

Sheffield Performance ‘Punching Above Our Weight’

There is much to be proud of again in the 2017 educational performance of Sheffield. Performance across the system, from Early Years through to A-level, has Sheffield broadly in line with national outcomes and performing well when compared to both our context and to similar places across the country. This position has been arrived at through a steady improvement over recent years and leaves Sheffield in a very different place in the rankings than it used to be, when the city regularly featured in the bottom quarter of local authority areas – not anymore!

There are twenty key measures, which span from early years to post-16 stages of education, and our analysis is based on how Sheffield performs in these when compared to national outcomes and similar places. Sheffield is equal to or above the national average in half of these measures, which is why we describe the performance of the city as being broadly in line with national outcomes.

Sheffield is at or above national in 50% of the twenty headline education measures.

Sheffield is in the top half of LAs in 35% of measures, is above city ranking for child poverty for 80% and only in the bottom quarter for 10%.

When compared to all local authority areas, Sheffield is no longer amongst the weaker performers. Sixteen measures (80%) see Sheffield ranked higher than its Child Poverty ranking (which is 112 out of the 152 places). There are only two measures in the bottom quarter, whilst we have seven measures (35%) which are in the top half of Local Authorities. The average ranking across the measures is 87th, which is twenty-five places higher than the Child Poverty Ranking and only ten places below the middle. Quite a difference

from the days when most rankings were below the deprivation rankings and down at the bottom of the list.

Performance in comparison with the other seven core cities is also strong, with Sheffield ranked in the top three in fourteen measures (70%). This includes three measures where the City is the highest ranked Core City and a further five where it is ranked second. This contrasts with only two measure where Sheffield is in the bottom two core cities.

Sheffield is in the top three core cities for 70% of measures and only in the bottom three for 15%. Amongst statistical neighbours Sheffield is in the top three for 45% and only in the bottom three for 5% of measures.

When Sheffield is compared to its statistical neighbours (a list of eleven places that the government identifies as being similar to us) we are in the top five for thirteen measures (65%). On this list Sheffield is in the top three rankings for nine measures (45%) but only ranked in the bottom three in one measure.

Whilst we should congratulate our education community on the outcomes of their hard work, we should also remain focussed on the areas for improvement. In many ways, our improved position makes it easier to see those areas that we need to improve in the future, as they now stand out more clearly.

We are doing well with our youngest children, with Sheffield first or second amongst the core cities for every measure in early years (Foundation Stage) and key stage one (Year 2). The weakest outcome in our data however is the Year 1 phonics test, where we are 4% points below the national average and ranked 140, and so this remains a focus for us.

70% of Sheffield Foundation Stage children achieved a 'good level of development' ... 1% point below national and ranked 2nd of core cities.

60% of Sheffield children achieved 'expected (national) standard' in reading, writing and maths at the end of KS2 (Y6) ... 1% point below national and ranked 3rd of core cities.

Outcomes at the end of the primary phases in Key Stage 2 (Year 6) have continued to improve, with progress measures in all subjects above national average but attainment tending to be just below national. The second weakest measure for Sheffield is the Y6 SATs test in Grammar Punctuation and Spelling, which is the other outcome that places Sheffield in the bottom quarter of LAs (ranked 129).

Whilst we are discussing our priorities, we are also focussed on reading across the primary school age range. Sheffield is much improved in these measures (ranked first and third amongst core cities) but we still recognise that it is the weakest of our core subjects in key stages one and two (likely to be 2% points below national in both).

In the secondary phase Sheffield can again be proud of the progress that pupils make. The Local Authority ranking for the KS4 (GCSE) Progress 8 measure is 56, which is in the top half of LAs nationally. We are second amongst the core cities for this headline measure, which was above the national average for the second consecutive year.

Sheffield's 'Progress 8' score was +0.01 ... this is above national and ranked 2nd of core cities.

The KS4 (GCSE) Attainment 8 outcome was also above national for the first time and Sheffield was in the top three core cities for four out of the five measures in Key Stage 4 (GCSE) and Key Stage 5 (A-level).

Our area for improvement in secondary comes when we look at the progress of specific pupil groups. Sheffield, in common with most places, is not seeing gaps closing fast enough for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities). Attainment and progress of white British disadvantaged pupils is a particular concern for us across the education system, as it is nationally.

So, in conclusion, much to be proud of and some clear areas to improve. I read in the local press that Sheffield is 'punching above its weight' in education and this seems to be a fair conclusion with regards to the 2017 performance data. Well done to all of our children and young people, their families, teachers, school leaders and everyone else who supports their learning.

Stephen Betts (Chief Executive, Learn Sheffield)

Follow Learn Sheffield ... @learnsheffield 

More analysis ... www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Articles/Performance-Review-2017