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## Boys falling further behind at school

Boys are falling further behind girls after just two years of school despite millions spent attempting to narrow the gender gap.



By **Graeme Paton**, Education Editor

11:23AM GMT 08 Dec 2009

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Official figures show boys are significantly more likely to struggle in the basics of English, mathematics and science at the age of seven.

According to Government data, the gap has widened in almost every area of early achievement over the last 12 months.

The disclosure will spark fresh fears that boys are being failed at a young age.

It is claimed that a poor start to school has serious knock-on effects throughout their education and means they are eventually less likely to

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gain good GCSEs.

The claims come just weeks after a report from the Centre for Policy Studies said the “ideological fads” of the left-wing educational establishment had impacted hardest on working class boys.

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It said failure to teach reading and writing properly to infants drove many “angry and resentful boys out of school and into trouble”.

According to the latest figures from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the gulf remains widest in writing.

Some 86.7 per cent of girls reached the standard expected of the average seven-year-old last summer compared with only 75.3 per cent of boys. The gap widened over the last 12 months from 11.1 percentage points to 11.4.

Girls also pulled further ahead in maths and science while the gap in reading – some eight percentage points – remained the same.

Experts claim that boys are naturally late starters but are being held back because of increased access to television and video games, combined with over-exposure to formal education at a young age.

Earlier this year, the high-profile Cambridge Primary Review called for formal lessons to be delayed by a year to give children greater access to a play-based curriculum.

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Dame Gillian Pugh, the review's chairman, said: "There is no research evidence that shows that early access to formal learning does children any good and quite a lot of good evidence to show that it actually can do some harm. Countries where children start more formal learning at six or seven actually overtake us as the children get older."

Dr Richard House, senior lecturer in psychotherapy at Roehampton University, said: "We must also face the politically incorrect fact that there exist significant gender differences in children's development and learning, with boys being bound to suffer more than girls in a developmentally inappropriate curricular framework where learning through movement and physical activity is afforded less importance than is appropriate."

"Moreover, there is a grave danger that boys will simply become disaffected and 'turn off' from learning if they experience comparative failure at too young an age. This makes it all the more important that young children experience a learning milieu that is appropriate to their developmental needs, and which does not unduly tax them in ways that they're just not ready for."

Currently, teachers informally assess pupils' performance in the core subjects at the end of Key Stage One – aged five to seven – in England.

The latest figures represent a breakdown of this summer's results by gender, ethnicity and social class.

Figures show overall standards in reading, writing and science increased this year compared with 2008, while maths stalled. Pupils from Chinese and Asian backgrounds performed the best, it was disclosed.

In reading, 80.5 per cent of boys gained the standard expected for their age – Level 2 – compared with 88.5 per cent of girls.

In maths, 87.9 per cent of boys made the grade, against 91.1 per cent of girls, while in science 87.2 per cent hit official targets, compared with 90.6 per cent of girls.



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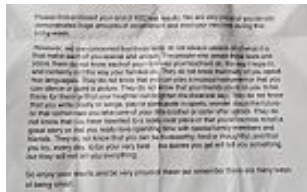


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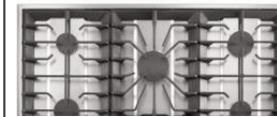
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