

Working Paper: Post-16 destinations for young people who experience alternative provision schools

Acknowledgments

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This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

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Introduction

[Department for Education statistics on post-16 destinations](#) show that relatively few young people who complete Key Stage 4 in alternative provision schools go on to a sustained education destination at age 16. Among those who completed Key Stage 4 in 2017/18, just 38% spent the following 6 months in education either at a school, AP school, FE college or work-based learning provider.

In this briefing, we present further analysis to include other young people who spend time in AP schools pre-16 and to examine the activities undertaken by pupils who experienced AP schools at age 16 and 17. If anything, the DfE statistics under-estimate the scale of the challenge in engaging this group of young people in post-16 education and training.

Data Sources

We use four data sources to identify activities undertaken by learners at academic ages 16 and 17:

- School Census
- Local authority alternative provision census (LAAPC)
- Individualised Learner Record (ILR)
- National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS)

Briefly, school census provides information on enrolments in state-funded mainstream, special and AP schools. LAAPC contains details of young people educated in other settings for which the local authority pays fees. ILR includes details of publicly- funded¹ qualifications taken in the further education system, which includes Colleges, work-based learning providers, employers and local authorities. Finally, NCCIS contains monthly activity indicators for young people aged 16-17 compiled by local authorities using a mixture of data and caseworker contacts.

¹ Funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

Post-16 activities

We derive an activity for each young person on 3 dates at age 16 and 3 dates at age 17. These dates correspond to the enumeration dates of the termly School Census. These are:

School Census	On roll at a state-funded AP school On roll at a state-funded mainstream or special school
LAAPC	In local authority alternative provision
ILR	Participating in publicly-funded education and training in the further education sector
NCCIS	In custody In employment Not in education, employment and training (NEET) Other activities Unknown

A young person may be classified in several categories on the same date. In some cases, the data sources may be in conflict. For example, NCCIS records whether a pupil was in full-time education at a school but there may be no corresponding records in School Census. This may be due to lags in the NCCIS data: perhaps a caseworker couldn't contact a young person one month. By the same token, a young person may be registered at a school or college but not attending.

For the purposes of this analysis, we allocate pupils to a single activity on each enumeration date by scanning the indicators and assigning them to the first category they fall into based on the hierarchical order listed in the appendix. Some young people are not found in any data source: these are added to the 'unknown' category.

Cohorts

Our analysis focuses on four cohorts of young people born between 1st September 1997 and 31st August 2001. These pupils would typically have completed Key Stage 4 between 2013/14 and 2016/17.

We use School Census from 2008/09 onwards to identify any pupils observed attending AP schools during their compulsory schooling. This was the first year that School Census was carried out in pupil referral units. We include all registration types².

The four cohorts were the first to be affected by the raising of the participation age to 18. In other words, they would be expected to remain in education and training (including employment with training) until their 18th birthday.

Activities of the 1999/2000 cohort

By way of illustration, we summarise the activities of the cohort born in 1999/2000 at each of the three time points both at age 16 (in 2016/17) and age 17 (in 2017/18). These are ages at the start of the academic year. In other words, we would expect 17 year olds to turn 18 during the academic year. Consequently, we would expect all young people to remain in education during the year in which they are 16.

² Single-rolled, dual-main, dual-subsidary and other registration types

Table 1: Post-16 activities at ages 16 and 17, 1999/2000 cohort of pupils who experienced AP schools pre-16

	Age 16			Age 17		
	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Spring	Summer
On roll in state funded AP schools	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
On roll in state funded mainstream/ special schools	7.9%	7.4%	6.9%	5.3%	5.1%	4.9%
Further education and work-based learning	48.4%	44.0%	40.8%	36.9%	33.9%	30.5%
Local authority alternative provision	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%
<i>All in education</i>	<i>57.4%</i>	<i>52.4%</i>	<i>48.6%</i>	<i>42.5%</i>	<i>40.2%</i>	<i>35.6%</i>
Custody	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%
Employment (excluding FE and WBL)	3.7%	5.9%	7.4%	10.6%	13.3%	15.2%
Not in education, employment and training (NEET)	10.7%	14.5%	16.2%	17.9%	19.6%	20.0%
Other activity recorded in NCCIS	12.9%	17.6%	18.3%	10.0%	13.0%	14.9%
Not known	14.8%	8.9%	8.8%	18.3%	13.1%	13.1%
Pupils	19183	19183	19183	19183	19183	19183

57% of pupils were in education in the Autumn at age 16, the majority of those in further education and work-based learning. This proportion then declined to 36% by summer at age 17. By contrast, the percentage of young people in employment (without any corresponding school or college records) increased from 4% to 15%. Data for other cohorts is presented in the appendix.

