

## **Chapter 4 – The clustering of access to schools**

Chapter 3 illustrated the clear patterns in educational participation and outcomes linked to the characteristics and backgrounds of learners. The indicators of possible educational disadvantage may vary over time and place, but these kinds of patterns are clear in all such studies worldwide. How do they arise and what can be done about them? This chapter starts looking at the possible reasons and solutions by considering who goes to school with whom.

My concern with school intakes started in the 1990s when I looked at issues of school choice (Gorard 1997a, 1998a, 1999), including the choice to use fee-paying schools (Gorard 1996, 1997b), and the operation of a ‘market’ or quasi-market in education (Gorard 1998b). This chapter is chiefly about a theme that developed from this - the extent to which children of similar social and economic backgrounds are then clustered within the same schools, the reasons this happens, the impact on attainment, and the wider damage it causes. This kind of clustering is referred to here as ‘segregation’ between schools. I have looked at levels of segregation, the causes and results of segregation, and its links to attainment (Gorard and Taylor 2002b, Gorard 2006c).

Although all state-funded schools in England are ‘choice’ schools, in the sense that any family is entitled to express a preference to attend any of them, this does not mean that all preferences are met. Schools have a planned fixed number of places. A small number of these schools are selective, taking only those children scoring above a certain level on an entrance test or in terms of aptitude. Many more schools continue to have a faith basis, and can restrict the number of children accepted who come from families apparently without that faith. Even more commonly, popular schools or their admissions authorities use over-subscription criteria such as the proximity of home to school to decide who gets contested places. Because of the segregated nature of housing in parts of England, due to differences in cost and availability, children can then turn out to be clustered by their family backgrounds into particular schools. This is measurable in terms of a range of characteristics including low attainment, poverty, ethnic origin, immigrant status, disability or learning difficulties.

Such problems are not unique to England (EGREES 2005). Some developing countries do not even have full participation of young children in school, some developed countries have universal tracks that divide children by ability from an early age, and many others have higher levels of clustering by faith (Siddiqui and Gorard 2017). In all of these countries the problem of socio-economic segregation between schools is worse than in England (Gorard and Smith 2004), with stronger links between child background and the schools’ outcomes (OECD 2014).

### **Why this clustering of pupils matters**

The disproportionate clustering of students within schools in terms of their personal characteristics is a matter of concern worldwide for many reasons (Logan et al. 2012, Belfi et al. 2014). For students not speaking the language of their country of residence, the most important factor in successful learning is exposure to native speakers (Lee and Madyun 2008), thus requiring a mixed intake to schools. Integrated and unsegregated school systems seem to lead to the desirable outcome that a pupil’s achievement depends less on their social and cultural background, whereas more between-school stratification leads to attainment more strongly linked to student SES (Parker et al. 2016).

All other things being equal, school systems with unequal distribution of resources and the stratification of students between schools by their parental income or immigrant status have been linked to lower overall attainment wherever this has been assessed (Danhier and Martin 2014, Mendolia et al. 2016, Yeung and Phuong Nguyen-Hoang 2016). The segregation of students is also linked to lowered patterns of high school graduation and college enrolment in the US, even after controlling for individual and other school factors (Palardy 2013). People growing up in segregated settings may then be less prepared for the academic challenges of subsequent education.

There are many possible reasons for these unfair outcomes (Roew and Lubiesnki 2017). Lower achievers, and poorer students may have less experienced or less qualified teachers (Kalogrides and Loeb 2013), so leading to worse teaching and opportunities to learn (Schmidt et al. 2015). In the 2008 economic recession, when teachers were made redundant in the US this occurred disproportionately in already disadvantaged areas (Knight and Strunk 2016). The school mix of students by socio-economic status (SES) even seems to influence how students are treated or diagnosed within each school (McCoy et al. 2012), teachers' expectations (Parker et al. 2016), and relationships between pupils and teachers, and between pupil peers, leading to poorer social skills (Gottfried 2014). Classes in poorer areas have different patterns of teacher:student interaction, more like those of younger classes in more affluent areas (Harris 2012).

