

2.3 Educational Attainment – The Early Years

Giving young children the best start in life includes the provision of a high standard of education from an early age. A child's progress is assessed from an early age (Foundation Stage, when the child is between 3 and 5 years of age) and assessed at Key Stage 1 (Year 2). Education is a key social determinant of inequalities in society.

Indicators:

Due to changes in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, a direct comparison of this year's result with previous year's results is not appropriate. However, measuring the gap to national this year and in the previous year will give a general indication of any improvement within the key stage.

Girls continue to perform better than boys in all key measures in 2015/2016. Meanwhile, the gender gap for the percentage achieving a good level of development has increased from 14.9% in 2015 to 16.9% in 2016 (Figure 1).

At present, 64.8% of the pupils in Walsall have been judged to have made a good level of development. This is 4.5% below the national average, a gap that has changed from 15% in 2012 under the previous early year's framework (Figure 2). Walsall currently ranks 10th in 14 local authorities in West Midlands in 2016 (Figure 3)

Mathematics and Understanding the World, particularly remains the limiting factors for more pupils achieving a good level of development. Walsall is currently ranked 140 and 143 in quartile band D for the Mathematics and Understanding the World measures respectively.

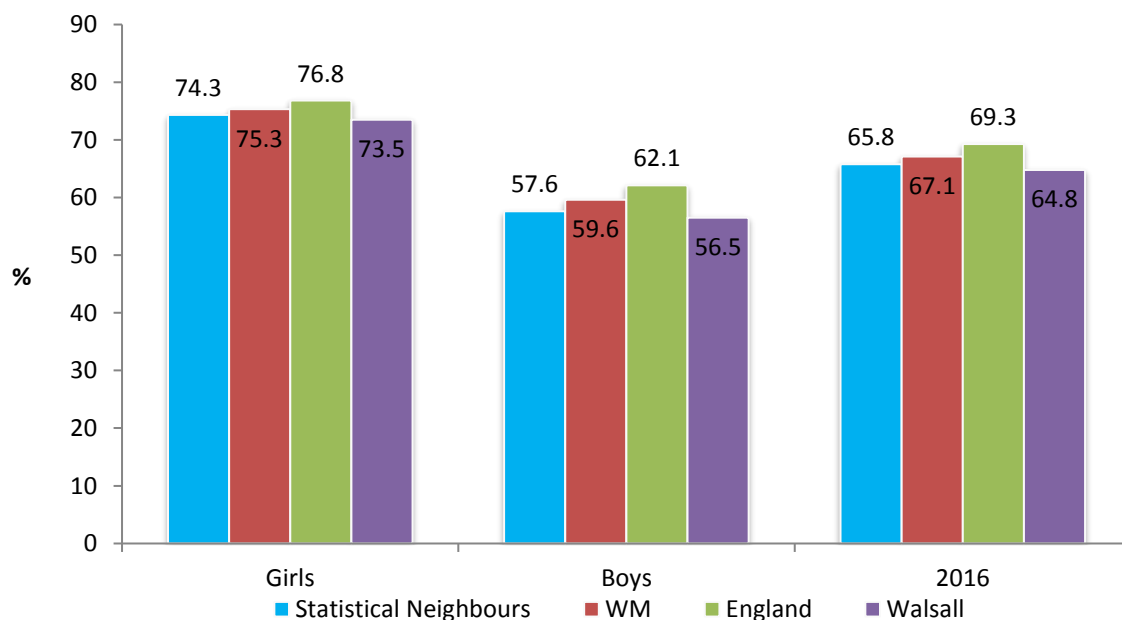


Figure 1: Percentage of children achieving a good level of development at Foundation Stage (EYFSP) 2015/2016 (Source: DfE: November 2016)