In addition, rates of those identified as NEET in NCCIS increased from 11% to 20% between Autumn at age 16 and Summer at age 17. However, this might be an under-estimate. Firstly, the activity of a percentage of young people is unknown each term, particularly in the Autumn term. Some of these young people may no longer be in England. Secondly, a larger percentage are recorded in NCCIS as participating in another activity. For example, 62% of those in this category have “full-time education in college” recorded as their activity, but there are no corresponding ILR records. In many instances, learning aims that ceased shortly before the enumeration date can be observed, suggesting drop-out not captured in time by NCCIS.

By way of comparison, Table 2 provides similar information for all other pupils observed in state-funded schools at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2016. Due to small numbers, rows for state-funded AP schools and local authority alternative provision have been subsumed into the “on roll in schools” row.

Table 2: Post-16 activities at ages 16 and 17, 1999/2000 cohort of pupils who completed Key Stage 4 in state-funded mainstream schools

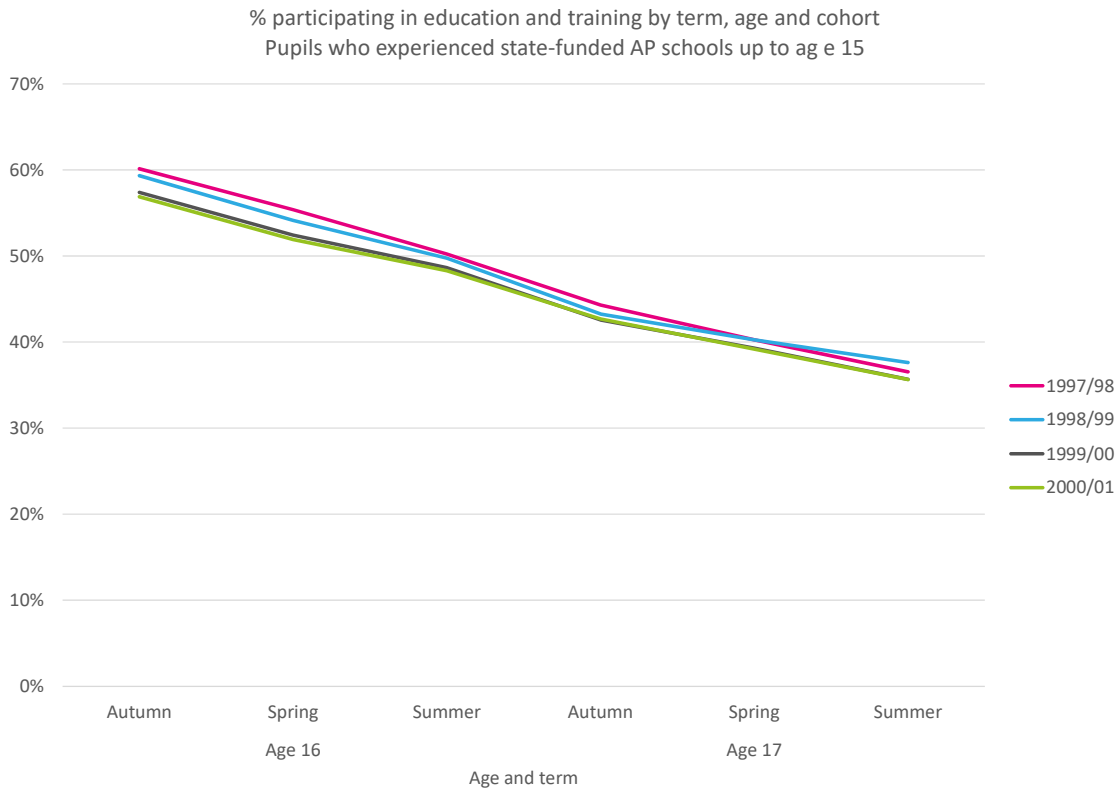
	Age 16			Age 17		
	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Spring	Summer
On roll in schools	40.7%	40.1%	39.2%	35.2%	34.8%	34.5%
Further education and work-based learning	52.9%	52.2%	51.0%	50.8%	49.5%	47.5%
<i>All In education</i>	<i>93.6%</i>	<i>92.3%</i>	<i>90.2%</i>	<i>86.0%</i>	<i>84.3%</i>	<i>82.0%</i>
Custody	<0.1%	<0.1%	<0.1%	<0.1%	<0.1%	<0.1%
Employment (excluding FE and WBL)	0.8%	1.2%	1.5%	1.8%	2.4%	2.4%
Not in education, employment and training (NEET)	1.1%	1.4%	2.0%	3.5%	5.2%	6.5%
Other activity recorded in NCCIS	2.7%	4.3%	5.5%	3.9%	5.5%	6.6%
Not known	1.8%	0.8%	0.9%	4.6%	2.6%	2.5%
Pupils	520658	520658	520658	520658	520658	520658

