



Social Mobility

- the impact of good governance

12th June 2025



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SHIFT MINDSETS*

**Social Mobility is good for business*

SOCIAL
MOBILITY
DAY

Social Mobility Day
Thursday 12th June 2025

SOCIAL MOBILITY
ISN'T JUST A

BUZZWORD*

Aims of this session:



to explore what social mobility, in the context of schools, means in 2025;



to focus on the role of governance in maintained schools and academies, if it is to impact the future life chances of pupils in our schools;



to clarify barriers to social mobility and how governance can be a force for change.



**GOVERNORS
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What is Social Mobility?



Social Mobility Commission

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What is social mobility?



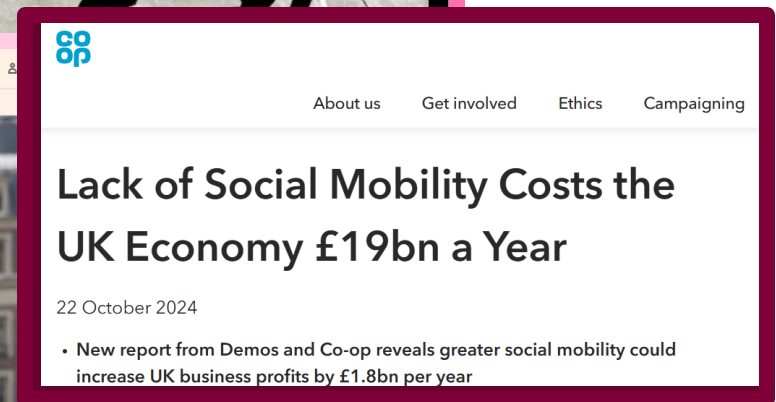
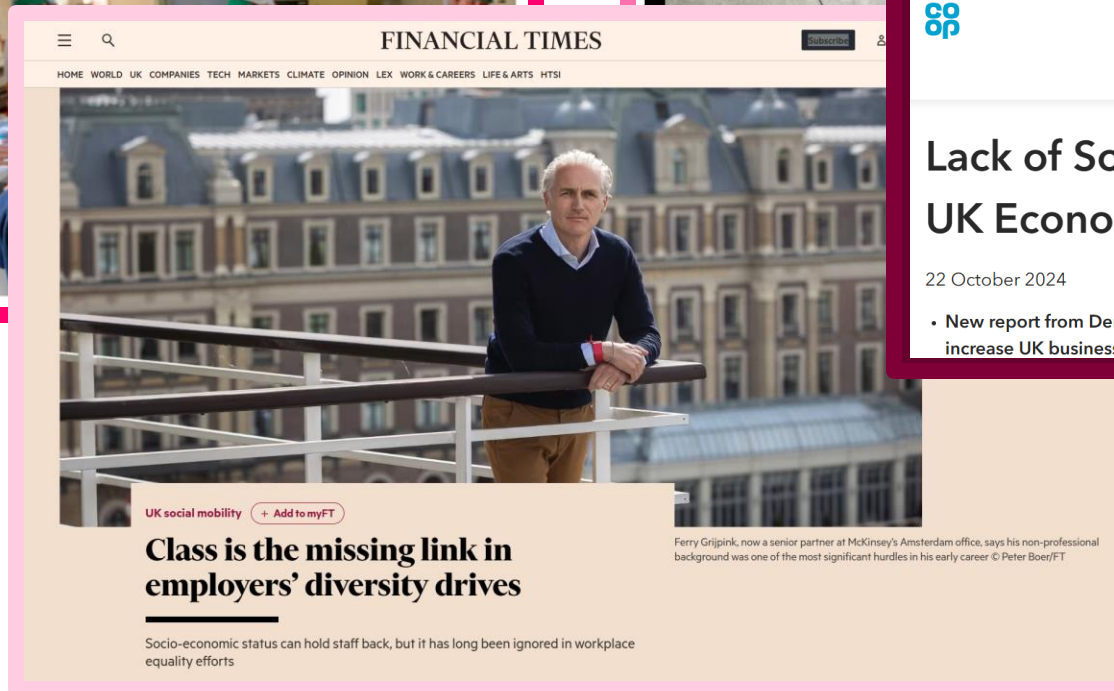
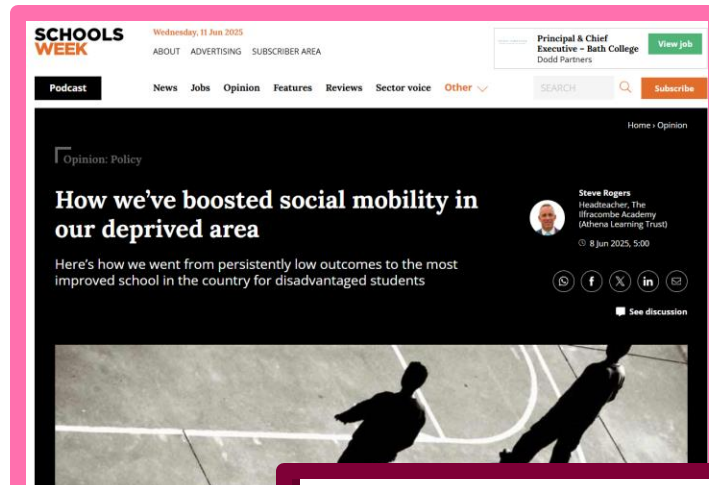
Social mobility is the link between a person's occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents.