One of the most obvious reasons why similar children go to schools together is because they live close together, and then go to local schools (Gorard et al. 2003, Camina and Iannone 2013). Residential segregation itself is linked to life outcomes such as income mobility, probably via school-level segregation in a reinforcing vicious cycle (Chetty et al. 2014). Parental preference for local neighbourhood schools is often greater among disadvantaged and minority families, which exacerbates the kinds of segregation found in urban areas (Jacobs 2013). Any system of allocating school places, especially contested places in over-subscribed schools, which uses catchments, distance from home or ease of travel will tend to reinforce patterns of pre-existing residential segregation (Frankenberg 2013). In turn, these rules for allocating school places can then influence where people choose to live (Liebowitz 2014), and housing becomes more expensive near highly advantaged schools.

The mix of peers in schools is also linked to wider non-cognitive student outcomes such as emotional and behavioural problems (Muller and Hofmann 2014), students' sense of justice (Gorard and See 2013), civic knowledge (Collado et al. 2015), and subsequent civic engagement (Hoskins et al. 2014). This, in turn, relates to how students see society, their sense of belonging (Gorard and Smith 2010), and the levels of SES, ethnic and other cohesion in that society (Mickelson and Nkomo 2012). School segregation may polarise information about future opportunities, by removing role models or influencing aspiration (Burgess et al. 2005), and assist in the creation of wider social ills, such as ill-health and delinquency (Clotfelter 2001). Mainstream schooling for lower attainers is reported to have a generally positive effect on the aspirations and self-concept of pupils with learning difficulties (Casey et al. 2006).

The segregation of pupils of different types between schools is therefore not merely a question of who goes to school with whom. Segregation whether racially, or by religion or social class, can have alarming and dangerous consequences for the school system and for society more widely and longer term. The potential impact on attainment is discussed further in Chapter 6, and the more solid impact on wider outcomes is covered in Chapter 9.

The number of years any student has been known to be eligible for FSM was introduced in Chapter 3. Here it is used as one explanatory variable in a regression model, looking at the possible impact of school intakes on pupil attainment. Table 4.1 includes three estimates of the level of disadvantage in the school attended by each student – its GS intake segregation levels for 2005 (their first school) and 2015 (their KS4 school), plus the average number of years all pupils in that school have been eligible for FSM. There are generally noticeable but far from perfect correlations between each measure of individual and school-level clustering of disadvantage. Pupils in more disadvantaged schools have lower attainment and make less progress between Key Stages. This is, of course, zero sum, and so there is no advantage in such pupil clustering. Segregation only worsens the pre-existing poverty and attainment gaps a little bit further.

Table 4.1 – Correlations between school-level disadvantage and individuals, KS4 cohort, England 2015

Individual indicator	Segregation 2005	Segregation 2015	Mean years-FSM
FSM 2005	0.40	0.09	0.07

FSM 2015	0.27	0.29	0.30
Years-FSM by KS4	0.41	0.34	0.39
Years-FSM missing	0.01	0.09	0.07
KS1 average points	-0.22	-0.23	-0.31
KS2 average points	-0.14	-0.16	-0.18
N GCSE equivalent entries	-0.15	-0.16	-0.26
Total GCSE capped points	-0.19	-0.21	-0.30
Best 8 value-added score	-0.12	-0.11	-0.17

Note: value-added or progress scores are described in Chapter 6.