For other pupils, we observe much higher rates in education: 94% in the Autumn at age 16 and 82% in the Summer at age 17. There remain some young people in the “not known” or “other” category but the percentages are much lower than for the group who had experienced AP schools.

Participation in post-16 education

In Figure 1, we show the percentage of pupils who had experienced AP schools in each of four cohorts who were observed in education at the three termly enumeration dates at ages 16 and 17. The green line corresponds with the “all in education” row in Table 1.

Figure 1: % participating in education and training by term, age and cohort



The lines are very similar although they do suggest that participation in post-16 education among young people who had experienced AP schools has been falling slightly.

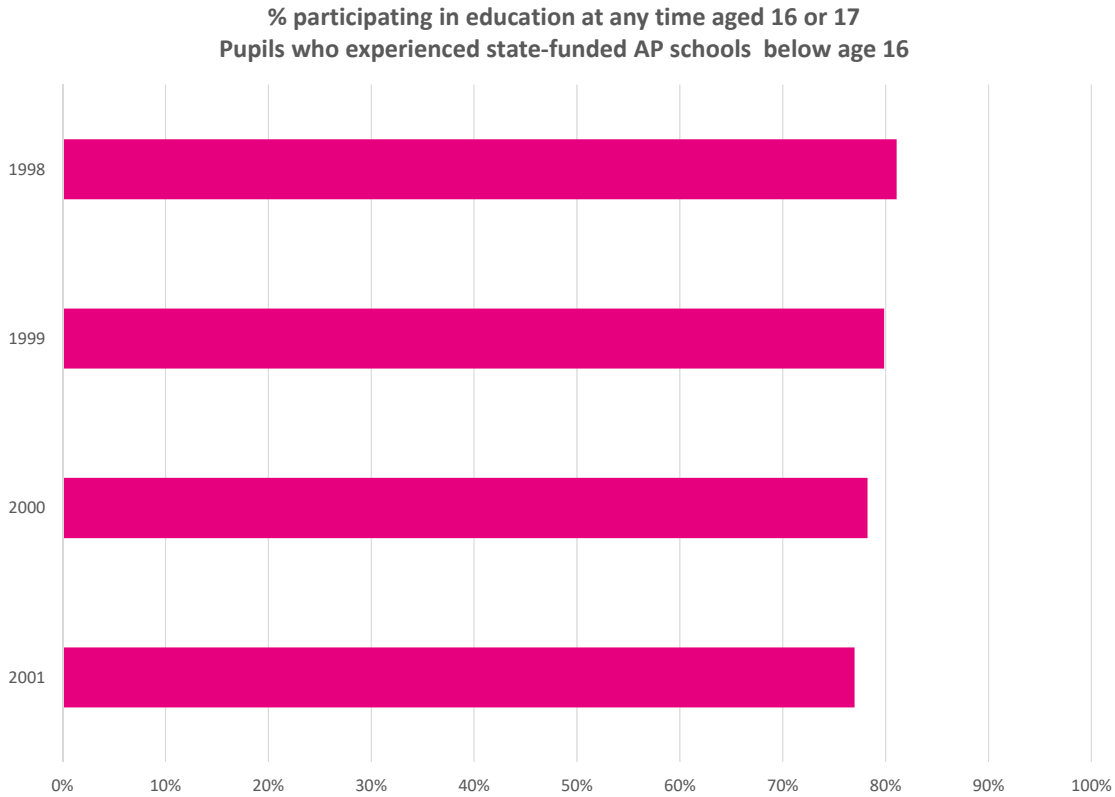
Some regional variation is observed. In Table 3, young people from the 1999/2000 cohort are assigned to the local authority of their final state-funded AP school enrolment below age 16. Rates of participation in post-16 education are then summarised for each region. Differences are particularly pronounced in the summer at age 17. 42% of young people who experienced AP in London were in education compared to 30% of those in the West Midlands.

