

Source: The Independent News, <http://www.independent.co.uk/>, October 27th 2000

## **Black Pupils 'Losing Out' in Drive to Raise Standards**

**By Ben Russell, Education Correspondent**

Startling new evidence that ethnic minorities are losing out in the drive to raise school standards was published by inspectors yesterday.

Researchers expressed alarm after an analysis of exam results found black children falling further behind their white counterparts as they progressed through school.

In one borough, black children were 20 percentage points ahead of the local average on baseline assessment tests carried out when they started primary school. But by the time they took their GCSEs, they lagged more than 20 points behind the norm.

A report, commissioned by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), said: "That any ethnic group could enter school 20 percentage points in advance of the average but leave 21 points behind opens up an important area for educational debate on ethnic minority achievement."

Analysis of test and exam results in a further five boroughs also found black pupils were falling behind as they progressed through schools. The report does not name the boroughs concerned. All ethnic groups had improved standards, but the overall gap between Afro-Caribbean and Pakistani pupils and whites was nearly double that of a decade ago.

The report pointed to research which has "consistently highlighted ways in which black pupils are stereotyped and face additional barriers to academic success".

The researchers, David Gillborn, of the London University Institute of Education, and Heidi Safisa Mirza, of Middlesex University, added: "Available evidence suggests that the inequalities of attainment for African-Caribbean pupils become progressively greater as they move through the school system."

The report was based on the first test comparisons between the races. But researchers expressed concern that only six authorities could provide full test comparisons.

Chris Myant, of the Commission for Racial Equality, said: "We are beginning to get some statistics to back up what educationalists have been saying for some time, which is there is relative under-achievement and may be problems with some groups as a result of their school experience."

The Schools minister Jacqui Smith said "more needed to be done" but added a new monitoring system would track pupils through school and help officials to target support.

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