



# National Middle Schools' Forum

## Research Paper No 2

# Does reorganization lead to improved standards?

An examination of the evidence regarding the rate of improvement in standards in former three tier authorities that have reorganized, compared to that in authorities that have retained their middle school systems.

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## Does reorganization lead to improved standards?

It is often asserted that abolishing middle schools, and moving to a transfer from primary to secondary schools at age 11, will lead to improved standards of achievement. Recently on the Isle of Wight the following list of authorities have been referred to as examples where reorganization has led to improved standards:

Warwickshire  
Ealing  
Waltham Forest  
Surrey

These are all authorities that used to have 8 to 12 middle schools.

While standards have risen in these authorities, they have also been rising nationally.

In order to understand more clearly whether reorganization has led to better than might otherwise be expected improvements in standards this paper sets out to compare the improvements shown in these authorities with the improvements shown in systems where middle schools have been retained. In order to also include an authority with 9 to 13 middle schools I have also included Bradford.

The analysis looks at the available data at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 using figures in the national performance tables.

## Key Stage 4

Key Stage 4 performance figures are available from 1994 and so we can compare the improvement in achievement over the last 10 years in the authorities that have reorganised, compared with the improvement over the same period in authorities that have retained their middle school systems.

### Percentage of pupils gaining 5 levels A\*-C at GCSE

	1994	2004	Improvement
<b>Authorities which have reorganized to two tier</b>			
Bradford (9-13)	26.7%	39.8%	13.1
Warwickshire (8-12)	42.6%	54.3%	11.7
Ealing (8-12)	32.2%	53.0%	20.8
Waltham Forest (11-14)	30.1%	47.1%	17
Surrey (8-12)	47.8%	58.6%	10.8
<b>Authorities which have retained middle school systems</b>			
Suffolk (9-13)	44.1%	57.3%	13.2
Northumberland (9-13)	41.3%	56.2%	14.9
Bedfordshire (9-13)	40.3%	51.2%	10.9
<b>National</b>	<b>43.3%</b>	<b>53.7%</b>	<b>10.4</b>

Source [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables/index\\_archived.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables/index_archived.shtml)

- 1) The 9 to 13 authorities which have retained their middle schools have all shown improvements, over the 10 year period, that are above the national average improvement.
- 2) The range of rates of improvement are broadly similar. The improvement shown by Ealing is perhaps better than in other authorities, but it starts from a relatively low base.

## Key Stage 2

The first Key Stage 2 performance figures became available in 1996 and so in this case we can compare the improvement in performance over the last 8 years.

### Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 at Key Stage 2.

	1996				2004				Improvement
	Eng	Ma	Sci	Average	Eng	Ma	Sci	Average	
<b>Authorities which have reorganized to two tier</b>									
Bradford (9-13)	44.7	41.0	52.6	46.1	71.0	66.0	78.0	71.7	25.6
Warwickshire (8-12)	59.9	54.5	64.1	59.5	80.0	77.0	88.0	81.7	22.2
Ealing (8-12)	52.1	46.8	53.0	51.2	78	73	83	78	26.8
Waltham Forest (11-14)	48.2	46.3	55.4	50.0	73	69	80	74	24
Surrey (8-12)	67.8	61.4	72.6	67.2	85	79	91	85	17.8
<b>Authorities which have retained middle school systems</b>									
Suffolk (9-13)	57.6	54.0	65.1	58.9	77.0	71.0	85.0	77.7	18.8
Northumberland (9-13)	57.0	52.9	65.0	58.3	78.0	74.0	87.0	79.7	21.4
Bedfordshire (9-13)	57.4	52.5	54.6	54.8	79.0	72.0	86.0	79.0	24.2
<b>National</b>	<b>56.3</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>61.2</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>78.0</b>	<b>74.0</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>79.3</b>	<b>22.4</b>

- 1) Once again there is very little to choose between the rates of improvement in the results of the authorities which reorganised and those which have retained their middle school systems.
- 2) The rates of improvement taken together in the two groups of authorities are broadly in line with the improvement nationally.

## **Conclusions**

It would appear from the figures at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 that the improvements in achievement shown in the tables above are broadly similar in the two groups of authorities. Those authorities that have reorganised their middle schools systems do not show a marked difference in their rate of improvement of their results.

The authorities which have retained their middle school systems shows rates of improvement that are in line with or above that achieved overall nationally and are in line with those achieved in the group of authorities which reorganised.