Table 3: % participating in education and training by age, term and region, cohort born in 1999/2000

	Age 16			Age 17			Pupils
	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Spring	Summer	
North East	54%	48%	46%	40%	34%	31%	899
North West	56%	49%	46%	39%	36%	32%	2877
Yorkshire and the Humber	55%	50%	45%	39%	35%	32%	1642
East Midlands	60%	56%	51%	47%	44%	39%	1649
West Midlands	54%	50%	46%	37%	34%	30%	1859
East of England	54%	48%	42%	38%	34%	31%	1896
London	60%	55%	53%	48%	44%	42%	3540
South East	58%	53%	50%	42%	40%	37%	2676
South West	62%	57%	53%	48%	45%	41%	2145

Figure 1 shows the percentage of individuals observed in education on particular dates in each term. It is possible, in theory at least, that someone might have participated in education at some point at age 16 or 17 despite never participating on any of the termly enumeration dates. Figure 2 shows the percentage of young people in each cohort who were ever observed enrolled at a school or pursuing a learning aim in ILR at any time while aged 16 or 17.

Figure 2: % participating in education and training by cohort



Transition from Key Stage 4

As we showed in our report on attainment, pupils who return to mainstream schools following a spell in the AP sector tend to achieve higher results in GCSEs and other qualifications than pupils who remained in the AP sector.

This carries forward into post-16 education. Pupils who return to mainstream or special schools to complete Key Stage 4 are more likely to be in education at 16 and 17 (Table 4). However, rates of participation for this group are relatively low. Less than half are observed in education in Summer at age 17.

Table 4: % participating in post-16 education and training by age and term and final Key Stage 4 setting (Cohort born in 1999/2000)

Key Stage 4 setting	Age 16			Age 17			Pupils
	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Spring	Summer	
Mainstream or special	69%	64%	60%	54%	50%	46%	9010
AP schools	51%	46%	42%	34%	31%	27%	7434
Local authority AP	38%	33%	31%	31%	29%	26%	1052
Other	51%	46%	43%	42%	35%	31%	550
None	27%	24%	23%	22%	20%	18%	1137
Total	57%	52%	49%	43%	39%	36%	19183

The group without a Key Stage 4 destination (the row labelled none) were not in state-funded education at age 15. Relatively few of this group are observed in education at 16 or 17 although some may have emigrated or, in rarer circumstances, died.

In the statistical appendix, we show rates of participation by AP school for pupils in the 1999/2000 and 2000/01 cohorts who completed Key Stage 4 in the sector. It can be seen that rates vary by provider. In some cases, participation rates in Autumn at age 16 exceed 75%. Of particular note is the Burnside Secondary PRU in Waltham Forest, which had a large number of pupils in the two cohorts (119) and where the Autumn age 16 participation rate was 80%.

Post-16 participation in education is also associated with attainment at Key Stage 4. In Table 5, we summarise Key Stage 4 attainment in literacy and numeracy. Literacy includes GCSE English and functional skills. Numeracy includes GCSE maths and functional skills.

Table 5: % participating in post-16 education and training by age, term and Key Stage 4 attainment in literacy and numeracy (Cohort born in 1999/2000)

	Age 16			Age 17			Pupils
	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Spring	Summer	
Not entered for either literacy or numeracy (or both)	37%	34%	31%	28%	26%	23%	5136
ELQ in both	43%	43%	38%	34%	31%	27%	956
One Level 1 and One ELQ	52%	45%	41%	33%	31%	27%	3306
Level 1 in both	64%	57%	53%	43%	39%	35%	5262
One Level 2 and One Level 1	75%	70%	66%	59%	53%	49%	2469
Level 2 in both	87%	83%	78%	77%	74%	70%	2054
Total	57%	52%	49%	43%	39%	36%	19183

Just over 10% of pupils in this cohort had achieved level 2 in both literacy and numeracy by the end of Key Stage 4. Rates of participation among this group were much higher compared to other groups that had experienced AP. Participation among those without level 1 qualifications in literacy and numeracy were low, particularly at age 17.

