

Narrowing attainment gaps for disadvantaged learners:

Recent policy and practice in England

OECD Paris

11 Feb 2010



Our goal: raise standards and equity

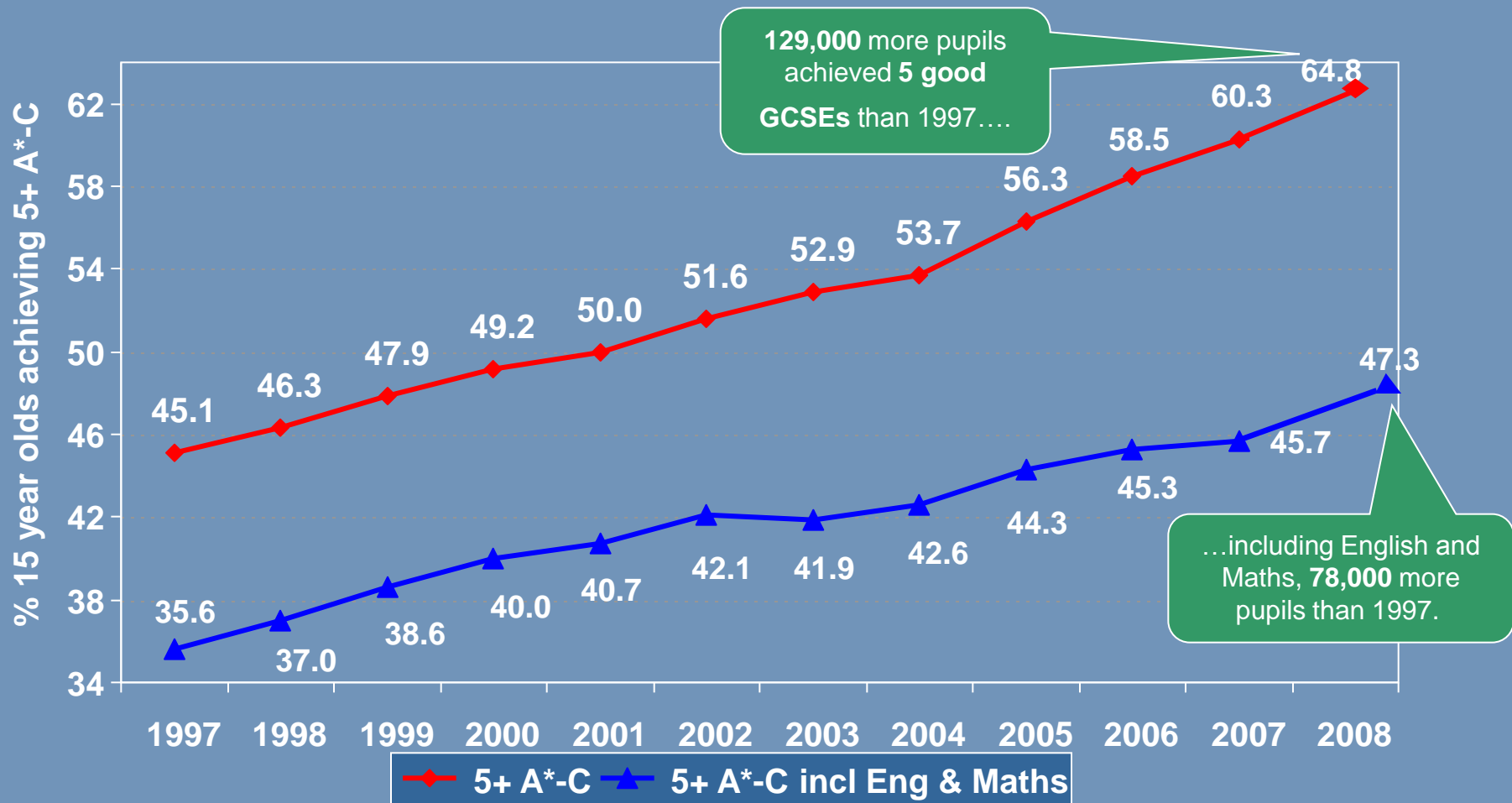
UK Government is publicly committed to 5 goals:

- **raise the educational achievement of all young people**
- **narrow educational gap between learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers**
- **reduce number of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET)**
- **require all young people to stay in education/ training to age 18 by 2013**
- **translate better skills into better pay and jobs.**

Measuring equity longitudinally

- Tackling these tasks requires good long-term data.
- Since 1997, every child has a Unique Pupil Number.
- It holds details of learners' backgrounds – but anonymised, so no privacy concerns have arisen.
- We assess progress, and log results against UPNs.
- So we can measure impact of education interventions for different types of learners.
- This is hugely valuable in evaluating new policies.
- Results are very revealing – and highly motivating!

