just under 1,000 students were awarded a PhDs or equivalent. Three-fifths (60%) of the region's full-time first degree graduates entered employment either in the UK or overseas after graduating in 2009. A quarter (25%) went onto further study, either on its own or combined with employment, and 8% were unemployed. A further 5% were not available for employment and 1% had another known destination. Of the 19,160 graduates from South West HEIs in 2007/8, some 60% remained in the region to gain employment.

## 4.12 Adult Learning and Qualifications

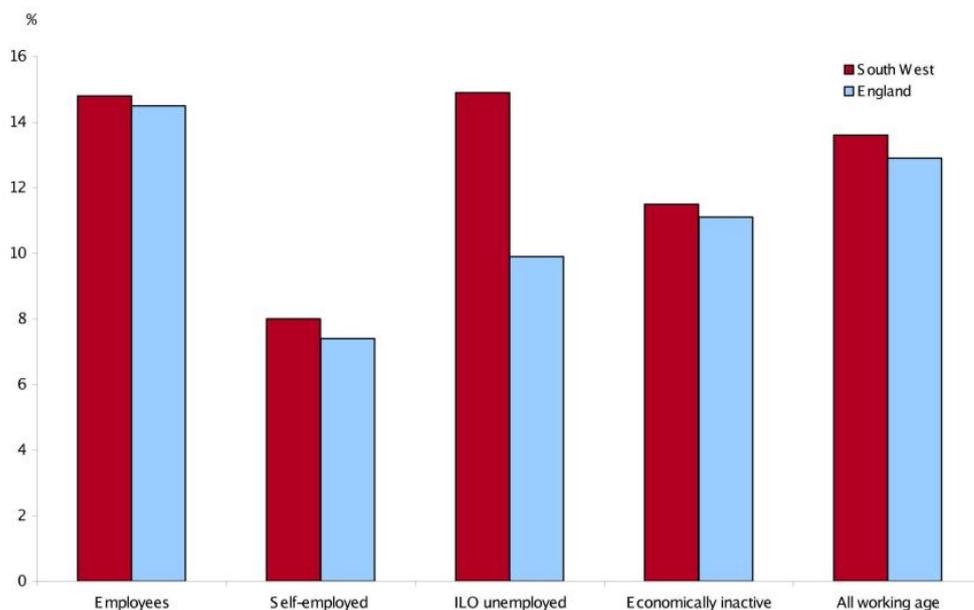
### Participation in Learning

**4.12.1** According to the NIACE Adult Learning Survey for 2009, 42% of South West residents aged 17 and over who had finished full-time

education were either currently learning or had participated in learning during the preceding three years. This compares with the national average of 39%. The survey found that the proportion of adults participating in learning nationally had changed little over the last ten years with participation highest among the young, the highest socio-economic groups and those who had remained in education at age 21.

**4.12.2** The Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides estimates of participation in job-related training and, as such, uses a narrower definition of learning than the NIACE survey. According to the LFS, one-in-seven (15%) of working age employees had trained in the last four weeks in 2009. Participation rates were highest for employees and the ILO unemployed and were higher for all forms of economic activity in the South West than the England average (Department for Children, Schools and Families, Statistics for the UK: 2009) (Figure 4.12.1).

**Figure 4.12.1 Participation by people of working age in job-related training in the last four weeks by economic activity, 2009**



Source: Labour Force Survey, Q2 2009

**4.12.3** The LFS also shows that, among employees, participation in work-related training is highest amongst women, young people (particularly those aged 16 to 19 years old), those with at least an HE qualification, people working in personal service, professional or associate professional and technical occupations and those who work in public administration, education and health ([The Data Service, Further Education and Skills](#)). By contrast, employees with no qualifications are least likely to receive training with only 3% taking part in work-related training in the last four weeks.