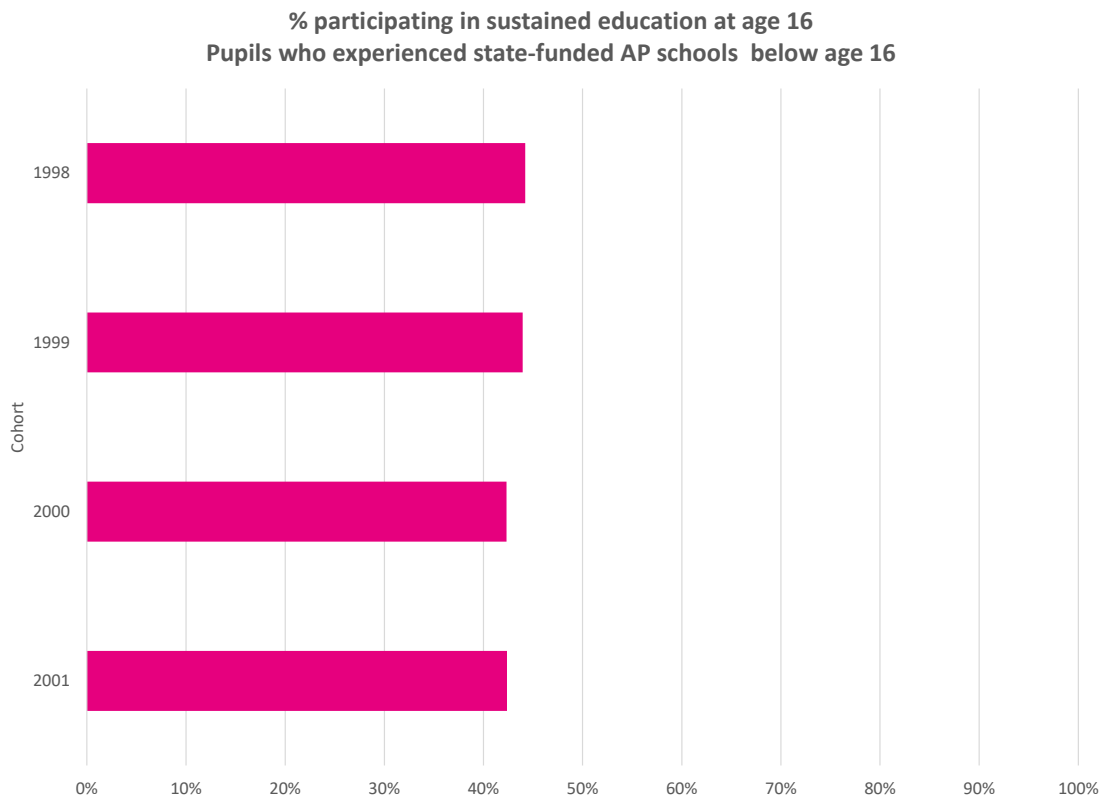
Sustained Participation

DfE produce statistics on sustained destinations, which they define as being in education (or employment with training) for at least one day each month between October and March in the year following Key Stage 4.

We use a slightly different measure of sustained participation, being continuously enrolled at a school or pursuing learning aims at a College between 1st October and 31st March. This includes changes of institution provided that enrolment dates overlap.

