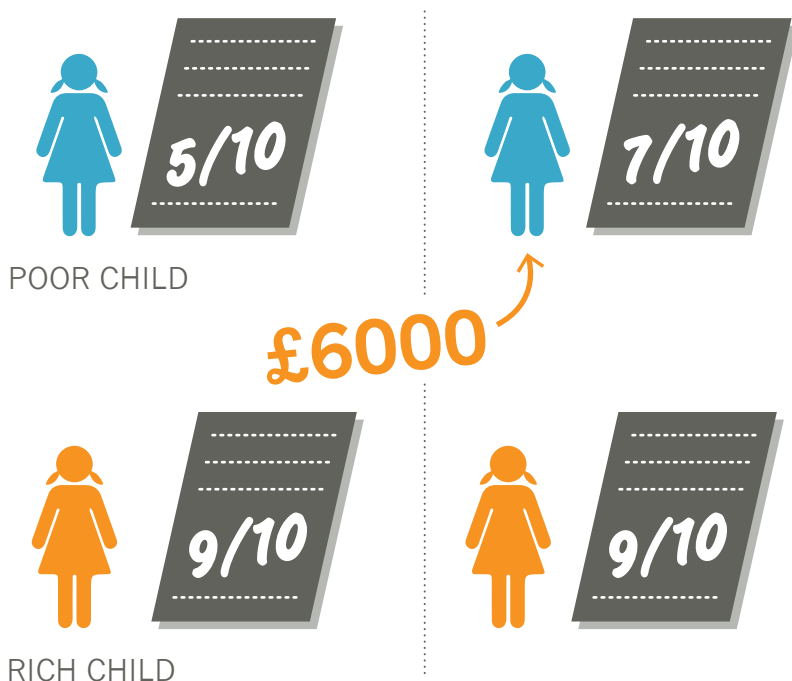


Poorer children do worse in school because they are poorer

CLOSING INCOME GAP ALONE WOULD AT LEAST HALVE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND THE REST



What does this mean?

Children on free school meals don't do as well in school as other pupils, for a number of reasons, such as parental education, peer effects and school quality. But household income is also important. This is because increased incomes reduce stress at home and allow for extra spending on books, computers and other learning facilities. In fact, just bringing the household income of Free School Meals children up to the national average would at least halve the achievement gap, regardless of factors like parental education.

The implication of this research is that if we want to give children an equal chance in life, improving schools alone won't be enough. We have to make household incomes more equal.

Explaining the data

Academics from the London School of Economics analysed over 30 different studies from across the world measuring the effects of income on children's school achievement. They found an increase of between 5% and 27% of a standard deviation on a child's ability to learn resulting from an increase in income of about £900. Even assuming the lower 5% improvement in cognitive ability per £900 spent, this suggests that increasing the income of Free School Meals children to the UK average (at a cost of around £6,000 per child) would halve the difference in Key Stage2 test results (aged 11) between Free School Meals children and the rest. To see the full report visit <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/does-money-affect-childrens-outcomes>