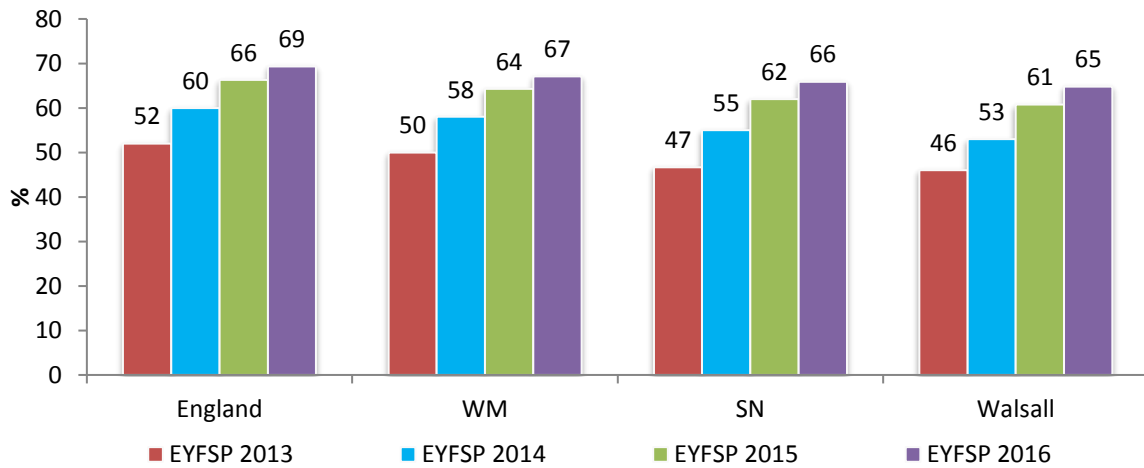


Figure 2: Percentage of children achieving a good level of development at Foundation Stage (EYFSP) 2015/2016 (Source: DfE: November 2016)

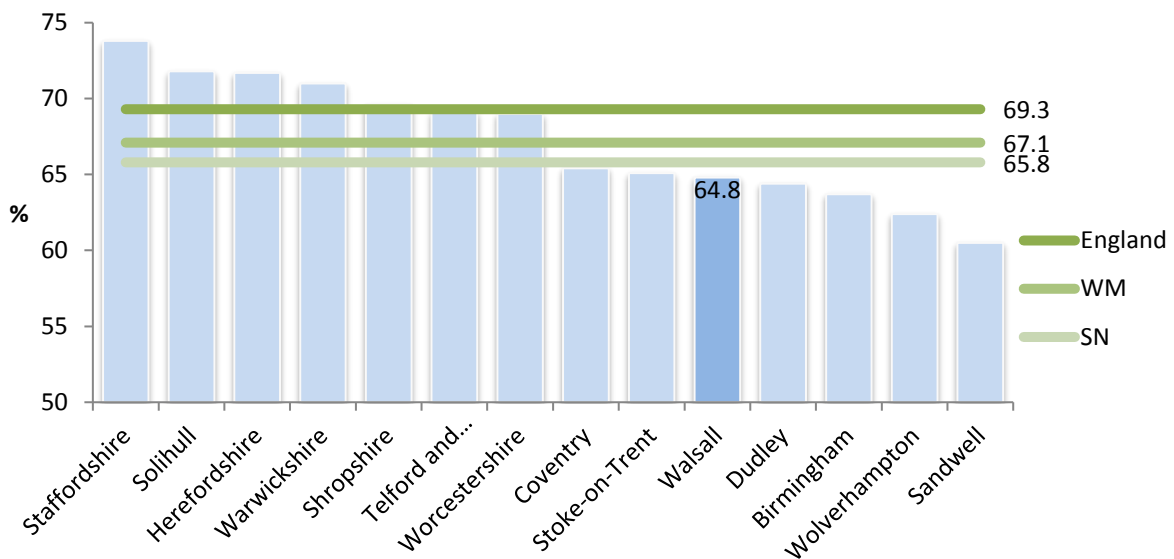


Figure 3: Percentage of children achieving a good level of development at Foundation Stage (EYFSP) 2015/2016 (Source: DfE: November 2016)

Absence rates are the key to addressing attainment as evidence shows there is a strong correlation between achievement and absence.