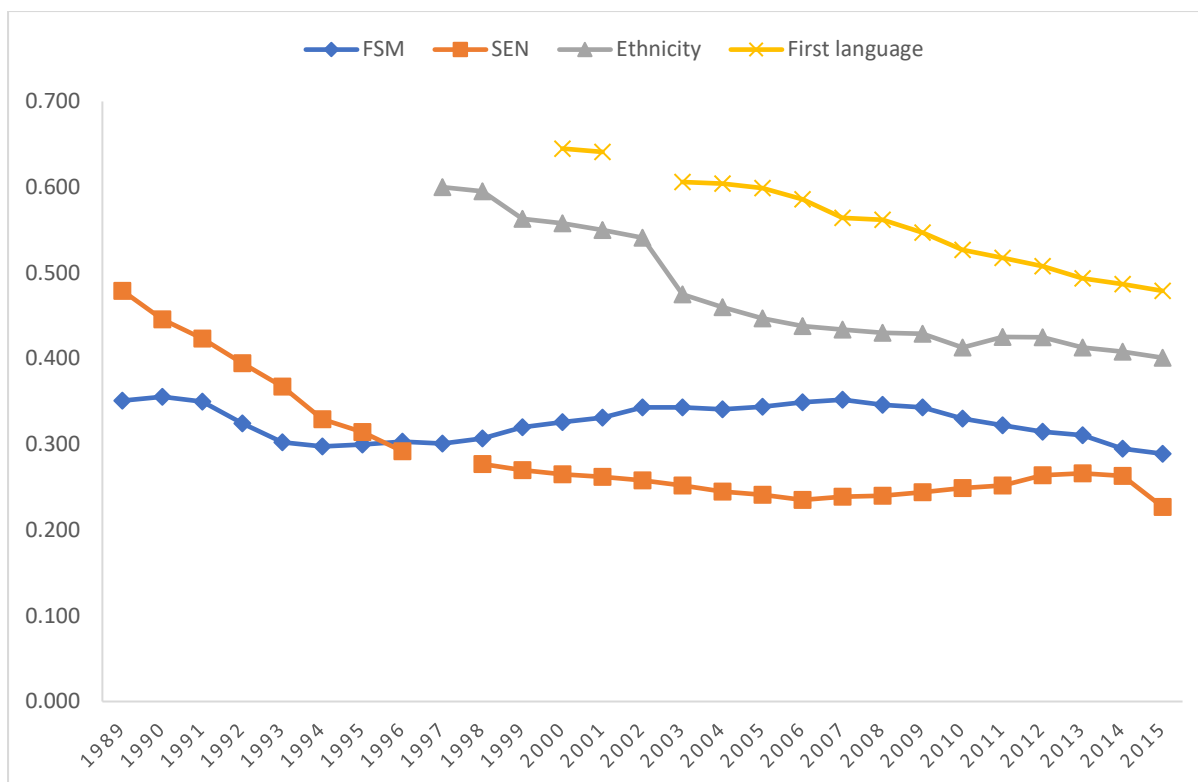
In general, the strongest correlations between individual school-level variables involve the average number of years-FSM (of the order of 0.40), and this is the justification for using years-FSM in the rest of the book. It explains more of the patterning in Chapter 3 than current eligibility for FSM or whether a student has ever been eligible.

### **The figures for England over time and place**

I have published figures for the level of between-school segregation, first in Wales and then England, with an increasing number of available indicators every year (Gorard and Fitz 1998a, 1998b, 2000a, 2000b, Gorard 2002d, Gorard and Cheng 2011, Gorard et al. 2013a, Gorard 2015e, 2015f). These have shown that segregation between schools by poverty is generally lower in Wales than in England, that segregation by take-up of, and eligibility for, free school meals is substantially the same, and that the same trends over time appear in primary schools as in secondary schools (the remainder of this chapter focuses more on secondary schools). Because mainstream state-funded schools are the most common, it makes little difference to the overall figures whether independent and special schools are included as well or not. This prior work has also shown that the scale and trend over time of segregation for each actual indicator of disadvantage, such as poverty or ethnicity, is different.

Figure 4.1 provides a summary of results for between-school segregation at the national level for a sample of four indicators – eligibility for free school meals, statements of special educational needs, non-white ethnicity, and having a first language other than English. Each has a different level of segregation, and a specific pattern of change over time. The overall trend for how clustered children are in schools by SEN, ethnicity and language is generally down over time, and the reasons for this are examined in the next section. The overall long-term trend for segregation by poverty (FSM) is also down, but the pattern is more cyclical. Figure 4.1 illustrates that, in addition to the changes over time, the actual levels of segregation vary considerably - with children without English as their first language much more segregated in the system than those with statements of special need, for example. Therefore, whatever is producing these figures, we need to explain both their level and their trends independently.

Figure 4.1 - Segregation indices for four indicators, state secondary schools, England 1989 to 2015



The laws concerning allocating places in over-subscribed schools were amended and tidied up in 1998, 2003 and 2007. There is no consistent, abrupt or delayed change in the patterns for the following years. The rules were already largely fair for most pupils (White et al. 2001, Fitz et al. 2002). Whatever benefits such changes in policy made for a minority it seems to have been marginal in comparison to the other determinants of segregation. However, in other countries, national level policies have made a considerable difference. When New Zealand abolished zoning in 1990, so that school places did not depend upon where students lived, the levels of SES and ethnic segregation plummeted. They then went back up again once proximity was re-introduced as a factor the following year. Something similar may have happened with SES segregation in England from 1990 to 1995 (Gorard et al. 2003a). This was the period in which all schools filled with students who had arrived since the onset of the 1988 Education Reform Act. It is likely that increased parental choice as provided by this Act had a brief role in driving down FSM segregation between schools. This is so because families in the neighbourhood of desirable schools had no reason to look elsewhere, whereas families in disadvantaged areas now had the right at least to request a place outside their area.