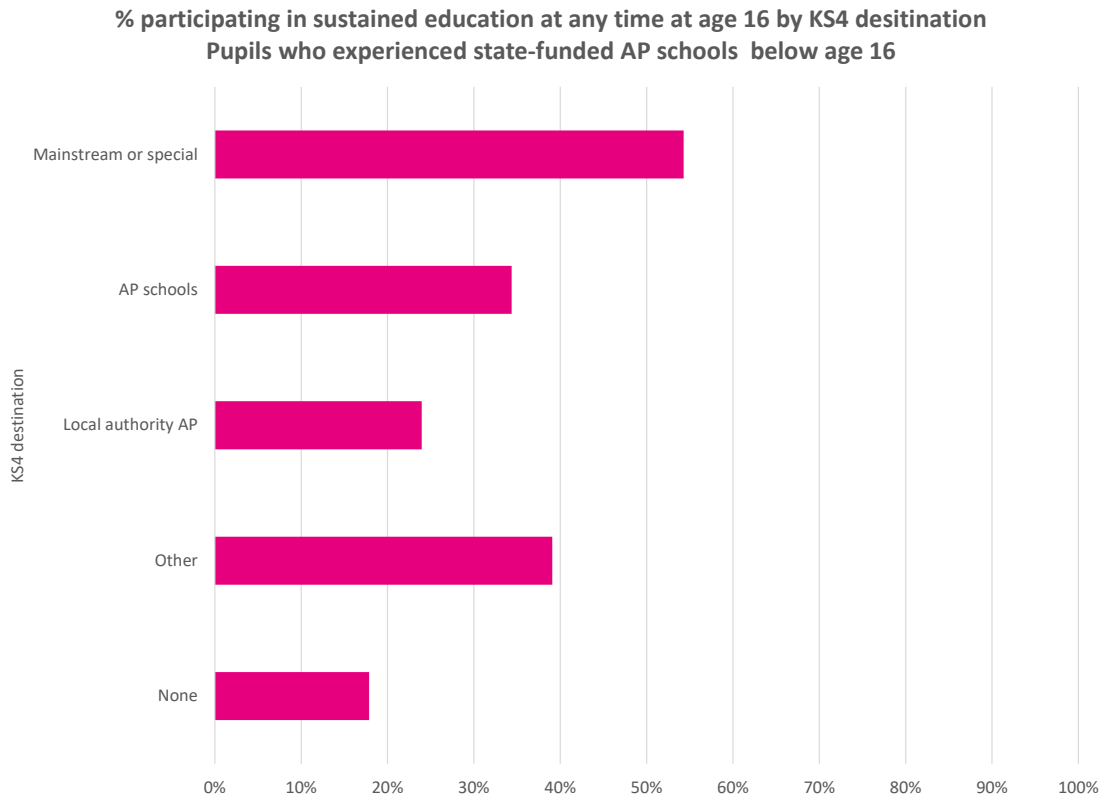
Among pupils who experience AP, around 40% are continuously enrolled at school or college between October and March at age 16. This is broadly consistent across the cohorts we study in this briefing.

Figure 3: % participating in sustained education at age 16 by cohort



Following on from Table 4 above, those who complete Key Stage 4 in a mainstream or special school are more likely to be in sustained education at 16.

Figure 4: % participating in sustained education at any point at age 16 by final KS4 destination (Cohort born in 1999/2000)



Initial post-16 education destinations

Finally, we examine the initial post-16 destinations of pupils who were in education in the Autumn at age 17. This means the school, college or other setting (e.g. work-based learning providers) where they were enrolled on the date of the October School Census in the year following Key Stage 4. The two caveats we make here are that 1) some pupils may have enrolled in September and already dropped out and 2) others may never have enrolled in the first place. As Table 1 shows, over 40% of former AP pupils in the 1999/2000 cohort were not in education in October at age 16.

In Table 6 we show the extent to which pupils who are observed in education in the Autumn at age 16 remain in education up to the end of Summer at Age 17 given the type of setting at which they are enrolled in Autumn at age 16. The first column of numbers shows the number enrolled in each type of setting in Autumn at age 16. The subsequent set of columns shows the proportion still in education at each enumeration date at age 16 and 17. Note that we do not consider here moves between types of setting (in other words, some of those in schools in the Autumn at age 16 may be enrolled in Colleges in later periods).

Table 6: Participation in education and training by cohort, term, age and type of setting attended in Autumn at age 16

Cohort	Type of setting, Autumn age 16	Age 16			Age 17		
		Number enrolled in Autumn	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Spring	Summer
2000	Schools	1545	95%	90%	84%	80%	77%
	AP	195	75%	71%	57%	53%	48%
	Colleges	8087	82%	75%	60%	55%	51%
	Other FE providers	1240	73%	56%	43%	39%	31%
	Total	11067	83%	75%	61%	57%	52%
2001	Schools	1538	95%	91%	87%	83%	81%
	AP	201	86%	79%	54%	49%	47%
	Colleges	8268	82%	75%	60%	56%	51%
	Other FE providers	1415	72%	57%	48%	44%	36%
	Total	11422	83%	75%	62%	58%	53%
2002	Schools	1615	96%	91%			
	AP	196	90%	80%			
	Colleges	8260	81%	74%			
	Other FE providers	1404	76%	56%			
	Total	11475	83%	74%			

Pupils who experienced AP pre-16 but then returned to state-funded schools post-16 were far more likely to remain in education at age 16 and 17 than pupils who attended other types of setting. However, there were relatively few of them, and selection effects are undoubtedly at play. Perhaps they would have been more likely to remain in education whatever type of setting they joined at age 16.

