

### 3.1 Educational attainment

Continuing educational engagement and aspirations for the future are central to breaking inter-generational cycles of disadvantage. Anecdotally, and confirmed by children’s perception surveys, Walsall faces a real challenge around low levels of aspiration – in common with many areas experiencing a structural industrial decline.

The national Tell-us Survey 2010 found that only 44% of Year 6 children expected to study after year 11, compared to 50% for similar councils. Locally, traditional views persist - that education and attainment were unimportant as young people would leave school at 16 and work in local industry not requiring high levels of qualifications. This is compounded by the economic downturn and a local lack of job opportunities (discussed further in Chapter 4).

Promotion of aspiration and educational attainment is vital to move from a vicious to a virtuous cycle.

## Vicious or Virtuous Cycle

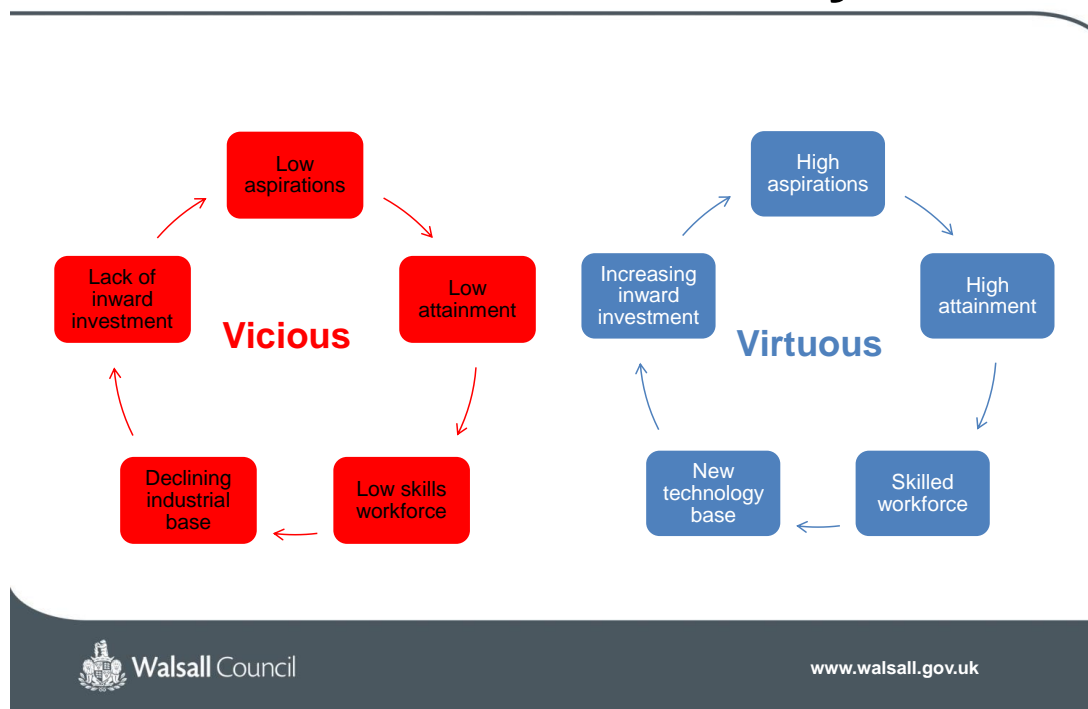


Figure 1: Vicious or virtuous cycle

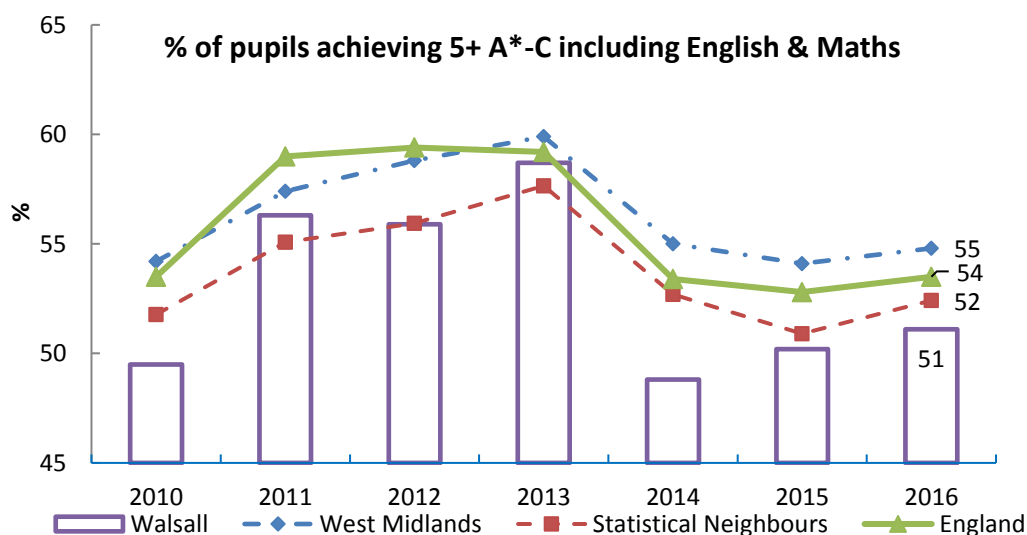
#### 3.1.1 GCSE (Key Stage 4) and A/AS Level

Good attainment at GCSE level equips young people to move confidently onto the next phase of their lives. The gold standard of each young person achieving 5 or more A\*-C grades including English and Maths remains a key challenge for Walsall. Education is a key social determinant of inequalities in society. Good attainment at A/AS Level or equivalent is equally important to access further educational opportunities and/or employment opportunities.