Some other indications of why segregation varies over time and by indicator comes from consideration of more local figures - here for local authority (government) areas in England. Table 4.2 shows the average level of FSM segregation for local authorities depending on their population density. In general, rural and less densely populated areas have higher segregation, presumably because there are fewer schools within reach of each household.

Table 4.2 – Levels of segregation by FSM and years-FSM, by local geography, England 2015

Type of area	Segregation FSM	Segregation years-FSM
Urban	0.23	0.21
Village	0.23	0.21
Town and Fringe	0.21	0.21

Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling	0.26	0.25
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Such factors are explored in more detail by looking at each of the 149 local authorities in England individually (apart from the City of London and Scilly Isles which have too few schools). These have been sorted into ascending order of segregation (based on years-FSM). The 20 least segregated areas in Table 4.3 have this in common – they are mostly in large urban areas such as London and Manchester and none have pupils in selective schools. Otherwise they have a range of school types, with between 0 and 40% of pupils attending private schools. But the kinds of state-maintained schools in each area may matter (see below). These areas have high levels of long-term poverty as evidenced by the average number of years pupils are known to be eligible for FSM. Having more FSM pupils locally seems to create a better mix of such pupils between schools, as long as schools are relatively close to each other, which they are in dense urban areas.

Table 4.3 – FSM Years segregation, England 2015, by percentage local authority characteristics, low segregation

Local Authority	Segregation years -FSM	Mean years -FSM	N pupils	Selective schools	Private schools	VC schools	Community schools	Academy schools	Area type
Tower Hamlets	5	5.09	2446	0	20	11	5	58	Urban
Islington	5	4.61	1350	0	37	13	6	44	Urban
Newham	6	3.24	3576	0	2	11	6	56	Urban
St. Helens	7	1.94	1832	0	2	25	8	25	Urban
Camden	7	3.80	1430	0	-	8	8	67	Urban
Barking and Dagenham	9	2.56	2139	0	1	10	0	70	Urban
Lewisham	9	2.71	2119	0	2	6	6	50	Urban
Greenwich	9	2.86	2165	0	14	14	0	29	Urban
Hackney	10	3.74	1974	0	12	7	0	36	Urban
Wandsworth	11	2.71	1803	0	12	6	0	44	Urban
Sandwell	11	2.32	3504	0	0	5	11	16	Urban
Manchester	11	3.45	4758	0	14	14	6	29	Urban
Cornwall	12	1.20	5545	0	4	3	33	14	Town
Waltham Forest	13	2.41	2527	0	8	5	5	48	Urban
Knowsley	13	3.67	1218	0	0	22	0	33	Hamlet
Westminster	13	3.8	1469	0	29	0	0	17	Urban

Isle of Wight	14	1.68	1362	0	8	0	25	13	Town
Hounslow	14	1.98	2606	0	5	6	0	19	Urban
Lambeth	14	3.45	1892	0	33	11	11	38	Urban
Rutland	14	0.41	489	0	66	0	0	0	Village

Note: Voluntary controlled (VC) schools are generally Roman Catholic faith-based. Church of England voluntary aided (VA) schools are not related to segregation, and the number of schools of other faiths is too small to matter at present.

The simple number of people resident in any local authority is linked to lower and reduced segregation in terms of FSM, ethnicity and SEN (Gorard 2015e). More populous areas have reduced all forms of segregation faster than other areas. Areas with high unemployment or indicators of multiple deprivation have lower levels of FSM (and ethnic) segregation. As with the number of local residents, the number of students in any area is linked to reduced segregation, perhaps for the same reasons. However, areas with greater growth of student numbers have higher segregation, at least temporarily. It may be that accommodating more students creates a short-term imbalance in school intakes. The prevalence of any indicator of disadvantage is linked to lower segregation, but any increase in that prevalence is linked to a temporary increase in segregation. Again, this could be a short term phenomenon, as schools struggle to find local places for the growing population.

