



Inequalities in the school years

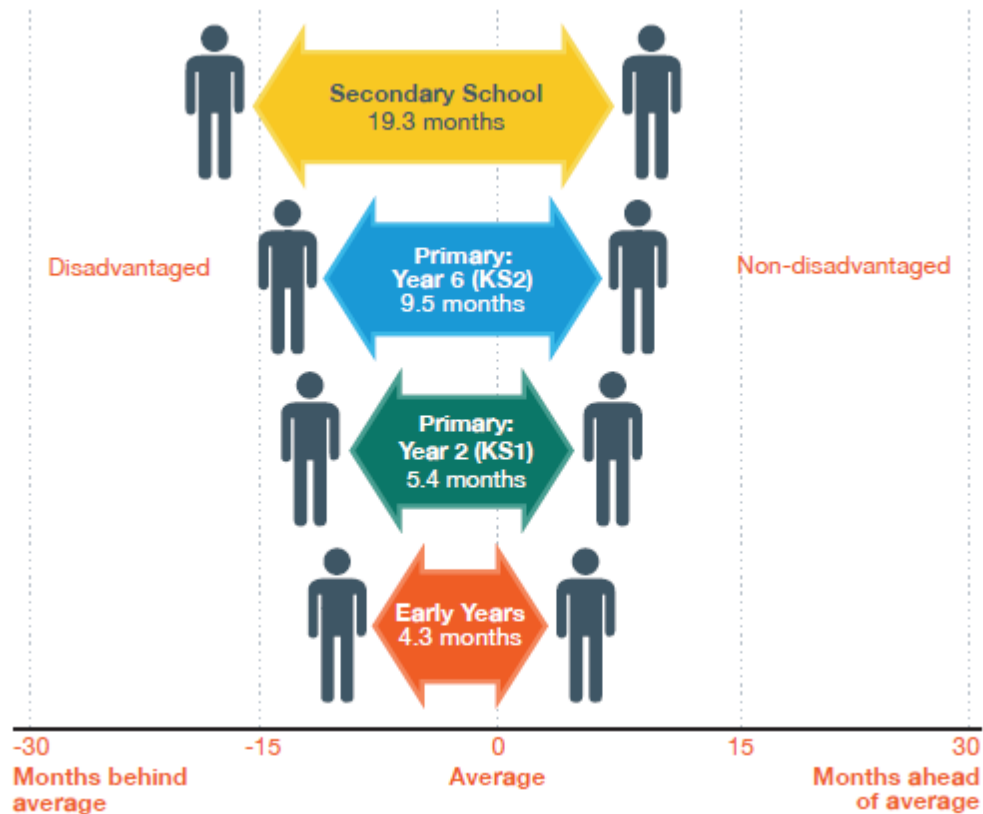
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Attainment gaps in school



Source: EEF (2018): The Attainment Gap 2017.



Current ISER Research

- The school years: outcomes are ‘produced’ or observed in pre-school, primary or secondary school
- Outcomes: skills, behaviours, health/wellbeing
- Data sources
 - Understanding Society data with linked education records and school-level characteristics
 - DfE National Pupil Database linked to school-level data
 - Others: e.g. Millennium Cohort Study, Aberdeen Children of the 1950s...



Overview

- The early years
 - Breastfeeding
 - Free childcare provision
 - Universal Infant Free School Meals
 - Parental investments
- Later years
 - School spending
 - Sibling spillover effects
 - Grammar schools
 - Ofsted inspections and parental inputs



Overview

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 - **Sibling spillover effects**
 - Grammar schools
 - **Ofsted inspections and parental inputs**



1. Sibling spillovers

- Siblings share a lot: genes, parents, neighbourhood, often schools
- That makes siblings quite similar
- Is there a direct influence from the older to the younger?
- Yes! Achievement of older spills over to younger sibling

The Observer

How firstborns can raise a sibling's game

Big brother is helping you ... success of eldest child can have 'spillover' effect, boosting exam results of their younger brothers and sisters



▲ Andy Murray quickly outstripped his elder brother Jamie, right. Photograph: Masatoshi Okauchi/Rex Features

The stereotype has long held that firstborn children go on to be bossy high flyers who leave their younger siblings behind. It's a cliché some might dispute - from **David Miliband**, who watched his younger brother snatch the

MailOnline

The effect is even more pronounced in less well-off families showing poorer children benefit more from a having high-attaining older sibling.