**4.12.4** Provisional results suggest that 352,100 adults aged 19 and over in the South West participated in government-funded FE during 2009/10. This includes learners who are studying on a course at an FE college, learners studying courses within their local community, employees undertaking an apprenticeship, and employees undertaking other qualifications in the workplace. The total figure includes 80,500 learners starting basic skills ('Skills for Life') qualifications, 49,500 learners working towards full Level 2 qualifications and 99,600 learners starting full Level 3 qualifications. Achievements during 2008/9 included 53,800 learners gaining Skills for Life qualifications, 44,300 gaining full Level 2 qualifications and 17,400 gaining full Level 3 qualifications. In total, 244,300 adults in the South West gained government-funded qualifications during 2008/9. Success rates for FE are not disaggregated by age at the regional level, but national estimates suggest that young people are equally as likely as older learners (aged 19 and over) to achieve their learning aims. Four-fifths of FE learners of any age in the South West achieved their learning aims in 2008/9. This is marginally below the England average of 81%.

**4.12.5** The number of adult apprentices in the region has almost doubled since 2005/6 with 17,200 people aged 19 and over starting a government-funded apprenticeship in 2008/9. Most (64%) of these apprentices were aged between 19 and 24 years old but a significant minority (36%) were aged 25 years and over. Most (62%) adult apprentices started the 'standard' apprenticeship, working to qualifications at Level 2 although 38% started the Advanced Apprenticeship programme

leading to Level 3 qualifications. The number of adults completing an apprenticeship framework has more than trebled over the last three years, rising from 2,800 in 2005/6 to 9,400 in 2008/9. Almost two-thirds (64%) were at Level 2 and more than one-third (36%) at Level 3. Apprenticeship success rates are not available by age at the regional level but are generally slightly higher for adult apprentices than those aged under 19 ([Success Rates, SFR Supplementary Tables, The Data Service](#)). The 2008/9 all-age success rate in the South West (73%) is the second highest in England and is comfortably above the national average (70%).

**4.12.6** Provisional data suggests that 50,400 adults started on Train to Gain courses during 2009/10 and 42,900 learners achieved an outcome through the programme. Three-quarters of learners who started Train to Gain (and remained on the programme for at least six weeks) achieved their learning aim(s).

### **Basic Skills**

**4.12.7** The Skills for Life Survey in 2003 revealed that around one-in-seven adults in the South West (14%) did not have functional levels of literacy<sup>(6)</sup> ([data](#)), and that one-in-five (21%) did not have functional levels of numeracy<sup>(7)</sup> ([data](#)). Local authorities have been tasked with monitoring the number of adults who achieve literacy qualifications at Level 1 and numeracy qualifications at Entry Level 3. Provisional data suggests that 127,000 people attended Skills for Life courses in 2009/10 with literacy courses attracting slightly more learners (90,600) than numeracy courses (84,500). 84,100 Skills for Life achievements were recorded in the region during 2008/9.

**4.12.8** Qualifications are often used as a proxy for skills. The South West has comparatively few residents of working age who do not hold any formal qualifications, many of whom will have difficulties with basic skills. In 2009, 8% of the South West's working age population did not hold any formal qualifications. This is three percentage points lower than the national average and four percentage points lower than the regional position in 2001. Using this estimate as an imperfect proxy for basic skills needs suggests that 236,000 South West residents may require help addressing basic skills deficiencies.