Whole cohort: standards are up

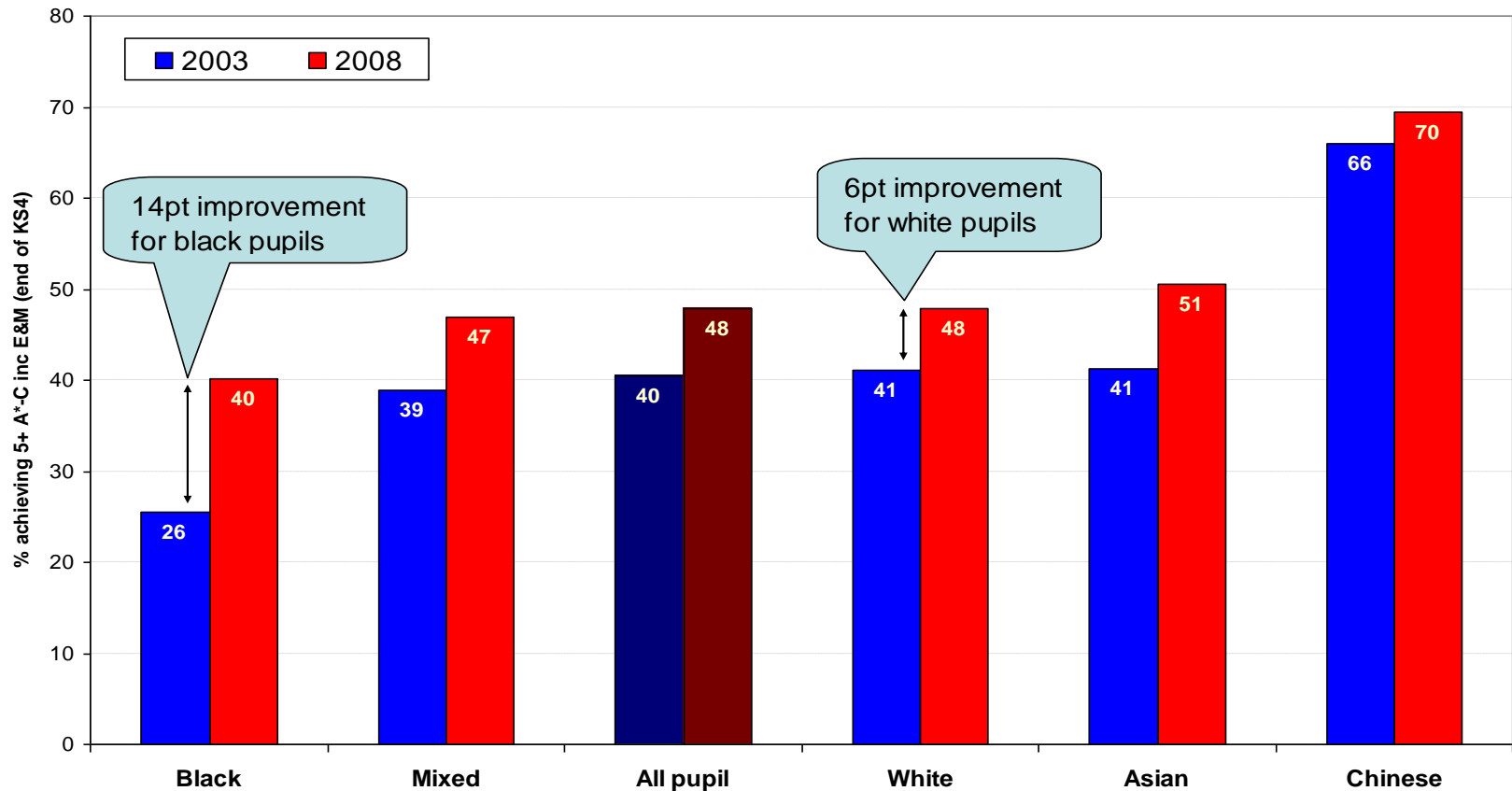


And some key gaps have narrowed...