One of the study's authors Birgitta Rabe explained: 'The older sibling's achievement may have a direct effect on the younger sibling's school grades if the older sibling teaches the younger sibling or helps with homework; the younger sibling imitates the older sibling, for example in their work style, or conversely tries to be different, for example to avoid competition the older sibling passes on important information about educational choices or school and teachers to the younger sibling.'

'We find that the spillover effect is larger for siblings in families eligible for free school meals, living in deprived neighbourhoods and speaking a language other than English at home.'

'This means that children from more deprived backgrounds benefit more from a high attaining older sibling than children from more affluent backgrounds.'



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Older Miliband brother David, right, was tipped to be the Labour party leader but was pipped to the post by younger brother Ed



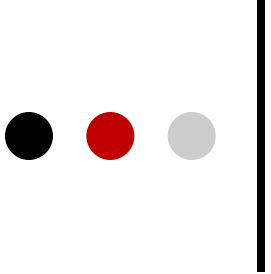
Implications for inequality

- Good news:
 - Spillovers larger for high- than low- attaining older sibling
 - Pattern is the same in high and low income families



Implications for inequality

- Less good news:
 - Children in low-income families less likely to have high-attaining older sibling
 - Being born into a low income family reduces students' attainment, while being born into high income family increases it.
 - Explains 8.4% of attainment gap
 - Sibling spillovers mean that interventions that improve the attainment of all children are likely to increase attainment gaps



2. How do parents respond to Ofsted inspections?

- Schools and parents both invest into children's human capital
 - If public investments increase/improve, are parents' efforts driven out? Or enhanced?
 - Important question for public policy
- Look at how parents respond to unexpected news from school Ofsted inspections



Findings



- Parents who receive **good** news about school quality **reduce** their own effort
 - This is driven by higher-educated and non-white households
 - Parents do not respond much to negative news, suggesting they are pessimistic to start with
- Public investments drive out private ones.



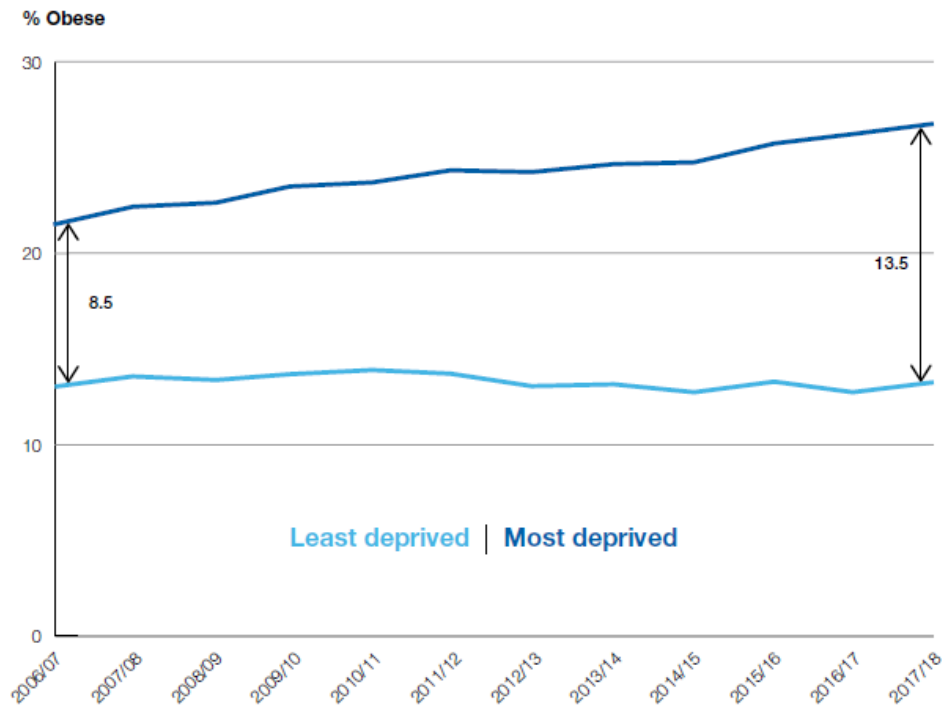
Implications for inequality

How does providing school quality information affect parental investments overall?