## KS4 Indicators:

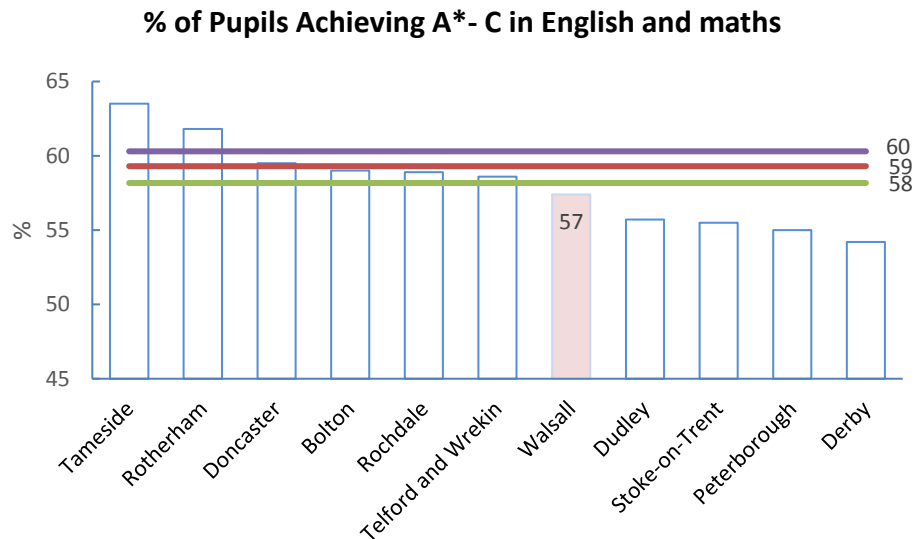
Walsall's 2015 results for the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ GCSE A\*-C including English and maths increased, in line with KS4 results nationally. Last year saw significant changes to the GCSE specification and how the results are then subsequently reported in the DfE league tables. Students' 'first' result rather than their best result is now counted in the DfE league tables, therefore eliminating any improvement in grades made by students from re-sitting one or more of their GCSE exams.

In 2016, the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs at A\*-C including English and Maths slightly increased by 0.3% on the previous year, from 50.8% in 2015 to 51.1%. The LA remains below the SN average (52.4%) for this measure, but the gap has increased to 1.3% this year. The national average has increased to 53.5%, meaning that the gap to national is now 2.4%. Walsall's current LA ranking nationally has decreased from 126th to 133rd in quartile band D for this measure.



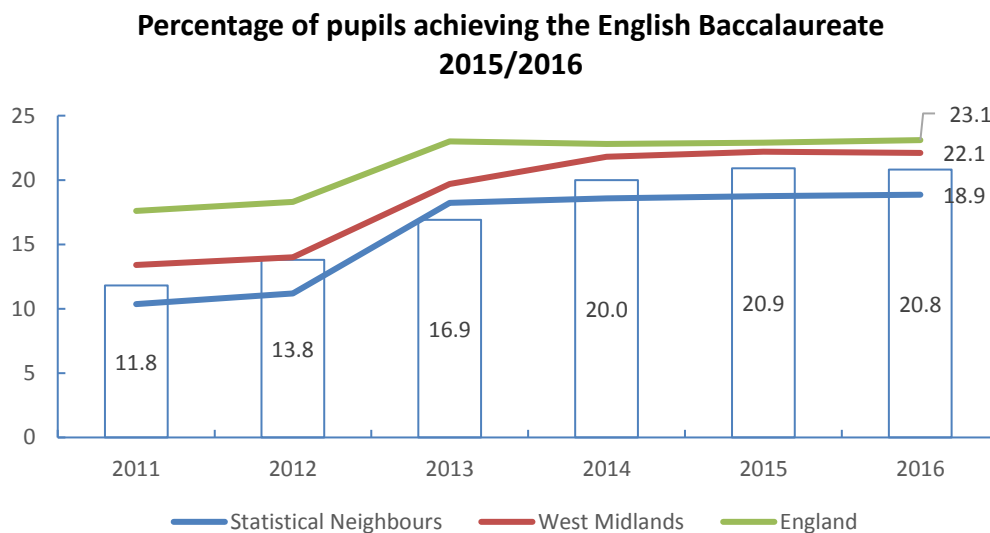
**Figure 1: Key Stage 4 (GCSE) - Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A\*-C grades including English and maths**  
(Source: DfE Jan 2017)

The LA's performance for pupils achieving 5+ GCSE A\*-C has also been affected by the changes to the way the results are reported. A new secondary school accountability system was implemented and new measures were introduced in 2016. Walsall has 57.4% of pupils achieving A\*-C in both English and maths, lower than the national average 59.3%, SN level 58.2% and West Midlands average 60.3%. Walsall's current ranking is 129th and in quartile band D for this measure (See Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Key Stage 4 (GCSE) - Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A\*-C grades in English and Maths (Source: DfE January 2017)**

