

YEAR 8 Attainment & Group Performance Deep Dive

Summer Term 2026

Purpose

This sample shows how Reality Behind the Data turns an assessment spreadsheet into a concise leadership narrative: what is strong, where the gaps are, which pupils or groups require closer attention, and what leaders should do next.

Prepared for	Demonstration School
Analysis scope	Year 8 - English, Mathematics, Science and RE
Groups illustrated	Pupil Premium (PP), SEND and High Prior Attainers (HPA)
Data status	Entirely fictional - no real pupil data

Executive summary

The overall picture is mixed rather than weak. English and RE are comparatively secure, while Science requires the most immediate attention. Mathematics is closer to the cohort picture overall, but the SEND gap is large enough to make it a leadership priority.

Overall Secure+	PP Secure+	SEND Secure+	HPA Advanced+
58%	48%	31%	72%

Headline findings

1	Science is the clearest whole-cohort priority Secure+ is 41%, with both PP and SEND pupils performing below their comparison groups.
2	SEND requires diagnosis, not a single generic intervention The gap appears across subjects but is particularly pronounced in Mathematics and Science.
3	HPA performance is positive but conversion matters Strong overall HPA outcomes should be followed by subject-level checks on movement into the highest attainment bands.
4	PP performance is weaker, but the pattern is not uniform The size of the PP gap varies by subject, so targeted subject responses are preferable to a single cohort-wide strategy.

Leadership interpretation

The data does not support a blanket conclusion that Year 8 is underperforming. Instead, it points to a smaller number of specific issues: Science attainment, SEND access and performance, and the conversion of higher prior attainment into the top bands. These are more useful starting points for action than the overall average alone.

Subject performance

The table below combines cohort attainment with group gaps. A negative gap means the named group is performing below its comparator.

Subject	Cohort avg	Secure+	PP gap	SEND gap	Priority
English	61%	70%	-4pp	-12pp	Medium
Mathematics	54%	59%	-5pp	-17pp	High
Science	47%	41%	-7pp	-19pp	High
RE	63%	72%	-2pp	-10pp	Low

Science - highest priority

The combination of the lowest cohort average, the lowest Secure+ rate and the largest SEND gap makes Science the clearest immediate priority. Before intervention, leaders should check assessment validity and question-level patterns to distinguish curriculum gaps from assessment-specific weakness.

Mathematics - targeted group concern

Overall Mathematics is not the weakest subject, but the SEND gap is substantial. This is a good example of why cohort averages alone can hide an important equity issue.

English and RE - relative strengths

Both subjects show stronger Secure+ outcomes. Their group gaps still warrant monitoring, but the data does not suggest the same level of urgency as Mathematics or Science.

Pupil-group analysis

Group labels are useful only when they lead to a more precise question. SEND, PP and HPA are not homogeneous groups, so the next stage is to identify which pupils, subjects and assessment strands are creating the pattern.

Group	Headline outcome	Interpretation	Recommended check
PP	48% Secure+	Below overall cohort; gap varies by subject.	Identify subjects and pupils driving the gap.
SEND	31% Secure+	Largest concern; particularly weak in Maths and Science.	Reviewed, access arrangements, curriculum gaps and
HPA	72% Advanced+	Strong overall, but headline figure may hide inconsistency.	Check each subject for pupils remaining Secure rather than

The reality behind the data

A single headline such as 'SEND is weak' is not an adequate diagnosis. The useful question is: **which SEND pupils, in which subjects, against which expected standard, and by how much?** The same principle applies to PP and HPA. This is where the analysis moves from reporting to decision-making.

Recommended action plan

Recommendations are deliberately specific enough to act on, but they should be tested against school context before implementation.

Priority	Action	Owner / discussion	Review evidence
1	Moderate the Science assessment and review question-level Science before designing intervention.	Science lead/department head/SLT	Confirmed weak strands; moderation notes; Science subject leads
2	Identify the SEND pupils contributing most strongly to Mathematics/Subject gaps	SEND Co-ordinator	Pupil-level diagnostic list using anonymous ID
3	Agree a six-week targeted response for the highest-priority gaps rather than generic intervention	SLT/Subject leads	Baseline intervention record and follow-up action
4	Review HPA conversion by subject, focusing on pupils who remain below standard	HPA lead/Subject leads	Added to 'Excelling' watchlist and subject lead
5	Repeat the same measures at the next assessment point to judge what gaps are closing.	SLT/Subject leads	Comparable dashboard and commentary.

What a client receives

Dashboard Headline attainment and group comparisons.	Interpretation A concise explanation of what matters and why.	Priorities Clear ranking of subjects, groups or issues requiring attention.
Action Practical recommendations linked to the evidence.	Leadership summary Language suitable for SLT and governor discussion.	Optional follow-up A walkthrough to discuss findings and next steps.

Ready to understand the reality behind your data?

Start with an anonymised dataset and a clear question. We will agree the scope before any work begins.

enquiries@realitybehindthedata.co.uk
realitybehindthedata.co.uk

This document is a fictional demonstration. No figures relate to a real school or pupil.