During the autumn term 2015 and the spring term 2016, Walsall's total absence rate for 4 year olds (6.4%) is the most highest in 14 local authorities in West Midlands, is higher than our comparator averages, statistical neighbours (5.7%), West Midlands (5.4%) and England (5.3%).

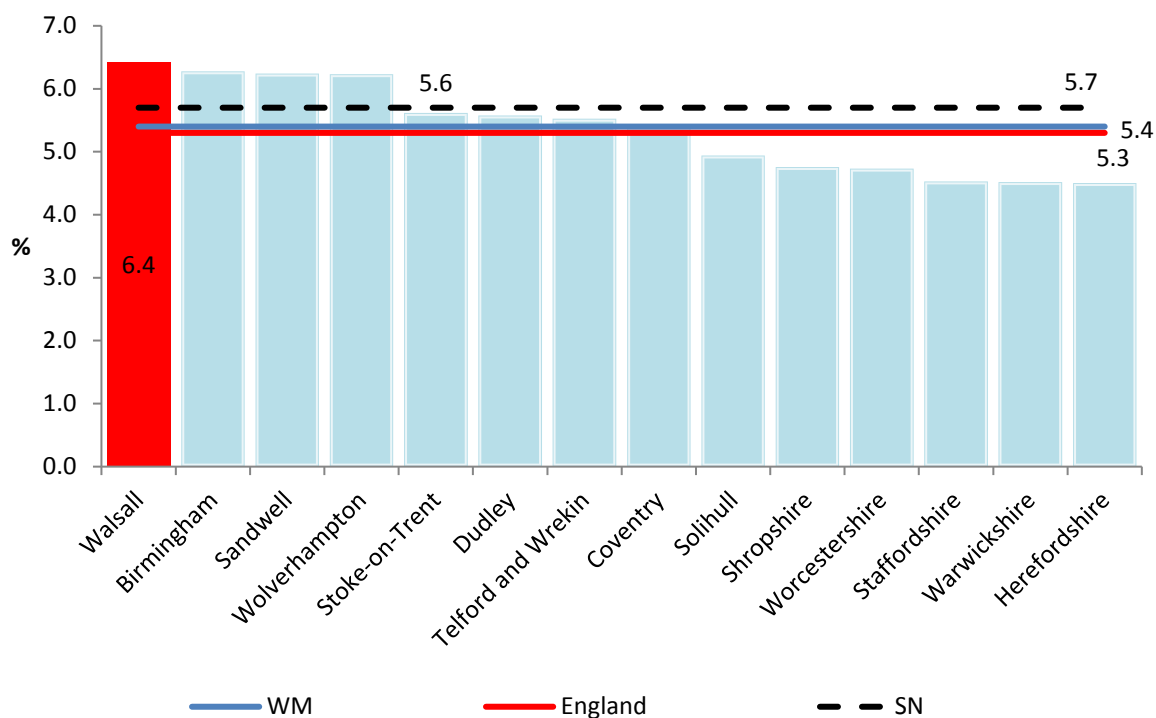


Figure 4: Overall School Absence Rate for 4 Year Olds 2015/16 (Source: DfE October 2016)

Sub-groups of pupils, for example, vulnerable children (Looked After Children (LAC), Children with Child Protection Plans), those with special needs or boys from white or mixed backgrounds, need continuous close monitoring and targeted support to ensure Walsall is helping these pupils fulfil their potential and therefore reduce inequalities in educational attainment.

Priority Actions for Early Years Education:

Investing in the early years, thereby improving early cognitive and non cognitive development and children's readiness for school is vital for later educational outcomes. High quality preschool experience can have positive effects on children's social, emotional and cognitive development.

Our priority is to target resources to support vulnerable groups and provide schools with appropriate support.

Key priorities are to:

- *Increasing the percentage of children achieving a good level of development across Early Years Foundation Stage by learning from best practice in other councils*
- *Continue to focus on pupils achieving KS1 L2+ in writing and maths, particularly White British group and the achievement of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)*
- *Ensure vulnerable groups, particularly pupils with SEN, LAC and children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) receive targeted support*
- *Work with primary schools to improve attendance rates to reach national*