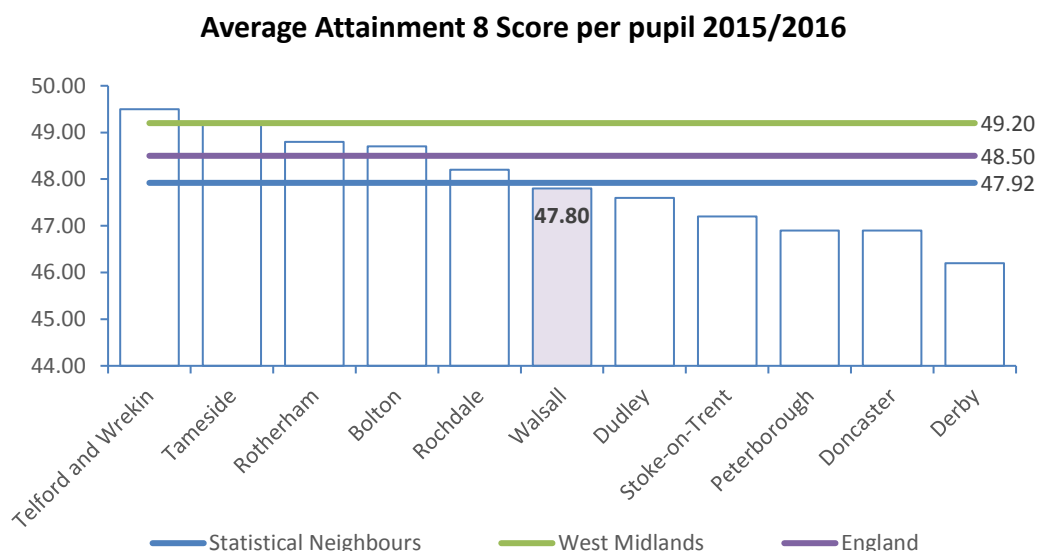
English Baccalaureate (EBacc) – was introduced into 2010 performance tables with the aim of recognising pupil’s achievements across a core of selected academic subjects. The EBacc covers achievement in GCSE (or accredited iGCSE) English, mathematics, sciences, a language and a humanities subject. The percentage of pupils achieving the EBacc was 20.8% in 2015/16, higher than the SN level 18.9%, but lower than the national average 23.1% and West Midlands average 22.1%, ranks 102nd nationally (see Figure 4).



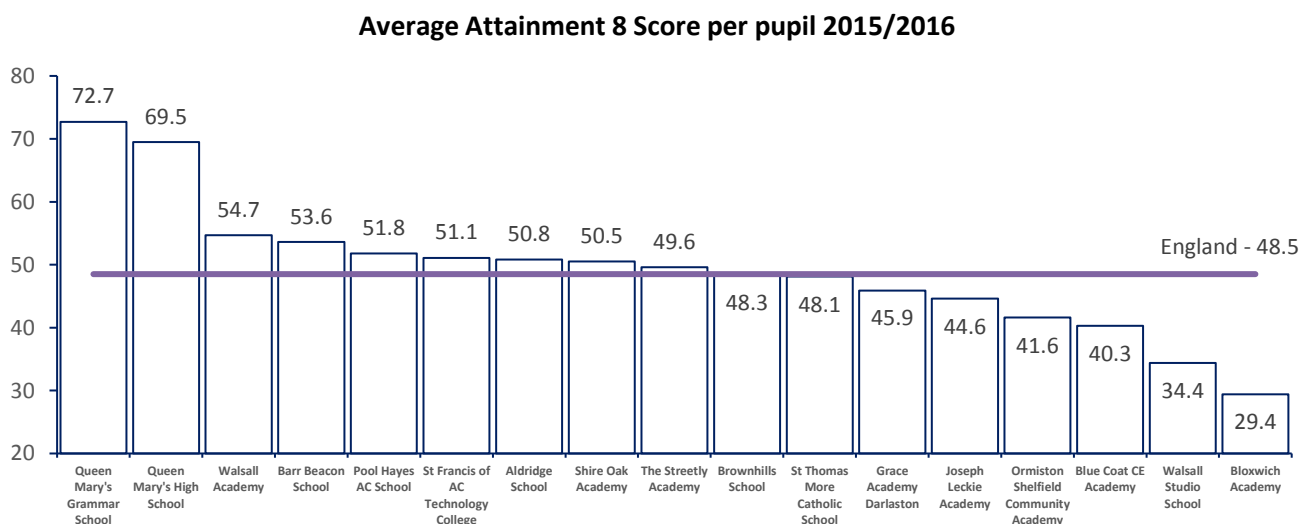
**Figure 4: Key Stage 4 (GCSE) - Percentage of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate 2015/2016 (Source: DfE, January 2017)**

An new Attainment 8 Score measures the average achievement of pupils in up to 8 qualifications including English (double weighted if the combined English qualification, or both language and literature are taken), maths (double weighted), three further qualifications that count in the EBacc and three further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or any other non-GCSE qualifications on the DfE approved list. In

2016 Walsall's Attainment 8 score was 47.8 compared to the national average of 48.5 points, and SN level 47.92, ranks 123rd place nationally (See Figure 5).. However, this was broadly in line with our statistical neighbours. The amount of progress young people make in secondary schools is now judged via the new Progress 8 measure. The national average is set at zero each year. In 2016 Walsall had a score of -0.24 indicating that students in Walsall make less than the average amount of progress across the secondary phase. This was also below our statistical neighbour's score of -0.12. The percentage of pupils in Walsall achieving the English Baccalaureate has remained at 21% in 2016. The average attainment 8 scores in 9 out of 17 secondary schools in Walsall were higher than the national average scores 48.5 (See Figure 6).