Ambition:

Effective governance is, above all, about driving relentless ambition for the children and young people served by our school system, whatever their circumstances.

Governance Handbook DfE (pre-March 2024)

The headlines:



...and in a school near you?



Social Mobility
Commission

Schools: The Engine of Social Mobility

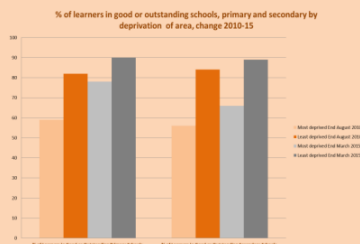
The Government is rightly committed to ensuring all children fulfil their potential in school

- There are welcome efforts towards tougher standards, a core curriculum and a greater focus on progress in accountability measures.
- Schools are more likely to be good or outstanding than 5 years ago; and 10,000 more poor children got good GCSEs in 2015 compared to 2005.
- Increasing numbers of schools have broken the link between demography and destiny with the attainment of their poorest students far exceeding the national average.
- But there is a stubbornly large attainment gap in England. Poor children start school behind and make less progress than other children when in school, which widens the gap in the school years. Progress in secondary schools stalls for many poor children.

The biggest weakness in the schools system is the large variation in standards

- School quality remains very patchy across England and poor children are less likely to go to the best schools.

- Children in the wealthiest areas are 12% more likely to go to a good primary school and almost 25% more likely to go to a good secondary school than children from the most deprived areas.



There are too few high quality teachers in the areas that need them most

- A high quality teaching workforce is essential both to narrowing the attainment gap and to delivering on the Government's schools reform programme
- **Teacher training:** Efforts to increase the number and quality of trainee teachers need to go further. Teacher-training places for many subjects are not being filled. Only 82% of places in secondary school were filled in 2015/16.

May 2016

- **Teacher pay:** Entry level teacher pay is falling behind other graduate jobs and teacher pay elsewhere in the OECD.
- **Teacher quality:** Difficulties in recruiting teachers risks creating a quality problem. In 2014, 20% of maths lessons in secondary schools were being taught by teachers without a relevant qualification - an increase from 17% in 2013.
- **Teacher incentives:** There are few incentives to encourage teachers to work in the most challenging schools. A commission survey found that just 15% of teachers would actively seek out work in more challenging schools.

Schools are not sufficiently focused on preparing the poorest children for life after school

- Schools do not focus enough on destinations (where their pupils go next). Success in exams must not be seen as an end in itself.
- There are big geographic variations in the extent to which young people from poor households access the best universities. Areas where disproportionately few poor pupils progress to university need to look to areas which do well.
- The Commission's Cracking the Code report (2014) highlighted examples of schools working hard to prepare their students for the world beyond, including: early engagement with employers and university, NEET prevention and social and cultural capital building.