6 This is defined as having levels of literacy required for a GCSE pass at grades D to G.

7 This is defined as having levels of numeracy at a level expected of an 11 year old.

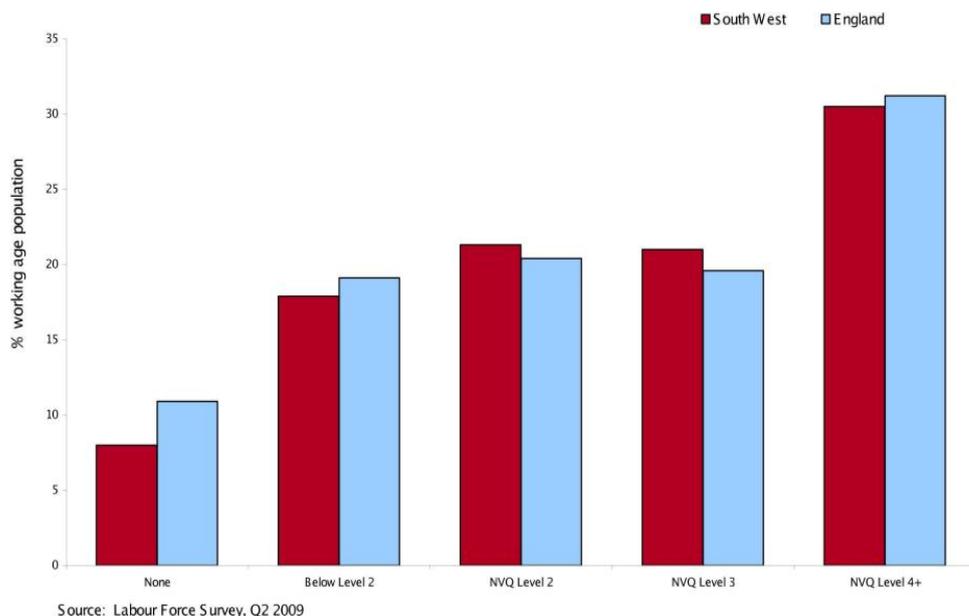
## Intermediate Skills

**4.12.9** Currently, three-quarters (73%) of South West residents of working age (2,255,000 individuals) are qualified to at least NVQ Level 2. This includes 696,000 individuals whose highest qualification is at Level 2. The proportion with qualifications at Level 2 or higher is comfortably above the England average (70%). While qualification levels have improved considerably in recent years with the proportion qualified at this level increasing from 67% in 2001, the position for 2009 falls some way short of the previous administration's aspiration of 79% by 2011.

**4.12.10** Annual Population Survey estimates for 2009 suggest that 825,000 South West residents of working age (aged 16 to 59 for women, 64 for men) could be eligible for government-funded training to help them achieve their first Level 2 qualification.

**4.12.11** More than half (51%) of the South West's working age population have a qualification at Level 3 or above. This percentage represents around 1,559,000 residents qualified at this level, of whom 652,000 have a qualification at Level 3. South West residents are more likely than the England average (49%) to have qualification at Level 3 or higher but the proportion is lower than the previous administration's target of 56% by 2011.

**Figure 4.12.2 Highest qualification held by people of working age, 2009**

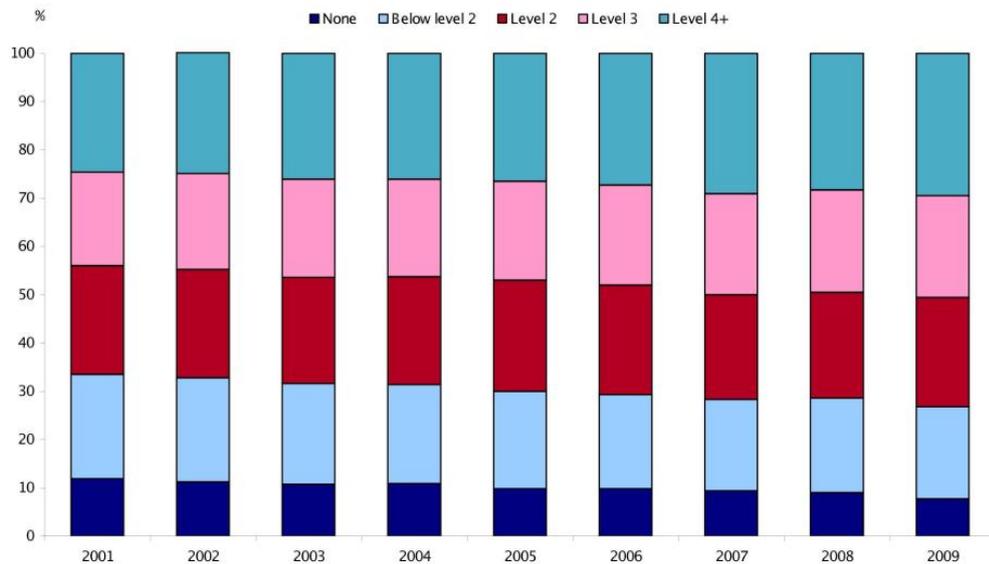


## High Level Qualifications

**4.12.12** Almost one-in-three (30%) working age adults in the South West is qualified to Level 4 or above. This is the same as the England average but is lower than targets set by the previous administration for 2011 (of 34%) and

2014 (of 36%). 907,000 South West residents of working age have acquired qualifications at or above Level 4. Within the South West, the proportion of the population with graduate-level qualifications is highest in Bath & North East Somerset (35%) and Bristol (35%), and lowest in Plymouth (24%), Torbay (24%) and Cornwall (23%).

