

Thinking about inequality

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The United Kingdom (UK) is a shockingly unequal society.

Government statistics show that in 2019 the numbers of children living in absolute poverty had risen by 200,000 in a year to a total of 3.7 million.

In England, the experience of education for children depends on where you live

The strong link between social disadvantage and poor educational outcomes is well documented in the research literature as have been the effects of poverty on young people's mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Evidence from empirical research studies and statistical analyses has repeatedly shown that the most economically disadvantaged students and or with a special educational need (SEN) have the poorest educational outcomes in England in terms of educational achievement and emotional wellbeing.

Children's experience of schooling is heavily influenced by the level of disadvantage that they face in their lives and their social class positions still heavily influence the opportunities open to them.

Cooper and Stewart (2013), in a systematic review of the literature, found that money makes a significant difference to the material outcomes of children's lives.

School absence rates in England are higher for pupils claiming free school meals (FSM): 7.6%, compared to 4.3% for non FSM pupils. The persistent absence rate for pupils who were eligible for FSM of 23.6% was more than twice the rate for those pupils not eligible.

Research has also shown that in England educational inequalities surface in the preschool years, but that they continue to widen in both primary and secondary school years.

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The overwhelming evidence in England is that the potential of many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is not currently met by school systems.

Then there is a new scheme called the National Databank, to get people who are digitally excluded because they can't afford to be connected to the internet.

Run by Bracknell Forest Council and Funded by the Department of Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Someone receiving data through the National Databank must be:

- 18+ years old
- From a low-income household

And qualify in at least one of the following statements:

- Has no access or insufficient access to the internet at home.
- Has no or insufficient access to the internet when away from the home.
- Cannot afford their existing monthly contract or top up