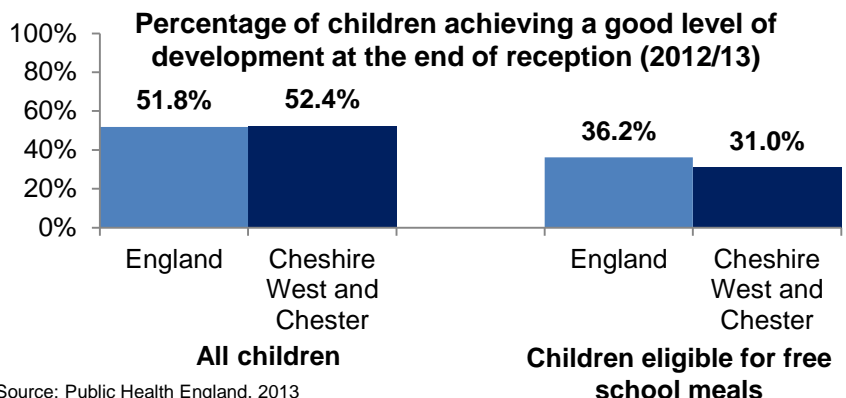




Cheshire West and Chester Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

School readiness is defined by Ofsted as having a firm grounding in a range of skills including communication. In Cheshire West and Chester, by the end of reception year, 61% of children achieved a good level of development (2013/14). This is similar to the England average of 60%.

2012/13 data show that by the end of reception year, 52.4% of children achieved a good level of development, similar to the England average of 51.7%. However, the percentage of children with free school meal status achieving a good level was 31%, this is significantly worse than the England rate of 36.2% (2012/13) (data for 2013/14 is currently unavailable).



Source: Public Health England, 2013

The proportion of children receiving free school meals and considered ready for school was 21.4 percentage points lower than the average percentage considered ready for school in Cheshire West and Chester, in 2012/13.

School readiness is also measured by the ability of the child to meet the expected level in a phonics screening check. The check consists of 40 words and non-words that the child will be asked to read.

In Cheshire West and Chester, 74% of year one pupils achieved the expected level in the phonics screening check which is the same as the England average (2013/14). The percentage of children with free school meal status who achieved the expected level in the phonics screening check was 56%. This is significantly worse than the England average of 61%.

School readiness	England		Cheshire West and Chester	
	All pupils	Pupils eligible for free school meals	All pupils	Pupils eligible for free school meals
% of children receiving a good level of development (2012/13)	51.70%	36.20%	52.40%	31%
% of year one pupils achieving the expected level in the phonics screening check (2013/14)	74%	61%	74%	56%

Evidence of what works

Ofsted examples of good practice:

- Providers who forge strong partnerships with parents and carers to develop the home learning environment, help improve the child's progress.
- Vulnerable children need the best provision, but quality is often weakest in areas of highest deprivation. Providers who have quickly identified children at risk and supported parents through the transition period helps to reverse this trend
- Specific programmes of support and intervention to develop speaking, listening and communication skills, led by speech and language therapists.
- Staff speaking clearly, and understanding the importance of giving opportunities for children to speak, in sentences, to ask questions, and engage in role-play.
- Schools working with children's centres to ensure gains made by disadvantaged children, in early years settings, are not set back over the summer holidays.

Recommended actions

Ofsted recommend:

- Multi-agency working to engage vulnerable parents and target support where it is most needed.
- Providers working closely with parents and carers through the transition period, to increase parental understanding of what is expected in terms of school readiness and provide information and guidance on how best to get their child ready.
- Discrete adult-directed teaching sessions to small groups of children.
- Use of Pupil Premium funding to ensure the early identification and specialist support for children.
- Timely and accurate assessment of a child's baseline starting point.

Rationale: Gaps in achievement between the poorest children and their counterparts are clearly established by the age of five. There are strong associations between a child's social background and their readiness for school on entry into year one. A number of children who start school behind their peers will never catch up (Ofsted).