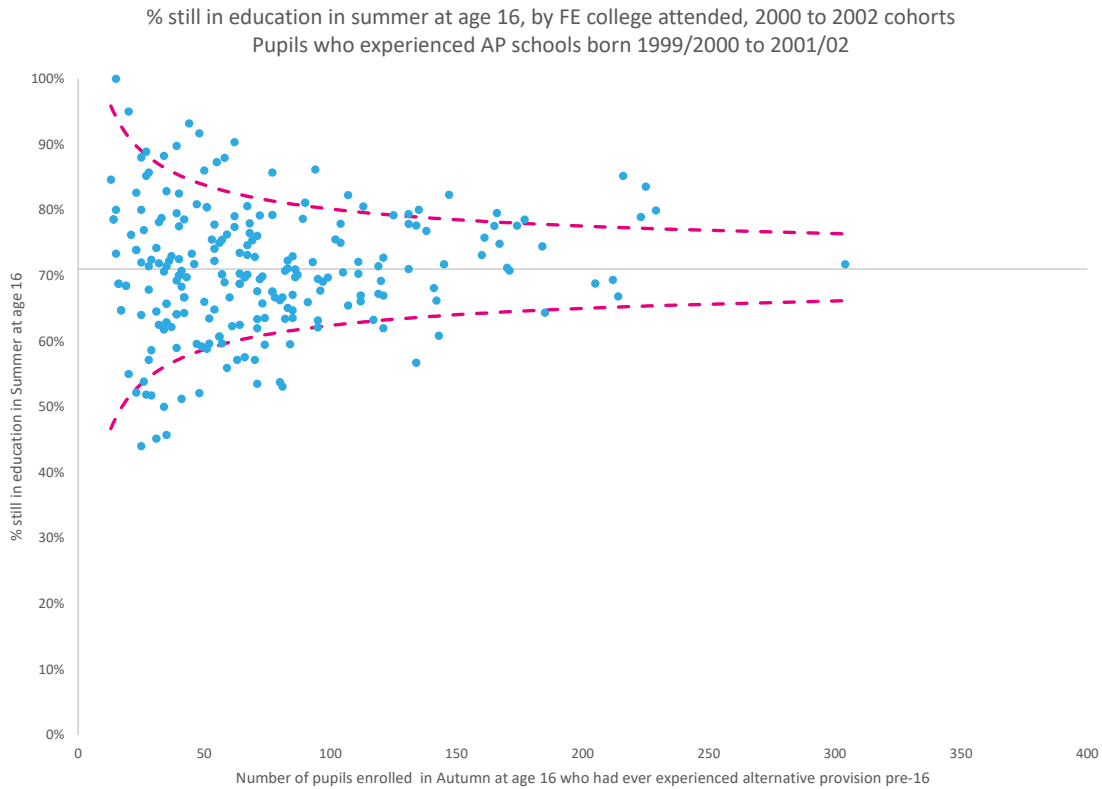
By contrast, participation rates were lowest among those who join other FE providers (e.g. work-based learning providers) in the Autumn at age 16.

The majority of pupils who experience AP who then stay on in education at 16 do so in FE colleges. In the statistical appendix, we show participation rates by College for former AP pupils who were enrolled in Autumn at age 16. These show substantial variation between Colleges. Some of this variation may represent differences in the needs of learners rather than the effectiveness of different Colleges to support young people who had experienced AP pre-16.

Rates are particularly high among sixth form colleges. These are largely selective institutions and so the comments we make above about pupils who stay on at school above may also apply here. The higher participation rates may simply reflect higher end of Key Stage 4 attainment.

As we showed in Table 5, the majority of pupils who experience AP do not achieve level 2 passes in English or maths. In the funnel plot below, we show the variation between Colleges in the percentage of pupils who are still in education in the Summer at age 16. However, this time we remove pupils who achieved level 2 in English or maths at the end of Key Stage 4. We show a three-year average in which we have combined the 1999/2000 to 2001/02 cohorts.