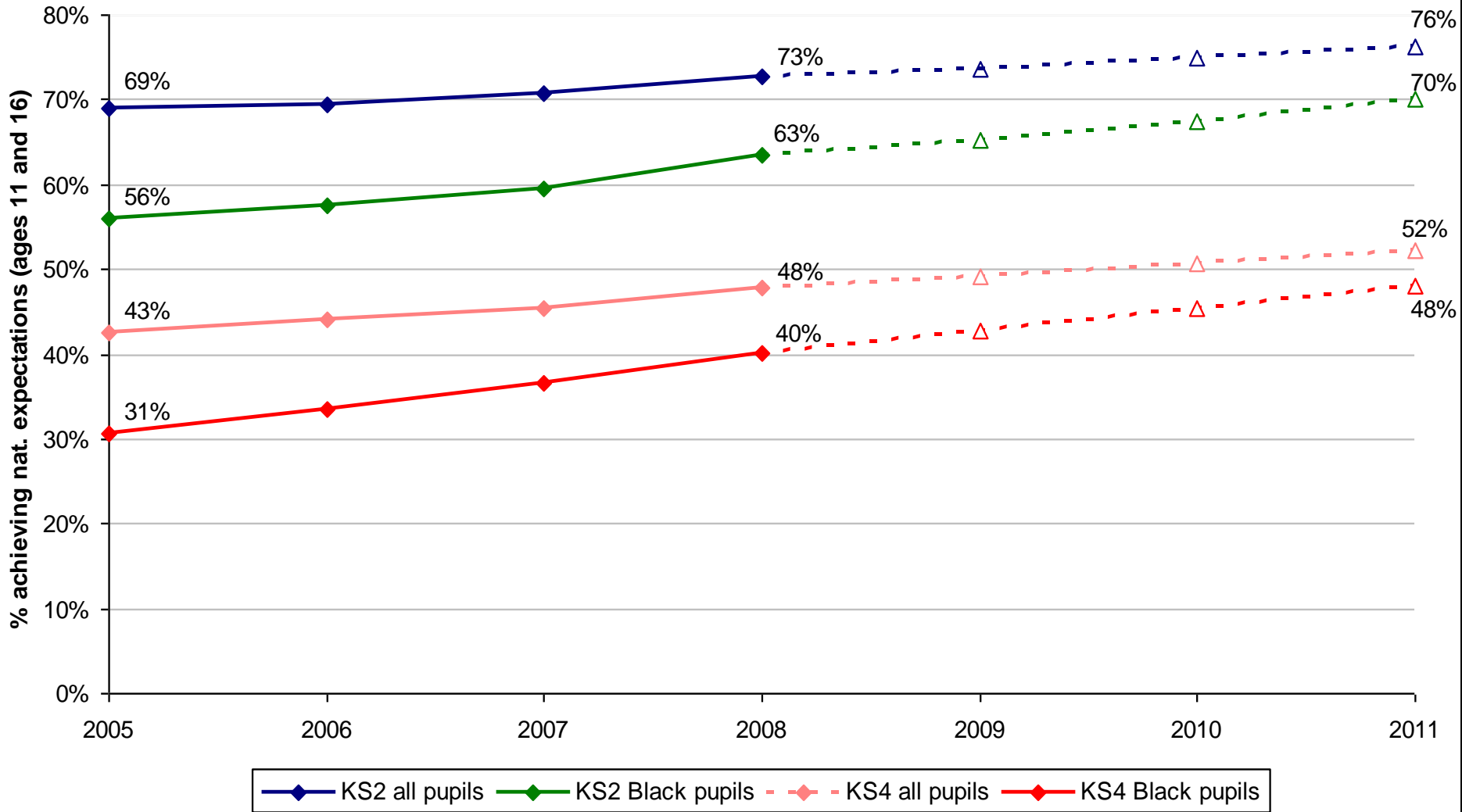
- Most deprived areas of England improving at double the average rate
- Weakest schools have made fastest progress
- Ethnicity: all main ethnic groups are making faster progress than White British children.