Government should address these problems. The Commission recommends:

1. Tackle underperforming schools

- Government should adopt a zero tolerance approach to schools which fail their pupils and their communities for more than five years in a row

3. Teacher pay

- Pay and reward for new teachers should be overhauled;
- Fees for teacher training and the bursary scheme should be scrapped; the bar for entry to training should be lowered; and the bar for qualification, raised.

2. Launch social mobility measures

- Government should demonstrate its commitment to narrowing the attainment gap by launching a new set of social mobility measures at a national, local authority and school level and should increase transparency on destinations.

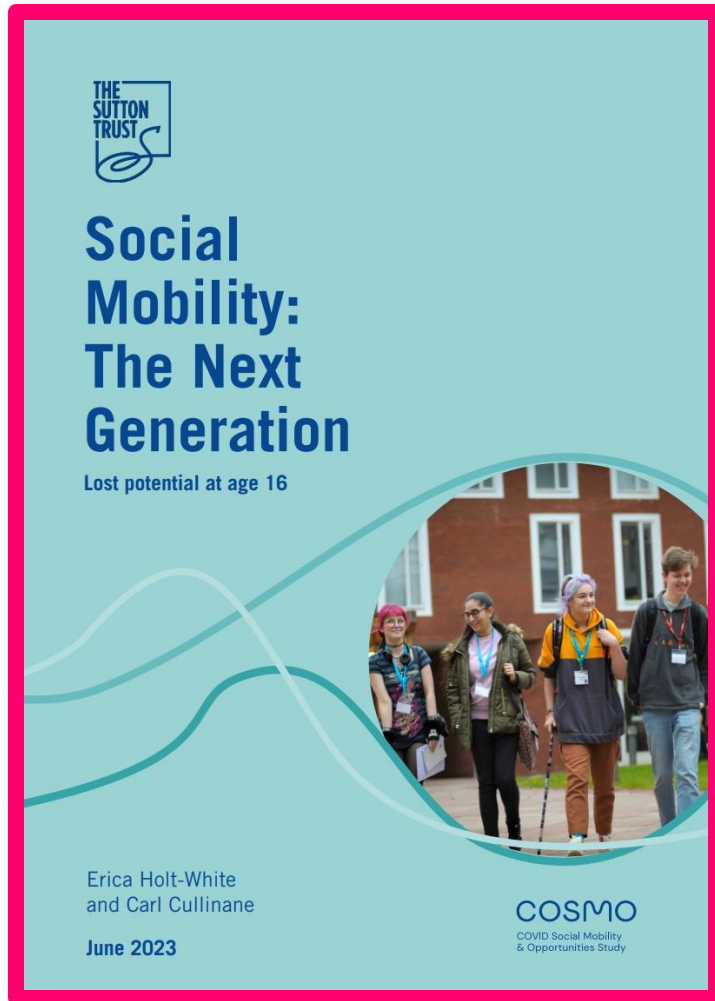
4. New teacher incentives

- New incentives should be introduced to get more good teachers into the most challenging schools;
- Local approaches to incentivise teachers to move to areas where they are most needed should be piloted.