**Figure 4.12.3 Highest qualification held by people of working age, South West: 2001 to 2009**



Source: Labour Force Survey

## 4.13 Employer Demand for Skills

### Recruitment, Hard-to-Fill Vacancies and Skills Shortages

**4.13.1** According to the National Employer Skills Survey (NESS), recruitment activity was lower in 2009 than 2007 reflecting contracting demand for labour during the recession. During 2009, one-in-eight (12%) of employers reported that they had a vacancy, 4% said they had a hard-to-fill vacancy and 3% had a vacancy that was hard to fill due to skills shortages. Three-quarters (72%) of vacancies in the region were hard to fill for this reason. Small employers were most likely to experience recruitment difficulties with more reporting difficulties in 2009 than in 2007.

### Skills Gaps

**4.13.2** More than one-in-five (22%) of South West employers reported that they had employees whom they considered not fully proficient. The incidence of skills shortages had worsened over the last two years. Over 200,000 employees, less than one-in-ten (9%) of the workforce, are thought not to be fully proficient in their role. Skills gaps are more common in

large firms than small ones. They are most commonly identified in technical, practical or job-related skills but also in customer-handling and team-working. Most employers reporting skills gaps identified the most common causes as new staff and lack of experience.

### Up-skilling

**4.13.3** Most employers (66%) in 2009 expected that their staff would need to acquire new skills or knowledge over the next year with larger employers more commonly identifying a need for up-skilling than small ones. Up-skilling was most often cited as being needed to keep up to date with legislative or regulatory requirements, the development of new products or services, the introduction of new technology or equipment and the introduction of new working practices. Employers in the public administration and defence, education and health and social work sectors were most likely to identify the need for up-skilling.

### Training

**4.13.4** Almost three-quarters (71%) of South West employers participating in the NESS in 2009 had provided training or development in the last 12 months. Despite slightly more

employers offering training, the proportion of the workforce receiving training actually fell over the last two years, from 66% in 2007 to 57% in 2009. Spending on training increased in real terms. Training is most commonly offered by employers in the public and financial services sectors. Most employers use an external supplier to train their staff, with the most commonly deployed being consultants or training providers, FE colleges and universities. The recession has had no impact on the amount or type of training provided by employers. Two-fifths (40%) of employers providing staff development would like to have done more but were prevented from doing so due to prohibitive cost, lack of time and problems with the supply of training.

#### **Government Initiatives**

**4.13.5** Most (63%) employers in the South West are aware of the Train to Gain programme with one-in-ten reported to have been actively involved in the programme during the previous 12 months. Public sector organisations and large employers were more likely to be aware of the programme and to have actively participated than other employers. Almost all employers (93%) had heard of government-funded apprenticeships but far fewer were aware of Adult (33%), Advanced (29%) or Higher Apprenticeships (18%). Again, awareness was higher among larger employers. Fewer than one-in-ten (9%) of the region's employers were currently employing an apprentice or had done so in the past. Apprenticeships were most commonly offered by construction firms. One-in-six (16%) of employers would consider recruiting an apprentice within the year.

#### **4.14 Conclusions**

**4.14.1** Young people's educational participation and achievement is generally higher in the South West than the England average, although there are pockets of under-achievement in some parts of the region and among pupils from low-income households and from some ethnic minority groups. Since low qualification levels are typically associated with low earnings and increased risk of unemployment, it is essential that all young people are given the opportunity to fulfil their vocational or academic potential.

**4.14.2** The region's highly-skilled workforce is an economic asset helping both to attract new businesses and support existing businesses to innovate and prosper. While qualification levels continue to rise, stimulating adults' participation in learning remains both a regional and national challenge. Investment in lifelong learning pays not only economic and financial dividends but is also associated with improvements in emotional, psychological and physical well-being.