**There has been a change to the way pupils are allocated to Key Stage 2 prior attainment groups**

In 2016, changes were introduced to KS2 national curriculum tests, with pupil outcomes expressed as KS2 scaled scores instead of national curriculum levels. A pupil’s prior attainment at KS4 is now calculated as the average of their scaled scores in English reading and maths. Most pupils who took national curriculum tests in the summer 2016 have reached the end of KS4 in 2020/21. Thus, the way in which low, middle and high prior attainment are defined at KS4 has changed. This has an impact on the comparability over time.

Within this statistical release the new categories are calculated in the following way:

* **Low prior attainers** have an average scaled score (average of their English reading and maths scaled scores) **of below 100.**
* **Middle prior attainers** have an average scaled score greater than or equal to 100 **but less than 110**.
* **High prior attainers** have an average scaled score **greater than or equal to 110.**

The scaled scores were part of a more rigorous curriculum that raised the of expectations of young people’s mastery of literacy and numeracy. Further detail on the changes are [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-primary-school-tests-show-schools-rising-to-the-challenge). The impact of this change is to alter the distribution of the number of pupils in each prior attainment category. The data for the latest three years, 2018/19 to 2020/21, is set out in the following table: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/e028baf3-50d7-476b-9801-2d70ad64b021>

The table shows there are fewer pupils in the higher prior attainment group. In 2020/21, 15.4% of the KS4 cohort, with both KS2 and KS4 results available, were in the higher KS2 prior attainment group compared with 42.8% in 2019/20.

The size of the middle KS2 prior attainment group has grown from 45.7% in 2019/20 to 52.4% in 2020/21. Consequently, the percentage of pupils in the low KS2 prior attainment group is much higher, 32.2% in 2020/21 compared with 11.4% in 2019/20.