- Parents react more to good than bad news – reduces level of help with homework by 14%
- Higher ranked schools more likely to receive good news – reduces inequality in parents' inputs across schools by 15%

Obesity gaps in children

10-11 year olds, by area deprivation



Source: Chief Medical Officer Report, 2019

Free School Meals

- Children spend a lot of time in school, meals can be lever to tackle obesity
- Since 2008: school meals have high nutritional standards and limits on portion sizes
- Only 1% of packed lunches meet food standards
- Free school meals given only to low-income children





Universal Infant Free School Meals

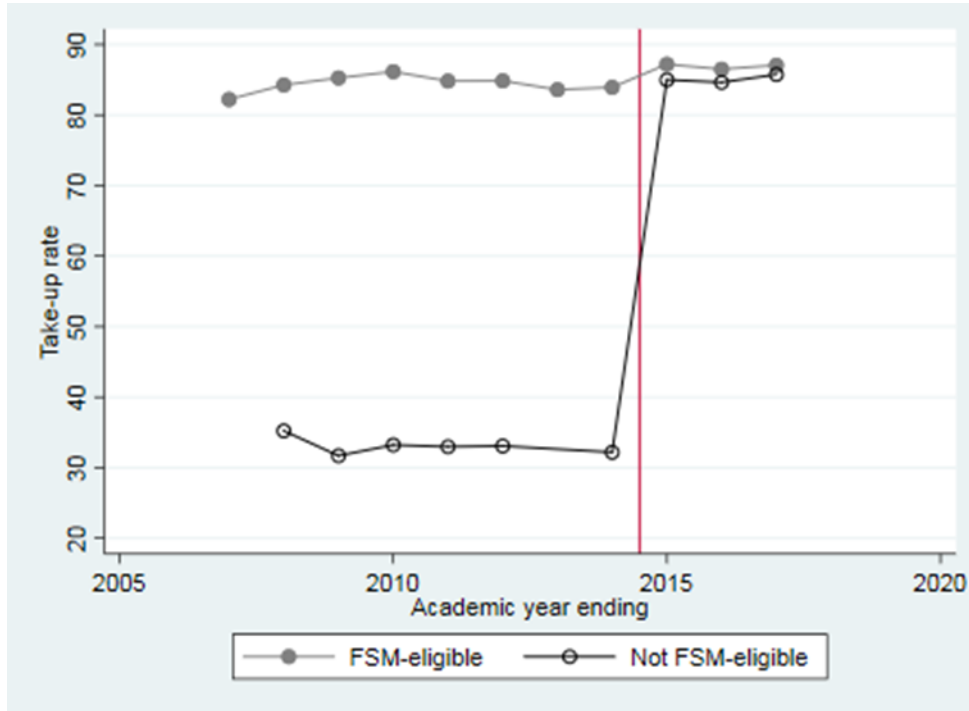
- From Sep 2014: free school meal for all children in first 3 school years
- Aim: access to a healthy meal a day and develop long-term healthy eating habits

Effect at end of first school year:

- 1%pt increase in healthy weight prevalence (base:76%)
- 0.75%pt reduction in obesity prevalence (base:10%)
- Large compared to several other policies

Implications for inequality

Change in take-up of meals by FSM status:



- Not previously eligible children seem to drive effect
- Suggests diets of relatively well-off students can be improved
- Policy may worsen health inequalities



Conclusions

- Interventions in the school years can affect gaps between children.
- Understanding how decisions made by parents, children and schools interact helps us design better interventions.
- Sometimes helpful interventions end up worsening childhood inequalities.