Segregation is lowest in London where houses and schools are closer together, and so easier to walk to, and neighbourhoods with both rich and poor housing adjacent, so reducing the impact of residential segregation. Public transport is better in London than elsewhere, again making mixing of intakes more feasible than in rural areas. Big cities may also have higher levels of disadvantage. All of these factors would tend to favour the existence of relatively mixed school intakes. Of course, there are exceptions. Big cities like Birmingham could have been like London in many ways, but Birmingham has no underground transport service, only a weak radial rail service, and more ‘ghettoisation’ of poverty and ethnicity. It also runs a selective grammar school system. All of these factors would tend to favour school intakes segregated by poverty and ethnicity. Islington and other central London Boroughs may also have lower segregation because the users of local schools are more homogeneous than expected, with a high proportion using fee-paying schools or schools in neighbouring boroughs. This leaves a rump with apparently high levels of FSM, and so low segregation in terms of FSM.

In contrast, the Isle of Wight and similar areas have low population densities, but segregation remains relatively low. The driver of low segregation here could be uniformity among the local permanent population – where nearly everyone is deprived or no one is from an ethnic minority then segregation in terms of those characteristics must be low. The North East of England also has much lower population density than London but similar levels of segregation. This could be because the levels of disadvantage there are both higher and more uniformly distributed. There are parts of Middlesbrough in the North East, for example, where no school has less than 50% of students eligible for FSM.

The 20 areas in the middle of the full 149 local authorities in terms of segregation appear in Table 4.4. These are all outside the big cities, but most are not rural (smaller towns or mixed areas), confirming that high population density tends to be linked to low segregation. They have higher levels of long-term poverty than areas in Table 4.3. There is little or no selection, and a mixture of other school types.

Table 4.4 – FSM Years segregation, England 2015, by percentage local authority characteristics, medium segregation

Local Authority	Segregation years -FSM	Mean years -FSM	N pupils	Selective schools	Private schools	VC schools	Community schools	Academy schools	Area type
Durham	20	1.99	5091	0	5	5	5	49	Town
Herefordshire	20	0.79	1845	0	7	5	0	21	Town
Wiltshire	20	0.77	5083	0.05	13	3	11	20	Urban
Salford	20	2.46	2155	0	8	18	0	47	Urban
Central Bedfordshire	21	0.85	2709	0	1	0	7	13	Town
Wokingham	21	0.60	1613	0	11	0	0	60	Hamlet
Cambridgeshire	21	0.93	5772	0	16	0	0	24	Urban
Bolton	21	1.79	3392	0	10	15	5	30	Urban
Bath and NE Somerset	21	0.92	2014	0	24	6	6	0	Urban
Worcestershire	21	1.06	5673	0	16	3	3	16	Hamlet
Enfield	21	2.44	3624	0.05	2	9	4	52	Urban
Derbyshire	21	1.30	8020	0	5	4	7	54	Town
Blackburn with Darwen	21	2.01	1749	0	12	14	14	14	Urban
Suffolk	21	1.13	7402	0	11	2	4	20	Hamlet
Dorset	21	0.68	4143	0	16	0	19	27	Urban
Medway	21	1.29	3114	0.28	3	5	0	10	Urban
Coventry	22	1.96	3399	0	7	12	16	16	Urban
Bournemouth	22	1.25	1660	0.19	8	0	0	7	Urban
Norfolk	22	1.28	8240	0	8	0	22	19	Hamlet
East Sussex	22	1.27	5159	0	14	3	3	43	Urban

The 20 areas with the worst problem of social segregation between schools have, on average, lower population density and are more rural. Most notably, they are much more likely to have high levels of selection in their schools (Table 4.5). The worst segregated 10 areas are all selective in nature. They also have a reasonably large local private sector, but a mixture of other types of schools. The key here appears to be selection. Areas like Bexley, Reading and Barnet have relatively high population densities like those in Table 4.3, but are in Table 4.5 just because they are selective. This shows the danger for social cohesion of having such divisive schools in an otherwise relatively comprehensive school system.