Minority pupils catching up at 16...

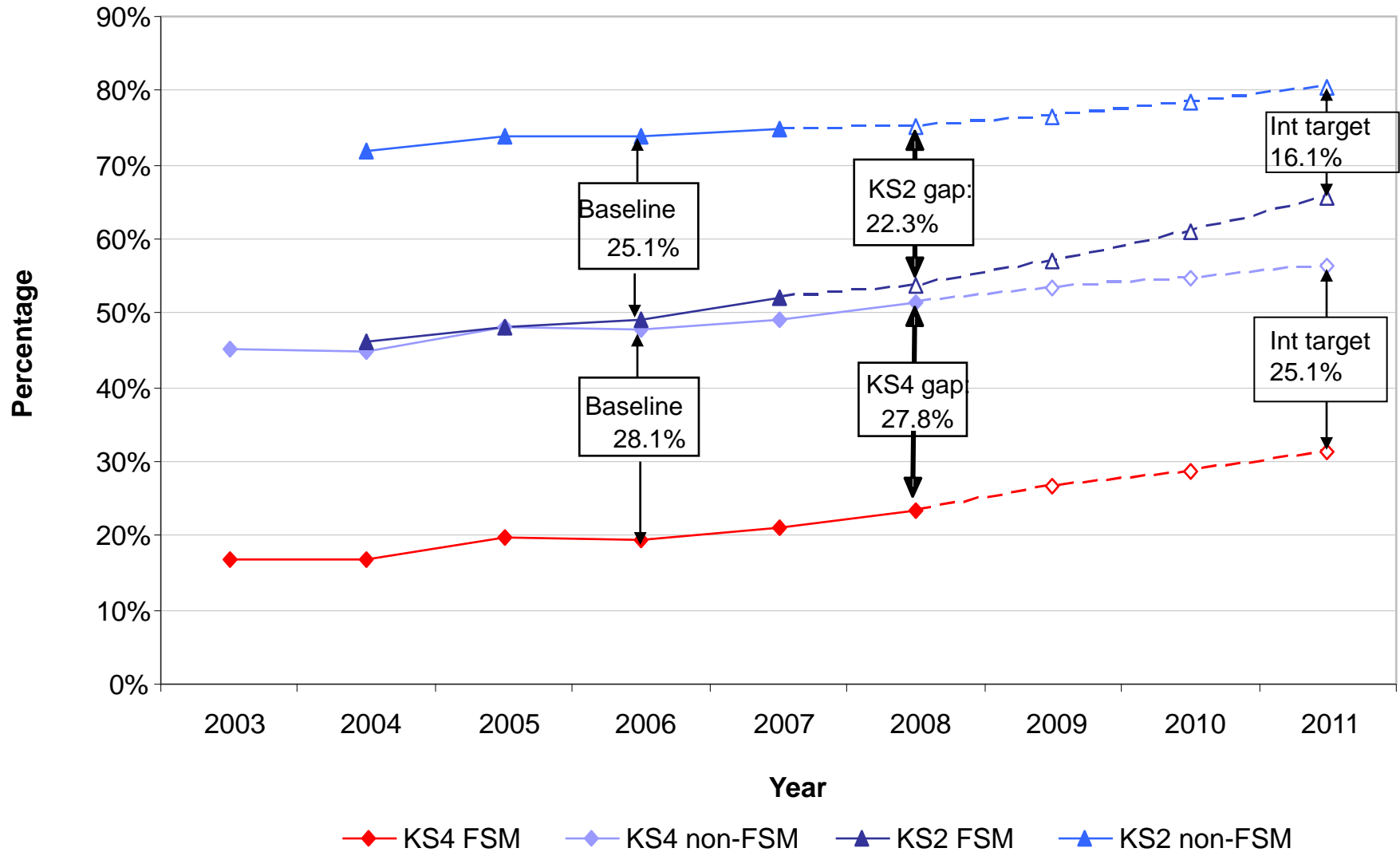
KS4 Achievement in GCSE Performance for Major Ethnic Groups from 2003-2008