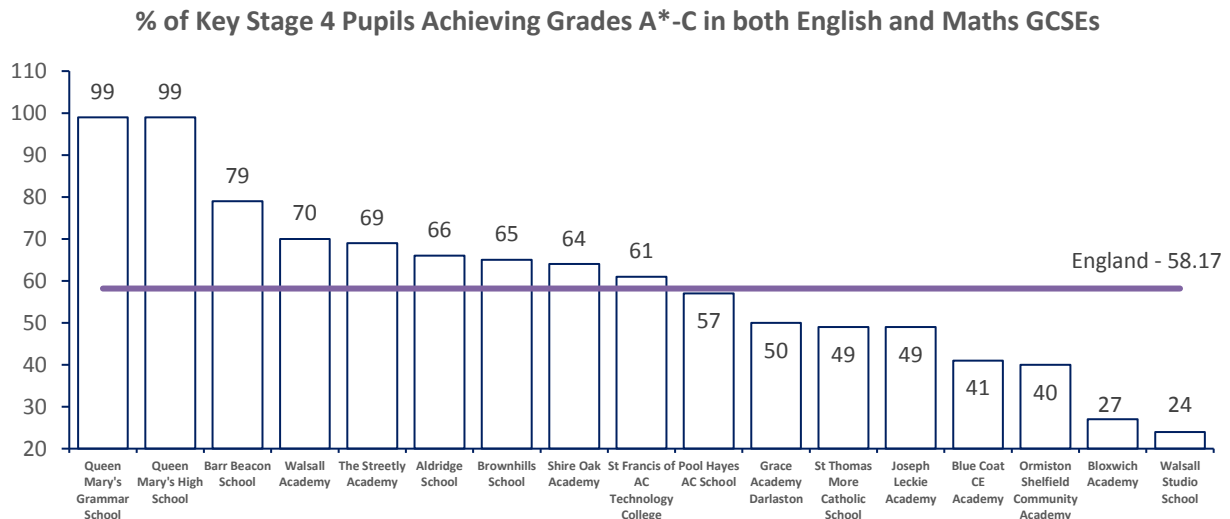
**Figure 5: Key Stage 4 (GCSE) - Average Attainment 8 Score per pupils 2015/2016 (Source: DfE, January 2017)**



**Figure 6: Key Stage 4 (GCSE) - Average Attainment 8 Score per pupils 2015/2016 (Source: DfE Oct 2016)**

English remains the limiting factor in the LA's overall performance for the headline measure of 5+ GCSE A\*-C in English and maths. This can be attributed to a bigger gap among secondary schools in Walsall. In 2015/2016, the percentages of pupils in 9 out of 17 secondary schools

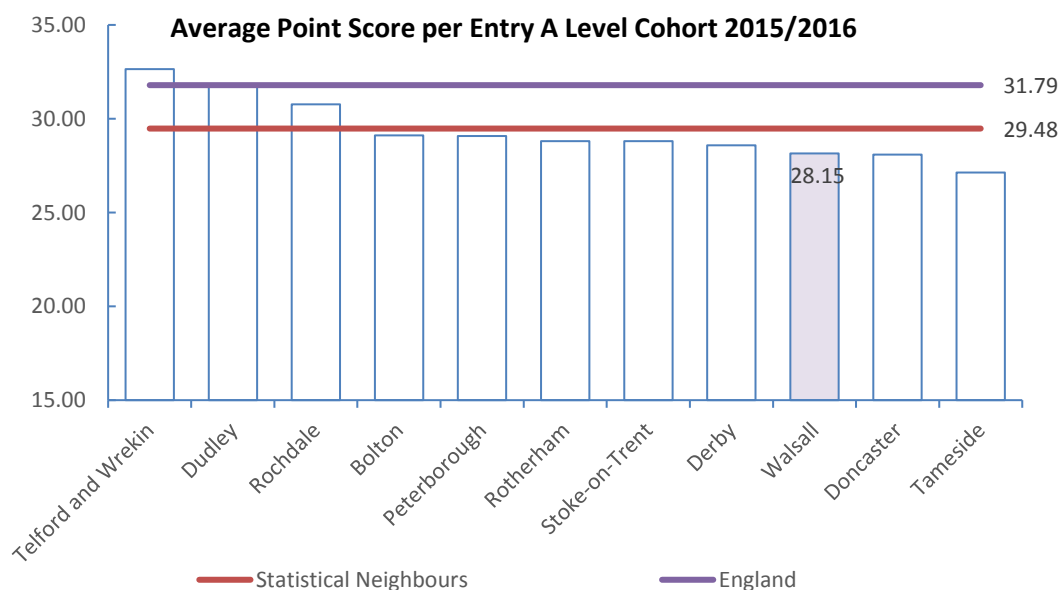
in Walsall passing English and maths with an A\* - C grade are higher than the national average 58% (see Figure 7).



**Figure 7: Key Stage 4 (GCSE) - Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A\*-C grades in English and Maths (Source: DfE January 2017)**

### KS5 Indicators:

For 2016 the average points score per candidate is no longer a key measure and is no longer reported by the DfE. The A Level points system has changed significantly in 2016 which means comparison to previous years is not possible. Average score achieved by Walsall students aged 16-18 years old was 28.15, lower than the national average 31.79, SN level 29.48 and West Midlands average 29.70, ranked 111 nationally in in quartile band D for this measure (See Figure 8).



**Figure 8: Key Stage 5 (A/AS Level) - Average Point Score per Candidate (Source: DfE, January 2017)**

Based on the latest 2016 data the APS per entry for All Level 3 qualifications in Walsall is slightly less than our statistical neighbours and below national by 1.4 points. Areas where Walsall achieves higher than national are for tech level (+ 7.74 points) and applied general qualifications (+3.76 points).

| All Level 3                    | 2016  |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Walsall (exc. Walsall College) | 31.05 |
| Walsall Rank                   | 94    |
| West Midlands                  | 32.08 |
| Statistical Neighbours         | 31.10 |
| National                       | 32.41 |

### Tech Level Points per Entry

| Tech Level PPE                 | 2016  |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Walsall (exc. Walsall College) | 38.51 |
| Walsall Rank                   | 46    |
| West Midlands                  | 38.15 |
| Statistical Neighbours         | 36.98 |
| National                       | 30.77 |

### Applied Level Points per Entry

| Applied General PPE            | 2016  |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Walsall (exc. Walsall College) | 38.45 |
| Walsall Rank                   | 55    |
| West Midlands                  | 39.37 |
| Statistical Neighbours         | 38.53 |
| National                       | 34.69 |

There is a mixed picture for A level outcomes in 2015/2016 according to the new measures. The LA's outcomes for average points score per entry for the best 3 A levels was 33.81, higher than the SN level 33.09 and West Midlands average 33.37, which ranks the LA 63rd nationally, and in quartile band B (See Figure 9).