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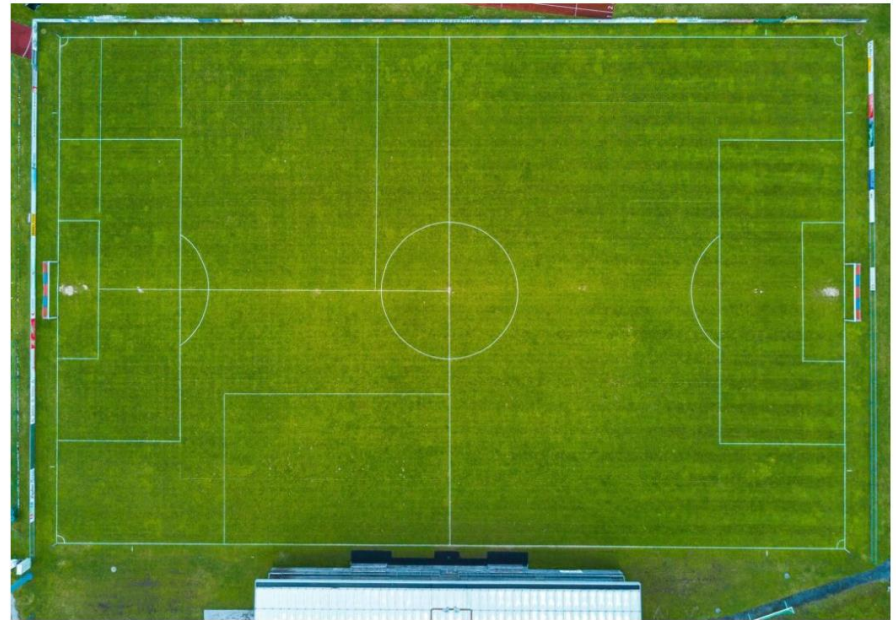
Reflection v action



Levelling the playing field and promoting social mobility through education

Research Review

Written By: Author(s): Jonathan Doherty



Communities | Disadvantage | Families | Inclusion | Leadership

What can schools do?

- recognise the barriers to fairer opportunity;
- understand context and its impact;
- celebrate diversity and promote real inclusion/opportunity for all;
- champion social mobility (celebrate examples);
- change mindsets;
- take positive action;

Barriers to fairer opportunity:

- socio-economic;
- personal & social development;
- early learning;
- protected characteristics (age, disability, SEN, race, faith, sexuality etc);
- expectations;
- life experiences
- role-modelling;
- Information, Advice and Guidance (careers);
- work-experience.

Understanding context and its impact

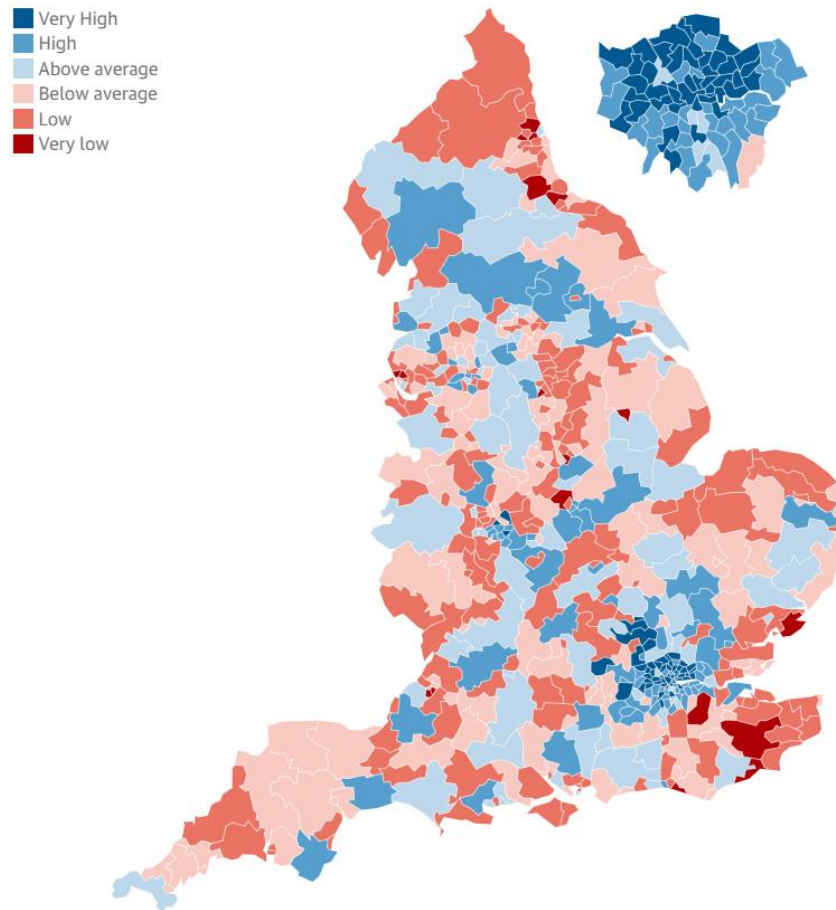
As governors and trustees, do we know:

- the different groups of pupils represented in our schools/trusts;
- Which groups are already falling behind (e.g. early reading);
- which groups don't access extra-curricular provision;
- which groups are not building social capital.

Geographical influence:

London hosts all of the top 20 best-ranked constituencies for social mobility

Opportunity rankings of English constituencies for disadvantaged young people



Guardian graphic. Source: Sutton Trust. Note: data is based on the Opportunity Index, which takes into account a range of measures such as school attainment, access to higher education, employment status and earnings of young people eligible for free school meals at secondary school

Geographical influence:

- 51% of children in London, who are eligible for free school meals, achieve A* - C in English and Maths compared to national average of only 36%;
- Lowest performing LAs for disadvantaged pupils (Free School Meals) fewer children on FSM attend an Ofsted-rated 'good' or 'outstanding' school;
- Disadvantaged pupils are twice as likely to become NEET, than non-disadvantaged within a year of GCSEs.

What should we (as governors) do?

- question the status quo;
- seek assurance of how *early reading* is prioritised for all;
- seek assurance that interventions support those with barriers in their path;
- question how the Pupil Premium grant is used/spent;
- redefine 'inclusion';
- champion *shifting mindsets*.

What *could* we (as governors) do?

- analyse how socially mobile your school community is;
- challenge our schools to do more:
 - broaden access to experiences;
 - explore alternative/impactful ways to spend pupil premium;
 - encourage a culture of ambition for all;
 - support parents and carers to promote ambition;
 - champion non-elitist opportunities;
 - promote widening participation.

A few examples:

- **champion early reading** – through encouraging parents to read/talk to children, including adult literacy support;
- **use PP to fund extra curricular activities** – for disadvantaged pupils;
- **provide transport home after revision classes** – so that disadvantaged pupils can afford to revise;
- **search out charitable support** – to help provide aspiration raising activities.
- **celebrate alumni** – as accessible to all.

Dr Jonathan
Doherty

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Best Practice

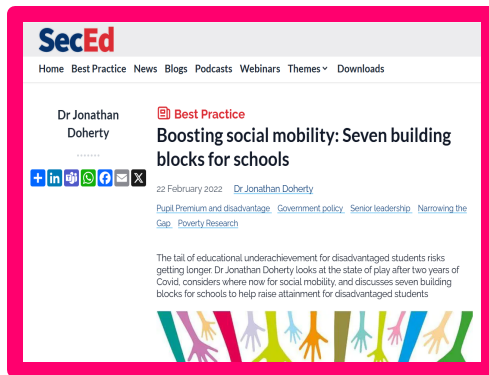
Boosting social mobility: Seven building blocks for schools

22 February 2022 [Dr Jonathan Doherty](#)

[Pupil Premium and disadvantage](#) [Government policy](#) [Senior leadership](#) [Narrowing the Gap](#) [Poverty Research](#)

The tail of educational underachievement for disadvantaged students risks getting longer. Dr Jonathan Doherty looks at the state of play after two years of Covid, considers where now for social mobility, and discusses seven building blocks for schools to help raise attainment for disadvantaged students





- Have a whole school ethos of attainment for all;
- Address behaviour and attendance;
- High-quality teaching for all;
- Meet individual learning needs;
- Deploy staff effectively;
- Be driven by data;
- Ensure clear, responsive leadership.

A final thought

Does your board composition reflect your community and include those who represent social mobility and can champion it?



Any Questions?



What's coming?

- **Social Mobility Day webinar**
 - 12th June 2025 at 12pm



- Thank you
- Please come back next time
- Enjoy the remainder of your day.