Figure 5: % still in education in summer at age 16, by FE college attended, 2000 to 2002 cohorts



There are four Colleges with more than 200 pupils in the three cohorts combined plotted above the upper control line. These are Barking and Dagenham College, Blackpool and Fylde College, South Thames Colleges and the Capital City Group of Colleges. These providers may be effective in supporting learners who experienced AP although demographic characteristics and learner needs may be a contributory factor.

Finally, we examine participation conditional on the type of study being pursued in Autumn at age 16 for those enrolled in FE colleges. We classify learners according to their learning aims excluding those in literacy and numeracy³. Over half study aims exclusively below level 2 (i.e. at level 1 and/ or entry level). It is particularly among this group, plus the small numbers undertaking "other types of learning" (e.g. work experience) and literacy/ numeracy only that subsequent participation rates tend to be lower.

³ We leave aside literacy and numeracy as we would expect all those who did not achieve at least grade 4 at GCSE to undertake learning aims in literacy and/ or numeracy post-16 as part of the conditions of funding.

Table 7: Participation in education and training by cohort, term, age and type of study in Autumn at age 16, students enrolled in FE Colleges

Cohort	Type of study	Age 16			Age 17		
		Number enrolled, Autumn age 16	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Spring	Summer
2000	Apprenticeship	204	91%	81%	63%	56%	49%
	Traineeship	43	53%	44%	37%	33%	SUPP
	2 or more A-levels	354	92%	87%	91%	85%	83%
	Other Level 3	865	89%	83%	77%	72%	67%
	Level 2	2135	85%	79%	61%	58%	53%
	Below Level 2	4171	79%	71%	53%	49%	44%
	Other types of learning	41	78%	80%	56%	54%	49%
	Literacy/ numeracy only	274	73%	64%	53%	49%	44%
2001	Apprenticeship	186	90%	80%	67%	56%	46%
	Traineeship	34	56%	38%	38%	SUPP	SUPP
	2 or more A-levels	342	95%	91%	93%	90%	83%
	Other Level 3	919	89%	84%	79%	75%	70%
	Level 2	2174	84%	77%	62%	58%	52%
	Below Level 2	4300	79%	72%	54%	49%	44%
	Other types of learning	39	74%	51%	36%	33%	26%
	Literacy/ numeracy only	274	68%	60%	49%	43%	39%
2002	Apprenticeship	177	90%	82%			
	Traineeship	26	54%	SUPP			
	2 or more A-levels	333	93%	88%			
	Other Level 3	921	90%	84%			
	Level 2	2149	84%	77%			
	Below Level 2	4353	78%	69%			
	Other types of learning	49	78%	65%			
	Literacy/ numeracy only	252	67%	56%			

Summary

DfE statistics show that less than 40% of pupils who complete Key Stage 4 at an AP school are in sustained education and training destinations between October and March at age 16.

In this briefing, we have gone further and examined the post-16 destinations at both age 16 and 17 of all pupils who experience AP schools pre 16. We find that rates of sustained post-16 participation are higher among pupils who return to mainstream or special schools to complete Key Stage 4. However, these rates are still relatively low at just over 50%.

Considering all pupils who experience AP schools pre-16, around 57% are observed in education in Autumn at age 16. This falls to 36% by summer at age 17. Equivalent figures for pupils who don't experience AP pre-16 are 94% and 82% respectively.

Unsurprisingly, those who are more likely to remain in education are those with higher levels of attainment at Key Stage 4.

Increasing the proportion of former AP pupils in education post-16 has to solve two problems.

Firstly, the initial transition problem. That is to say that there are suitable post-16 pathways available for young people with low attainment at Key Stage 4 and that all pupils enrol on courses.

Secondly the drop out problem. This means supporting pupils on those courses and providing information on alternative options if necessary.

Given the way the Post-16 sector is currently organised, this has to entail working with colleges and work-based learning providers.

Appendix

We allocate pupils to categories of activity according to the following decision hierarchy:

- NCCIS Custody
- School Census – AP school
- School Census- other school
- Further education (ILR)
- Local authority alternative provision (LAAPC)
- NCCIS NEET
- NCCIS employment
- NCCIS other activity
- NCCIS unknown
- Unknown- not in any sources