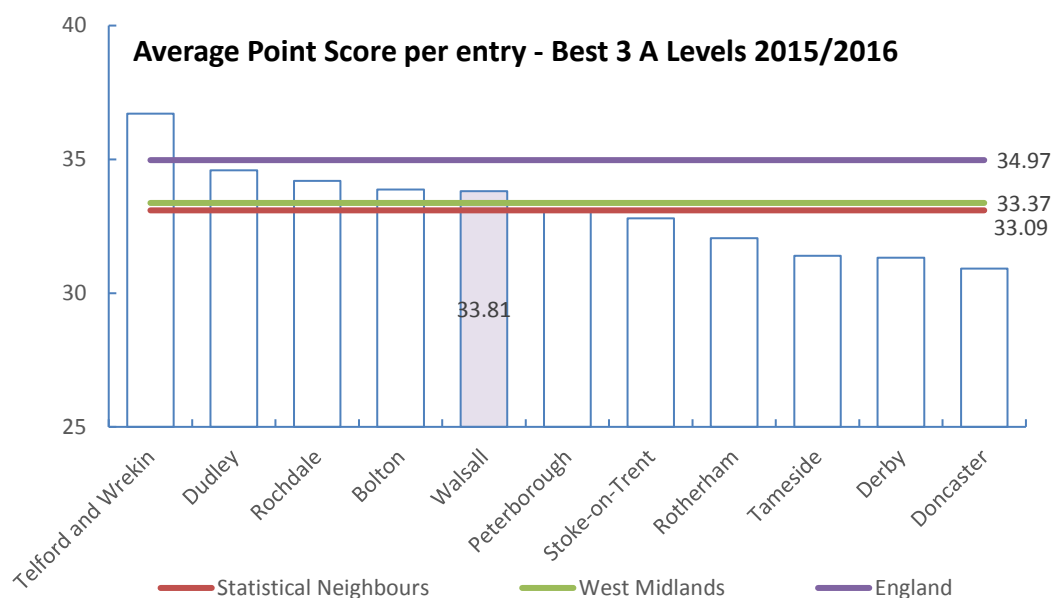


Figure 9: Key Stage 5 (A/AS Level) - Average Point Score per Entry  
(Source: DfE, January 2017)

It is recognised that good attainment at A/AS level or equivalent is equally important to access further education opportunities and/or employment opportunities. Walsall is faced with the challenge of closing the gap between Walsall and regional/national levels.

## **Priorities for Action:**

*Target support and challenge schools in inverse proportion to success, to address underperformance. In particular,*

- *Raise standards in all primary and secondary schools, and accelerate the progress pupils make so that their achievement at least matches national figures.*
- *Close the achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others, and improve the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs or disability so they make at least as much progress as other pupils nationally.*
- *Use assessment information and other key performance indicators to identify those schools at greatest risk of decline, including those that had previously been subject to 'light touch' support.*
- *Promote and broker school to school and cluster support including the use of expert practitioners in Walsall and beyond. Teaching Schools and National Leaders of Education provide significant additional resource.*

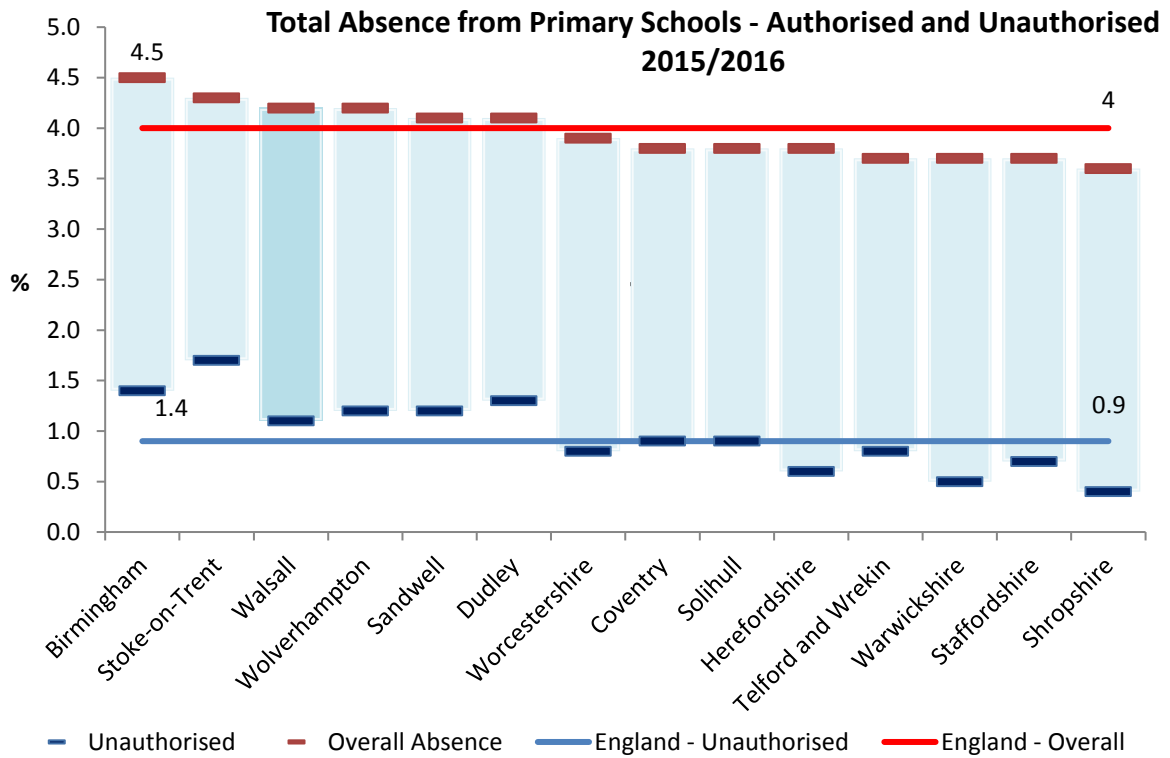
### **3.1.2 School attendance**

School attendance is crucial to future well-being, as it is linked to attainment and to social inclusion. Absence rates are the key to addressing attainment as evidence shows there is a strong correlation between achievement and absence. Absence rates in both primary and secondary schools in Walsall are recorded through the number of half days missed, both authorised and unauthorised, by children of compulsory school age.

