

Press release

Tuesday 14 March 2017

NEW REPORT EXPOSES QUALIFICATION CRISIS FOR 16-19 YEAR OLDS

A new report launching today¹ calls for additional funding for 16-19 education as only 12% of students who fail to attain an A*-C in English and maths at 16 go on to do so by 19.

And when also considering GCSE equivalents, this figure still only increases to less than a quarter (22%) of pupils being successful by age 19.

In fact, young people are five times more likely to pass their driving test at 17 than catch up on GCSEs².

This is despite government policies put in place to encourage all in this age group to secure GCSEs in these subjects.

Life after school: Confronting the crisis, a report by youth and education charity Impetus-PEF, shows that GCSE catch-up provision is not working for young people who need to attain these grades post-16, irrespective of their background or where they study.

While catch-up rates for all young people are poor, the outlook is worse for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Amongst those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and who do not secure grade C or above at 16, only 17% catch up in English by 19; and just 8% catch up in maths. In comparison, of their peers who are *not* eligible for FSM, 25% catch up in English by age 19; and 13% catch up in maths.

Impetus-PEF's report also found that all providers struggle to help young people catch up, but Further Education (FE) colleges face the greatest challenges providing for this group of young students and therefore present the poorest catch-up rates. FE colleges serve three times more catch up students (124,982) than schools (38,657) and ten times more students than sixth-form colleges (12,924); this has put pressure on timetabling, facilities, recruitment and teaching. In addition, there are 15,000 fewer people teaching in FE colleges than six years ago³.

Andy Ratcliffe, Chief Executive of Impetus-PEF, says: "Re-sitting maths and English GCSEs should be a second chance for young people to succeed. It should be a sequel with a happy ending. Instead it's normally a re-run, a second chance to fail.

We need to give schools and colleges the support and incentives to help all young people get the qualifications they need, whatever their backgrounds."

Dr. Rebecca Allen, Director of Education Datalab, says: "From our research, there's no doubt that FE colleges face extraordinary pressures which show in their students' catch-up results. Only 13% go on to pass English and just 5% go on to pass maths by 19 through FE colleges. This compares to 32% passing English and 18% passing maths at sixth form colleges. Young people attempting these qualifications deserve the best chance to succeed and they're not getting it."

Impetus-PEF acknowledges that the UK needs all young people to have good levels of literacy and numeracy and has developed five recommendations⁴ that could stop so many being left behind and funding is a vital and urgent priority.

The charity is calling on government to establish an ‘Excellence in English and maths fund’ to provide Further Education colleges, schools and sixth forms with an additional £935 per pupil retaking English and maths, with one half provided on enrolment, and one half on successful completion.

Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, says, “Without good English and maths qualifications, life after school is much tougher, with fewer options and less access to jobs and higher education. Our young people deserve the best chance to succeed. Giving catch-up providers extra funding and the right incentives will improve standards and resource. A must for our young people.”

Many students who drop out of FE colleges enrol on programmes with independent learning providers such as Impetus-PEF’s charity partners who serve disengaged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many young people they work with, on initial diagnosis, have Entry Level competencies akin to literacy and numeracy levels expected of primary school children.

ENDS

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Note to editors

Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation (Impetus-PEF) transforms the lives of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds by ensuring they get the support they need to succeed in education, in work, in life. They do this by finding, investing in and building the best charities working with these young people, helping them to have a bigger impact and by influencing the policy and resource decisions that impact their lives.

www.impetus-pef.org.uk

References:

- 1 Life After School is available for journalists now by emailing Louisa.struben@amazonpr.co.uk

It will be available to the public on www.impetus-pef.org.uk from 21 March following its launch to MPs at a Westminster event.

Impetus-PEF commissioned Education Datalab to analyse data available through the National Pupil Database (NPD) and Individualised Learner Records (ILR); in addition, field research was conducted with providers, learners and decision makers in the 16 -19 education sector.

- 2 [*DVLA: car driving test data*](#)
- 3 [*TES: Invest to secure the skills post-Brexit Britain needs*](#)

- 4 Impetus-PEF's five recommendations to confront this crisis in 16-19 education:
1. Government to retain its ambition for every 19-year-old to secure a Level 2 or higher in English and maths
 2. Additional funding for further education providers
 3. Publicising Functional Skills and developing it into a valued qualification
 4. Increasing supply of Further Education teachers
 5. Review of the gap in access, completion and progression amongst young people.

For more information please visit www.impetus-pef.org.uk/life-after-school