Table 4.5 – FSM Years segregation, England 2015, by percentage local authority characteristics, high segregation

Local Authority	Segregation years -FSM	Mean years -FSM	N pupils	Selective schools	Private schools	VC schools	Community schools	Academy schools	Area type
Sutton	28	0.98	2675	0.29	4	12	0	6	Urban
Cumbria	28	1.11	5294	0.02	6	9	7	34	Urban
Hertfordshire	29	0.83	12690	0	16	2	6	29	Urban
Solihull	29	1.29	3055	0	5	5	5	26	Town
North East Lincolnshire	29	1.82	1816	0	1	0	0	0	Urban
Reading	29	1.66	1132	0.19	31	10	20	0	Urban
Bromley	30	1.04	3240	0.08	11	0	5	14	Urban
Cheshire West and Chester	30	1.28	3571	0	11	7	18	33	Hamlet
Sefton	30	1.57	3136	0	8	24	12	28	Urban
Warrington	30	1.02	2437	0	0	14	0	29	Hamlet
Plymouth	30	1.46	2722	0.15	4	0	0	35	Urban
Kent	30	1.15	16012	0.29	10	2	22	17	Town
Gloucestershire	30	0.89	6508	0.13	12	0	10	18	Urban
Bexley	31	1.28	3280	0.23	0	0	0	16	Urban
Lincolnshire	32	0.87	8125	0.22	4	0	7	21	Urban
Southend-on-Sea	33	1.34	2114	0.28	2	0	19	19	Urban
Poole	34	0.72	1530	0.23	9	0	10	10	Urban
Buckinghamshire	36	0.59	5683	0.38	10	2	7	25	Hamlet
Barnet	37	1.67	3526	0.10	13	17	0	13	Urban
Trafford	38	1.12	2850	0.38	3	8	13	21	Urban

The economic cycle and local events such as changes in employment may be linked to changes in segregation. Areas can become more or less attractive to live in, students can move in and out of state-funded benefits like eligibility for free school meals, and parents can find fee-paying schools more or less affordable. Immigration can increase the number of children from ethnic minorities or with English as their second language. Nationally, the figures for the level of segregation using each indicator are not related to the proportion of students educated in the private sector (around 7% in England), nor with changes in the tiny proportion educated in hospitals or Pupil Referral Units. However, the segregation level for each indicator is strongly linked to the simple prevalence of that indicator in the national school system. As the number of pupils in any category grows the dispersal of students with that characteristic tends to be more evenly spread between schools (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 – Correlation (R) between level of segregation for any indicator and the prevalence of that indicator in any year, secondary schools, England 1989-2013

Indicator of possible disadvantage	Number of pupils, SEN statement	Number of pupils, SEN no statement	Number of non-white pupils	Number of EAL pupils	Number of FSM pupils
Correlation with level of segregation by the same indicator	-0.94	-0.90	-0.93	-0.96	-0.80

Given the scale of correlations in Table 4.6, it is not necessary to look much further for the determinants of segregation by SEN, ethnic origin or first language. The prevalence of any indicator of disadvantage can change because of a change in population for the mainstream school system, such as those caused by increased immigration (affecting the number of non-White UK children and those speaking English as a second language). This means that schools in some areas are taking in a slightly different profile of students. The prevalence can also change due to an improvement or modification in reporting, such as greater sensitivity in spotting special educational needs or in classifying ethnic minority status. Here it is not clear that students are actually moving schools; rather the suggestion is that students are being identified differently in their existing schools. The impact on segregation would look the same (i.e. it does not matter here whether a FSM-eligible pupil exchanged into a new school or whether an existing pupil became FSM-eligible due to a change of circumstances). Similarly, in England, there is an on-going policy of integrating children with special educational needs in mainstream schooling, and a parallel increase in the number of children diagnosed as having a special educational need of any kind (Tomlinson 2012). Schools are also closed or merged, and new schools spring up in areas of high demand. Factors such as these can affect the prevalence of any indicator of disadvantage, and/or the distribution of such indicators between schools.

Changes in segregation over time are therefore linked to changes in the level of that indicator in the state-funded school system as a whole. When indicators of disadvantage grow in frequency their dispersal across schools also tends to grow (creating lower levels of calculated segregation), and for FSM this is clearly linked to the economic cycle (Cheng and Gorard 2010). For example, the level of segregation for FSM take-up 1989 to 2013 is correlated with the percentage of FSM students at -0.80. When the economy is good, segregation tends to be higher perhaps partly because fewer families live in poverty. When the economy falters, there is more ‘equality of poverty’ and levels of FSM students rise and appear more evenly spread between schools (Gorard et al. 2003a). A similar picture has emerged from the US, where greater income segregation between schools is linked to increased disparity in income (Owens et al. 2016). However, there is more to FSM segregation than the other indicators because the correlation with prevalence is lower (R of 0.8 means that about 36% of the variation in segregation is yet to be explained).