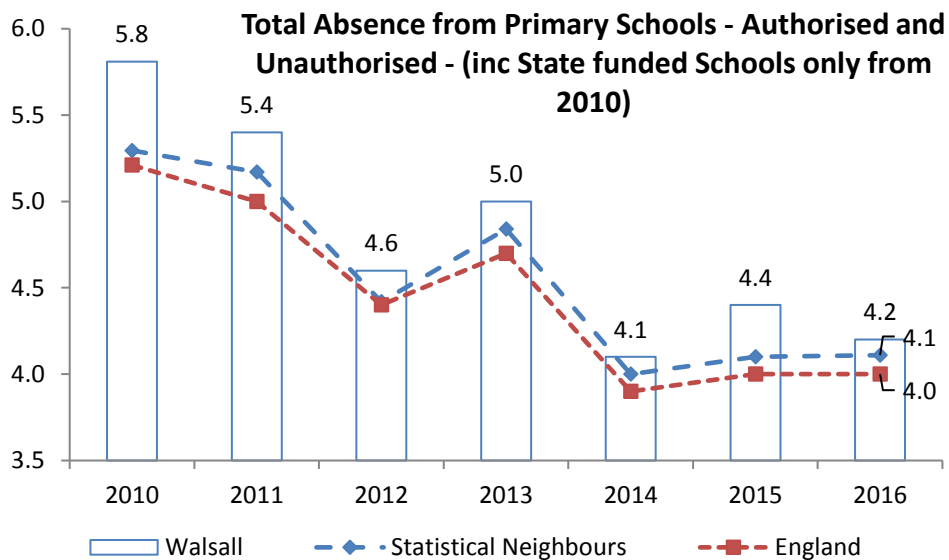
#### **Indicators:**

In Walsall, absence from Primary schools has remained consistently in the bottom quartile despite reductions over time (because other councils are reducing faster) (see Figure 7).

Primary total absence for Walsall decreased slightly to 4.2% in 2015/16 from 4.4% in 2014/15, third highest in WM 14 local authorities, which is higher than West Midlands average 4% and England 4% respectively. Despite this increase in primary absence, the LA is now ranked 104th nationally - an improvement of 3 places from 2015 (see Figure 10 and Figure 11). The LA is now in quartile band C.



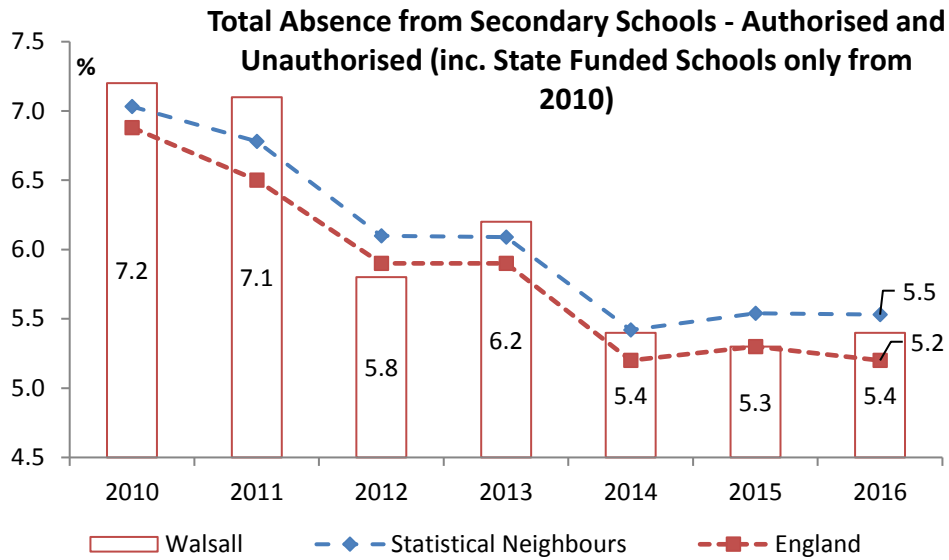
**Figure 10 - Overall Primary school absence rate 202015/2016 in WM**  
(Source: DfE March 2017)



