

NOTICE OF MOTION	Date of Council Meeting: 04/11/26
	Mover: Councillor Yasseen
	Seconded: Councillor Bower
	Title of Motion: Education Emergency (A generation of warnings, too little action: we need practical support for disadvantaged children, families & communities)

That this Council notes:

- Educational inequality can emerge in the early years and widen through school and into further education, training and work. This is a longstanding emergency, not a new or sudden issue: evidence and warnings have accumulated over a generation, while too many barriers remain.
- Rotherham's overall attainment is often close to or above the national average but this masks significantly poorer outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and areas. National evidence shows particularly low attainment and progression among White British boys eligible for free school meals; local data should establish whether the same pattern exists in Rotherham.
- In 2024/25, 44.2% of Rotherham children eligible for free school meals achieved a Good Level of Development at age five, compared with 64.9% of all children. The report also records a 14.4 percentage point early years gender gap, with boys less likely than girls to achieve this measure.
- In 2024/25, the KS2 reading, writing and maths gap between disadvantaged pupils and others was 25.7 percentage points in Rotherham, compared with 21.7 nationally.
- In 2025/26, 45.2% of pupils eligible for free school meals met the standard in this measure, well below the Borough average of 61.8% and 48.4% of eligible pupils nationally.
- Rotherham's 2025 Attainment 8 score was 41.8, compared with 46.2 nationally; and 30.7% for children eligible for free school meals, well below the Borough average.
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (2025) identifies 17.2% of Rotherham children aged 0–15 as living in neighbourhoods among the 5% most deprived nationally for education, skills and training, including 7.6% in the most deprived 1%.
- Nearly half of Rotherham's children aged 0-15 live in income deprived families: 46% (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index 2026) , compared with 38% nationally. Ofsted reports that 13,132 pupils (31.5%) are eligible for free school meals, compared with 27.4% nationally. Council figures show that 12,650 children were FSM-eligible in 2023/24, an 84% increase since 2015/16.
- Rotherham's 2022/23 higher education progression rate was 38% by age 19, compared with 48% nationally. The latest national figures show that 28.6% of

FSM-eligible pupils had entered higher education by age 19 by 2024/25, falling to 13% for FSM-eligible White British boys (least likely to progress to higher education). These gaps underline the need for practical, needs based support across all communities.

- The Council's 'No Family Left Behind' Strategy, developed following a motion passed in September 2024 (Led by Cllr Yasseen and Cllr Currie) provides an existing framework for joining work on child poverty and family educational success.
- Sheffield Hallam University launched the South Yorkshire Boys' Impact Hub in February 2026, it brings together educators, researchers and policymakers to address educational barriers facing boys and young men from lower income backgrounds.
- SYMCA already brings education and employment partners together through its Aspiring Pathways programme.

That this Council believes:

- Every child and young person has talents and potential which deserve to be realised. Poverty, low ambition and other disadvantages often restrict the opportunity to develop them but should not determine a young person's future.
- That Rotherham should be a Child Centred Borough where the resources of the Council and its partners are harnessed to support every child to be the best they can.
- The educational disadvantage facing too many children has been visible for a generation. Repeated warnings have not been matched by sustained action at the scale required. This is an educational emergency and a systemic failure that demands practical action from national and local governments.
- Rotherham Children's progress depends on families, schools and communities being supported to work together. Families should be treated as partners with aspirations, and offered hands on help to navigate learning, choices and routes after 16.
- The Council cannot direct all schools, many of which are academies but it can use its convening role to bring schools, universities, colleges, families, employers and community organisations together and align support across education, early years, Family Hubs, health, skills and anti-poverty work.
- Success means more than monitoring gaps or examination results. It means providing practical help that improves learning, belonging, wellbeing, and seeing more young people confidently progress into further education, apprenticeships, higher education and secure work.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Education, setting out that educational disadvantage has been documented over a generation but gaps persist and calling for sustained national action, long term investment and transparent reporting on progress, including action to address the effects of child poverty on learning and progression.
2. Ask Cabinet to make improving educational opportunity a delivery priority within the 'No Family Left Behind' Strategy, linking family poverty work with

education, skills and post-16 progression and building on existing services rather than creating a separate strategy.

3. Request that OSMB review how the Council and its partners can improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people, with particular attention to barriers affecting boys and young men from lower income backgrounds. The review should examine available local attainment and higher education progression data by disadvantage, FSM eligibility, sex and ethnicity; consider whether national patterns among FSM-eligible White British boys are reflected in Rotherham; and assess the merits and feasibility of one or more local pilots to address underperformance.