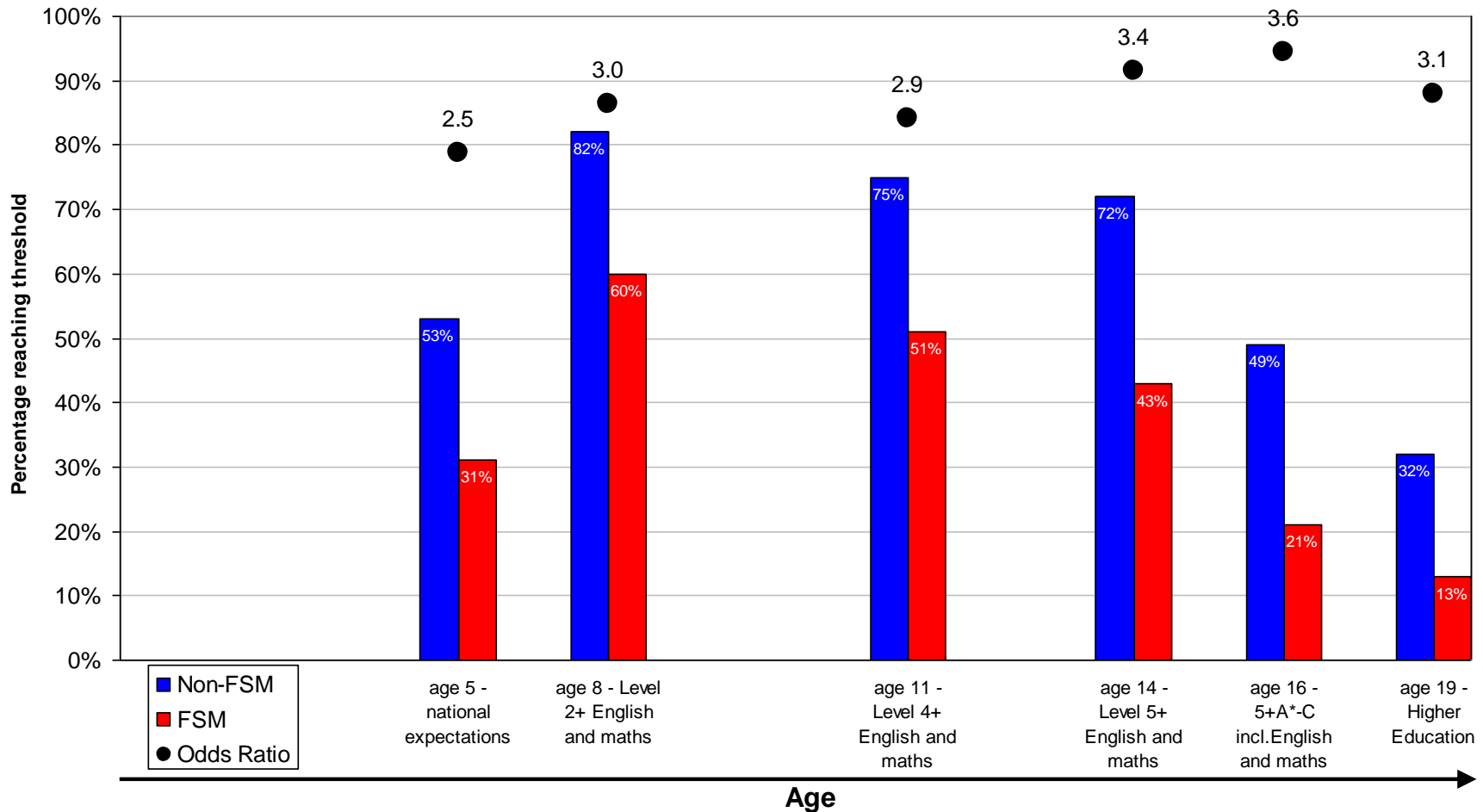
...especially Black pupils



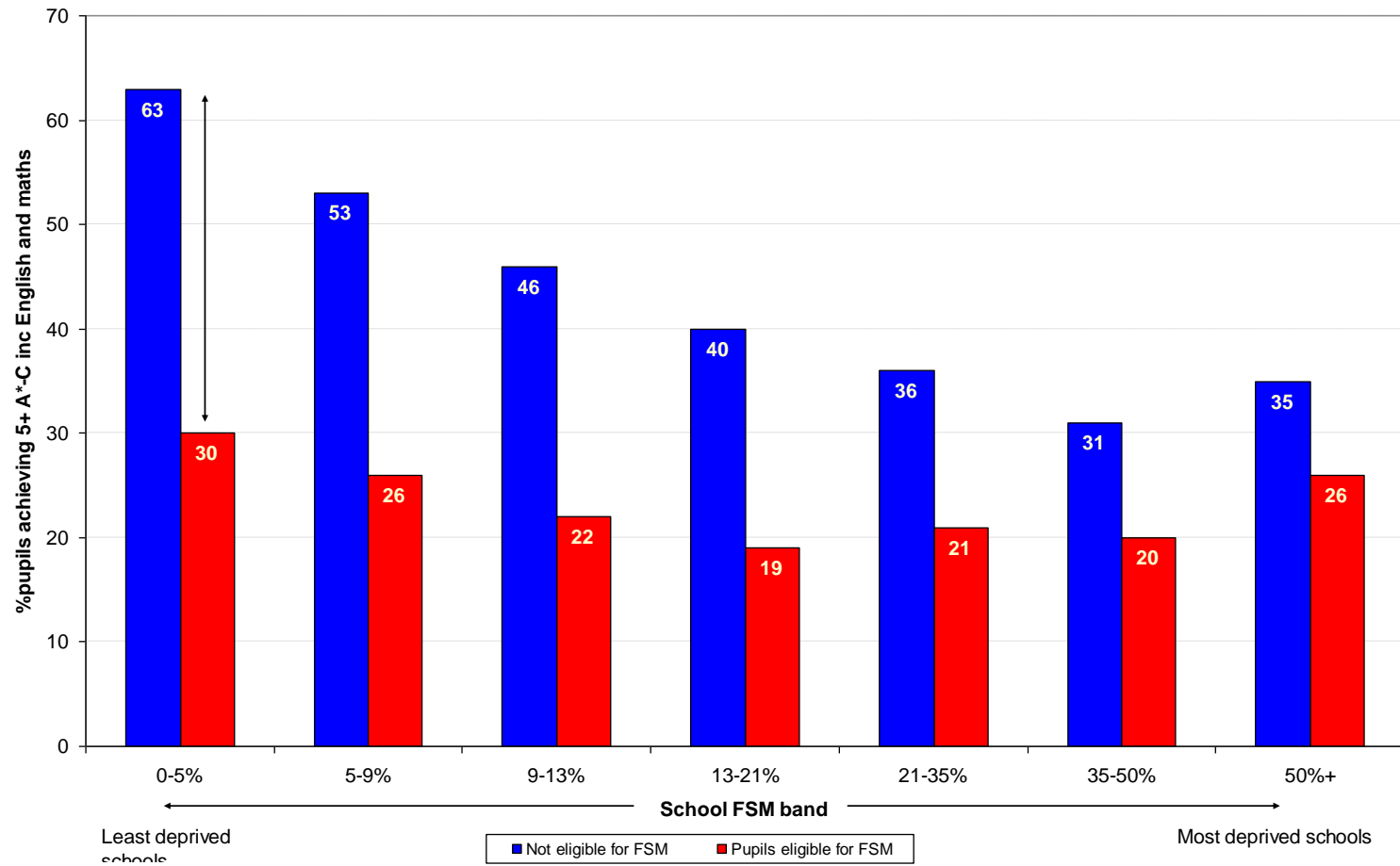
But poverty gaps remain very wide



Low-income learners have three times worse success rates than their peers – from age 5 to 18!



Gaps are largest in schools with fewest disadvantaged pupils!



Action strategy to narrow gaps / deliver equity

Raising visibility and awareness

Catch pupils before they slip back. Set higher, not lower, aspirations for the at-risk groups.

Early years, parents

Equity demands very early intervention. Late cures are more expensive than early prevention

Targeted support in basics

The weakest pupils need the best teachers and the extra help – one to one tuition works very well.

Relevant curriculum , relevant skills and qualifications

Broaden pupils' experiences, raise aspirations, address linked issues (health etc). Extra Mile project. 14-19 and HE.

Raising the Participation Age legislation

All young people now required to stay in learning to age 18