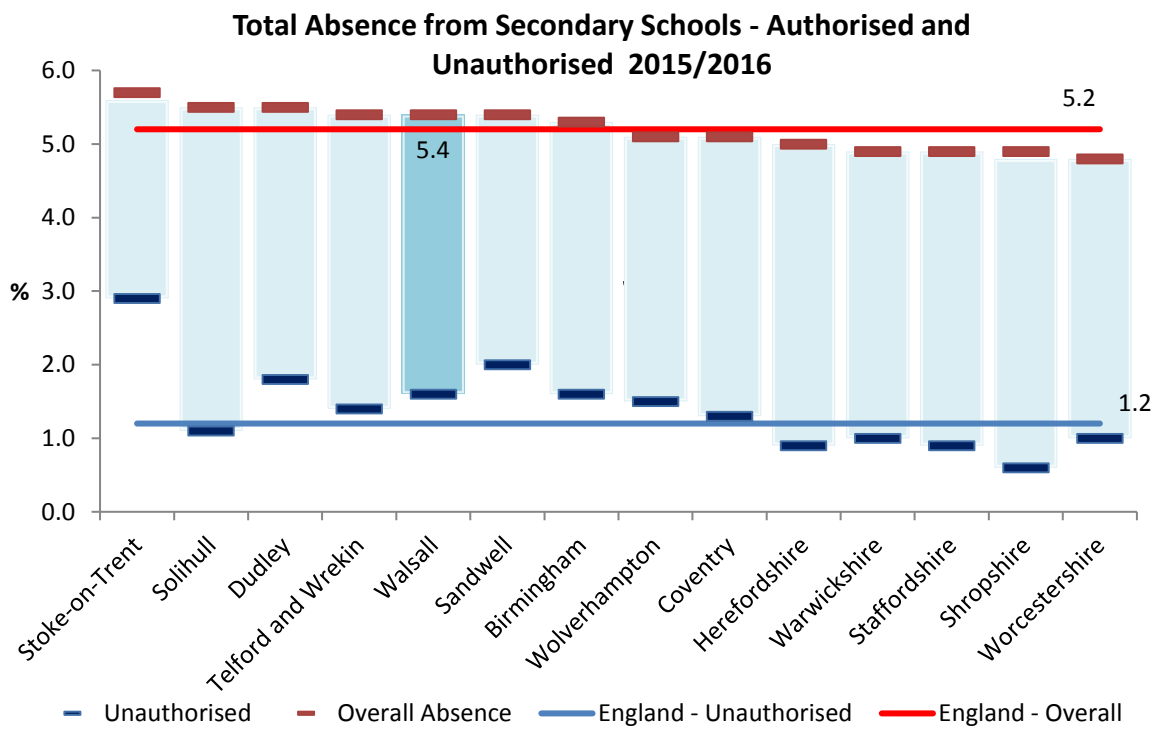
**Figure 11: Overall Primary School Absence 2010-2016**  
(Source: DfE March 2017)

In 2015/2016, the secondary schools' total absence also slightly creased from 5.3% in 2014/15 to 5.4%. This is slightly higher than West Midlands average 5.2%, equal to the national 5.2% and lower than the SN 5.5%. The LA now provisionally ranks 98th in quartile band C nationally - an improvement of 5 places from 2015. (see Figure 12 and Figure 13).