### Local school types

Most of the factors discussed so far are largely fixed in the sense that education policy is unlikely to have any impact on them. To make a difference to populations, areas of residence for recent immigrants,

transport and housing would take a long time to impact on the local intakes to schools. The most malleable factors identified as associated with SES segregation between schools relate to the types of schools in each area, and the ways in which school places are allocated.

The problem of segregation seems to arise partly from school diversity, giving families a reason, often perhaps a spurious reason, for choosing a school other than its quality or proximity (Taylor et al. 2005). In the US, newer types of school include a range of charter schools (Gleason et al 2010, Ni 2012), similar to the Swedish model of ‘free’ schools. Both have been emulated in England by Academies and free schools since 2000, and more recently by UTCs and Studio schools (Gorard 2014b). In addition, any school that selects its intake in terms of religion will tend to increase segregation by ethnic origin (Harris 2012), parental income and education (Allen and West 2011), and social class (Shepherd and Rogers 2012). Any school that selects students by prior attainment will inadvertently increase segregation by social class because of the well-established association between the social background and attainment (Chapter 3).

Some of the strongest associations are between segregation and the types of local schools (Table 4.7). The proportion of local schools that are controlled by the local authority, comprehensive, or at least not selective (here labelled community schools) is strongly linked to lower levels of, and reduction over time in, all types of segregation (-0.7 R for FSM). This is a crucial finding. Diversity of schooling, and giving families any reason to choose schools by their type rather than perceived quality or convenience, is linked to increased clustering of types of pupils, with all of the dangers that this entails (see above).

Table 4.7 - Correlation between local school characteristics and local authority segregation figures, England 2015

	FSM-eligible segregation	SEN statement segregation	Non-white ethnicity segregation
Community schools %	-0.7	-0.3	
Foundation schools %	0.3		
Special schools %	0.3		
City Technology Colleges %	0.3		0.3
Academy Converters %	0.5	0.3	0.2
Selective schools %	0.6	0.3	

Note: blank cells represent correlations of less than 0.2 in absolute value

The remaining special schools in any area drive up both SEN and FSM segregation because of the link between FSM and SEN (Chapter 3). Foundation schools and City Technology Colleges are partly or overtly selective, and this drives segregation because of the link between early attainment and disadvantage. The more surprising result, to some extent, is the raised segregation in areas with more converter Academies (see also Chapter 6).

Originally, Academies were set up both to stop the spiral of decline in existing schools and to improve student results in heavily disadvantaged areas. The schools selected to participate at the outset were among the most disadvantaged and so where new Academies ended up taking a smaller share of local FSM-eligible students than previously, this meant that neighbouring schools had to take more and so the local clustering of poorer children into specific schools actually reduced.

However, the Academies programme more recently has been driven by a purported school improvement agenda, and the social justice element is now largely ignored, meaning that almost any school is eligible to convert. Private fee-paying schools, ex-grammar schools, Foundation schools and many others (including primary) have become Academies. And the even newer Free Schools have been set up as Academies from fresh. All of these are clearly nothing like the most disadvantaged schools in their area, and were not in anything like a spiral of decline beforehand. This raises the very real danger of increased local SES segregation between schools, especially where the new Academies also begin to take a

smaller share of FSM eligible students like the early ones did (Gorard 2009b). Over time and across political administrations, their number has grown quickly to become the majority school type at secondary level.

The newer Converter Academies generally take far less than their fair share of FSM pupils, while the original Sponsor-led Academies generally take more than their share. They have very different profiles. For example, 51% of Converter Academies take less than half their ‘fair share’ of FSM pupils, whereas only 3% of Sponsor-led Academies do. The difference between Converter and Sponsor-led Academies then manifests itself in their association with local levels of SES segregation between schools (Table 4.8). Whereas, in 2012 the existence of Converter Academies in any LEA was strongly positively linked to local levels of SES segregation between schools (Pearson’s R or around +0.41), the existence of Sponsor-led Academies was weakly but negatively linked to SES segregation (R of around -0.14). However, LEAs with both types of Academies were linked to higher levels of segregation than LEAs with a higher proportion of community schools. In terms of mixed intakes, having state-maintained community schools is clearly preferable.