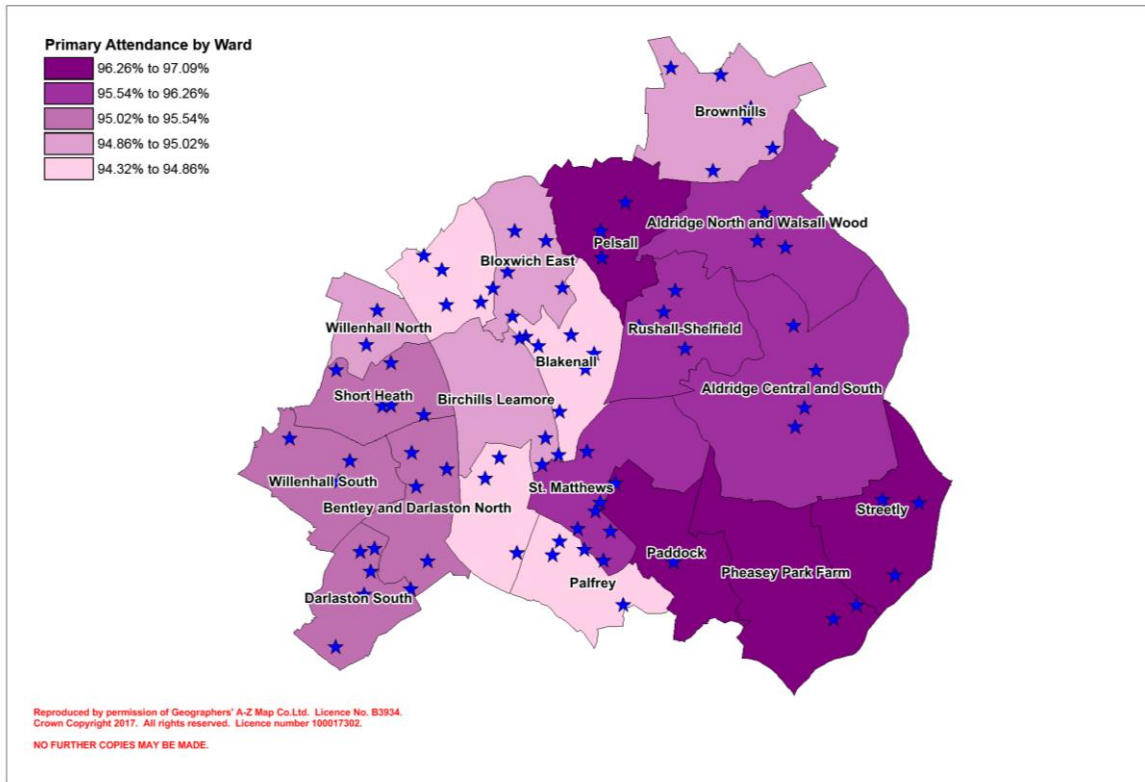


**Figure 12: Secondary School Absences 2010-2016**  
(Source: DfE March 2017)



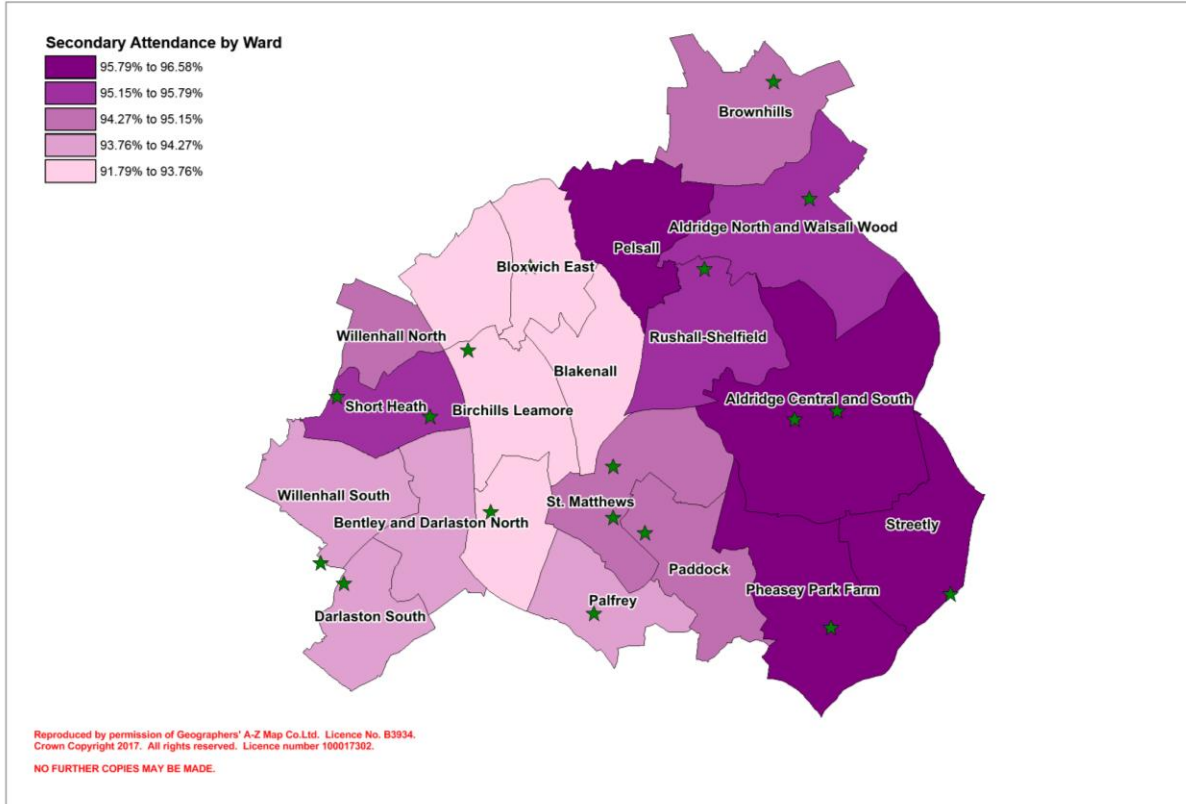
**Figure 13: Overall Secondary School Absence Rate in WM 2015/2016**  
(Source: DfE March 2017)

There is a correlation between school absence and deprivation – Figure 14 and Figure 5 show wards with the lowest levels (lighter shading) of attendance in both primary and secondary schools are also those wards with higher levels of deprivation than the Walsall average.



**Figure 14: Primary School % of attendance by ward 2015/2016**  
 (Source: Capita One Pupil Database)

**Figure 15: Secondary School % of attendance by ward 2015/2016**



(Source: Capita One Pupil Database)

## **Priorities for Action:**

### **Sharing and learning best practice**

Commissioning of Attendance Officer support through clusters is developing. This means that standards being applied across the geographic area including decisions for authorising absence or not is guided through a consistent approach, set out in agreed policies.

In addition, where there are good systems in schools set up for tracking and monitoring absence, this is identified and shared with other schools across Walsall who have ineffective systems in place.

### **Attendance in social care settings**

There is Education Welfare representation in a variety of multi-agency settings such as MASH and PLO and therefore increases the opportunities for prioritising attendance. This provides an opportunity to share school attendance records of individual C&YP at the point of a case referred into MASH. This information forms part of the screening process.

In respect of the PLO process school attendance features from information shared by schools or the Education Welfare Service officers. In addition there is an Education Panel set up as a joint venture with YJS for the children with irregular attendance. This provides an opportunity to work jointly with the young person, parent, school and officers of the Access service and YJS where attendance is prioritised. In addition this panel provides an opportunity to challenge schools on the level of support offered to this group and arrange support for parents as standard practice.

All persistently absent children are tracked and monitored regularly and all chronic absentees are screened each term through supervision to ensure level of agency support is in place. For example, ensuring children with mental health are referred to CAMHS.

Early Help is encouraged to engage other professionals when there are more complex issues arising. All officers contribute to core groups or case conferences.

### **Targeted interventions**

93% of Walsall schools commission attendance support from the Education Welfare Service. However, information is still requested from all schools for operational and advisory purposes. The Attendance Officers work within a defined graduated process within the commissioned time which entails identifying and targeting C&YP at risk of becoming a persistent absentee. In addition, where there is social care concerns, referrals to MASH are instigated.

Schools commission support at varying number of hours dependent on budget and priority. Secondary schools commission the most time generally between 6 and 21 hours per week. Special schools raised their weekly support for 2014/15. Primary schools are supported between 2 hours per fortnight to 6 hours per week. This is reflected in the latest published

absence data. This data demonstrates that persistent absence in secondary schools is now 0.1% better than national average and in line with the national average for overall absence.

There is a rising trend for special schools overall absence being 0.2% better than national average. Persistent absence has decreased by 2.3% which is against the rising national trend, although Special school PA is 1.8% above national average. The gap for the same period in 2013/14 was 4.9%, a closure of 3.1%.

### **Liaison with School Improvement Service**

Close liaison continues between the Access & Attendance team and the School Improvement services through attendance at joint team meetings which provides opportunities to share intelligence. Data held on education management system (Capita one) is used as operational data which is available on the shared area with updates each term. Data profiles about each school which contain information about the numbers of vulnerable children for each school, including persistent absence are updated each term and these are used to quantify the information shared.