Table 4.8 – Correlation between percentage of each type of local school with local level of segregation, England 2012

LEA-level segregation GS FSM	Percentage of Sponsor-led Academies	Percentage of Converter Academies
2012	-0.14	+0.41

Internationally, it is quite clear that the extent to which pupils are clustered together with others like them socially and ethnically as well as in terms of ability is much higher in countries with selective systems (Jenkins et al. 2008, OECD 2014). Segregation tends to be high in countries with tracking or selection at a young age such as Germany, Austria, Belgium and Hungary. Such ‘segregation’ is lower in developed countries with little or no diversity of schooling such as those in Scandinavia, linked to low achievement gaps, higher average attainment and also the highest percentage of very skilled students (Alegre and Ferrer 2010).

In England, in areas that have grammar schools, those students living in the most disadvantaged parts are less likely to attend a grammar even where they have high prior attainment scores (Cribb et al. 2013). Grammar schools are fully selective by attainment testing at age 11, and take only 28% of their ‘fair’ share of poorer children (DfE 2017). And even where those attending grammar schools are denoted FSM-eligible they will have been so for fewer years. Of course, some of these differences could be due to the kind of pupil populations in areas where the minority of 163 grammar schools remain, which could differ from the rest of the country. To assess this, Tables 4.9 and 4.10 compare those attending grammar schools with only those pupils in areas with grammar schools. These make it clear that the differences are not produced by the geography of where grammar schools still exist. In fact, pupils in grammar schools are even less representative of their local areas than they are of pupils in England as a whole. Those attending grammar schools live in less deprived IDACI districts, within each local authority. In particular, even the few FSM-eligible pupils in grammar schools have been eligible for noticeably fewer years than in the rest of the school system.

Table 4.9 – Characteristics of grammar school pupils compared to pupils in selective areas, 2015

	Grammar	Not grammar
Mean IDACI score	0.1	0.2
FSM years by KS4, all pupils	0.3	1.6
FSM years by KS4, FSM pupils	5.1	6.8

Grammar schools admit negligible numbers of students with statements of SEN (biased towards dyslexia). And they take more Pakistani and Chinese origin students than represented by the local population.

Table 4.10 – Characteristics of grammar school pupils compared to pupils in selective areas, percentages, 2015

	Grammar	Not grammar
Non-White UK	25	18
EAL students	11	13
SEN students with statement	0	4
SEN students no statement	5	13

## Conclusions

All of the above factors can and do influence whether children go to schools with others like them, and so to the changes over time in Figure 4.1. In England, around 30% of students would have to exchange their schools if SES and related segregation between schools were to be eliminated. Evidence from around the world shows that such segregation is unnecessary, and harmful to students. It is associated with greater unfairness in practice, worse opportunities for the most disadvantaged, lowered aspirations, and lower participation rates in later education. And all of these risks are run by the system for no clear gain (Chapter 6).

The clustering of students with similar characteristics in particular schools is partly determined by factors outside education, indeed often outside immediate government control. The economic cycle, the nature of regional populations, residential segregation within regions, local population density, quality of public transport (especially in rural areas), and patterns of recent immigration are all determinants of either the level or trend in SES segregation between schools. Other determinants are quite clearly within education and within government control. The policy of inclusion for children with disabilities and learning challenges and the growth of diagnoses for non-visible disabilities have led to a general decline in segregation by SEN. The allocation of over-subscribed school places in terms of catchments, distance or feeder schools exacerbates or at least retains the impact of existing residential segregation (Taylor et al. 2001). Policy solutions include area-wide bussing, banding or local authority lotteries, combined with free travel, for those entitled, to any feasible school rather than simply to the nearest available. However, the biggest single controllable factor is the diversity of national school provision.

The quality of education available in a national school system should not depend upon where a student lives or which school they attend. Therefore, new school types or schemes for only *some* pupils are not the way forward. The poverty gap in education will more likely be reduced by reducing differences between schools, opportunities and treatments, than by celebrating them. There should therefore be no state-funded diversity of schooling, with the state wilfully continuing to provide what they claim (by implication) is an inferior experience for some. For example, if grammar schools were clearly better schools then their advocates are effectively arguing that the 80% in secondary-modern schools should be condemned to an inferior education by the state. In fact, it is not clear that that any type of school is better than any other, and so the money invested in them could have been used more fruitfully elsewhere. All young people should be included in mainstream institutions as far as possible. Controlling the school mix like this is one of the most important educational tasks for central and local governments – but it is one that they routinely evade (or worse).

