



# School Prioritisation for Maximum Impact

Vicky Dee – Director of School Partnerships  
The Brilliant Club



# Our Mission

The Brilliant Club works across the UK, mobilising the PhD community to support less advantaged students to access the most competitive universities, and succeed when they get there.



# Why does The Brilliant Club exist?

UCAS comparison of progression to the most competitive universities by 18-year-olds:

28 in  
100


for the most  
advantaged  
quintile

2 in  
100

for the most  
disadvantaged  
quintile

\*Measured using the UCAS Multiple Equality Measure


# The Brilliant Club



## The Scholars Programme

The Scholars Programme is delivered by PhD researchers in schools across the UK, to pupils age 8-18.


[Find out more](#)



## Join the Dots

Join the Dots brings schools and colleges together with universities to help build successful transitions for less advantaged students.


[Find out more](#)



## Parent Power

Parent Power creates parent communities across the UK, each one supported by an anchor institution.

[Find out more](#)



## Access and Success

Alongside our core programmes, our Access and Success Projects team collaborates with other organisations to provide bespoke small and large scale projects.

[Find out more](#)



# Some of our brilliant courses

KS4/5



The Scholars Programme




**Basic Game Theory: Understanding the Science of Decision Making and Social Mechanisms**  
Key Stage 4 Programme

Pupil Name:  School:

Coursebook Designed by: Housheer, Sofia Strand

**S** **B**

The Scholars Programme




**Can Computers Help Us Make Better Batteries?**  
Key Stage 4 Programme

Pupil Name:  School:

Coursebook Designed by: Sami Ouladine

**S** **B**

The Scholars Programme



**RACISM AND RESISTANCE**


**Rap, Racism and Resistance: A Critical Perspective**  
Key Stage 4 Programme

Pupil Name:  School:

Coursebook Designed by: Billi Kaur

**S** **B**

The Scholars Programme



**Symmetry, Symmetry Breaking and Why the Universe Doesn't Annihilate Itself**  
Key Stage 5 Programme

Pupil Name:  School:

Coursebook Designed by: Lauren Martin

**S** **B**

The Scholars Programme



**Infectious Disease – How can we prevent future pandemics?**  
Key Stage 4 Programme

Pupil Name:  School:

Coursebook Designed by: Henry Spanton

**S** **B**

The Scholars Programme



**Disability Across Time**  
Key Stage 4 Programme

Pupil Name:  School:

Coursebook Designed by: Felicity McKee

**S** **B**

The Scholars Programme



**hello future.**

**Engineering Materials – How do materials help shape the world we live in?**  
Key Stage 4 Programme

Pupil Name:  School:

Coursebook Designed by: James Wilson - The University of York

**S** **B**

The Scholars Programme



**Oceans and Climate Change**  
Key Stage 5 Programme

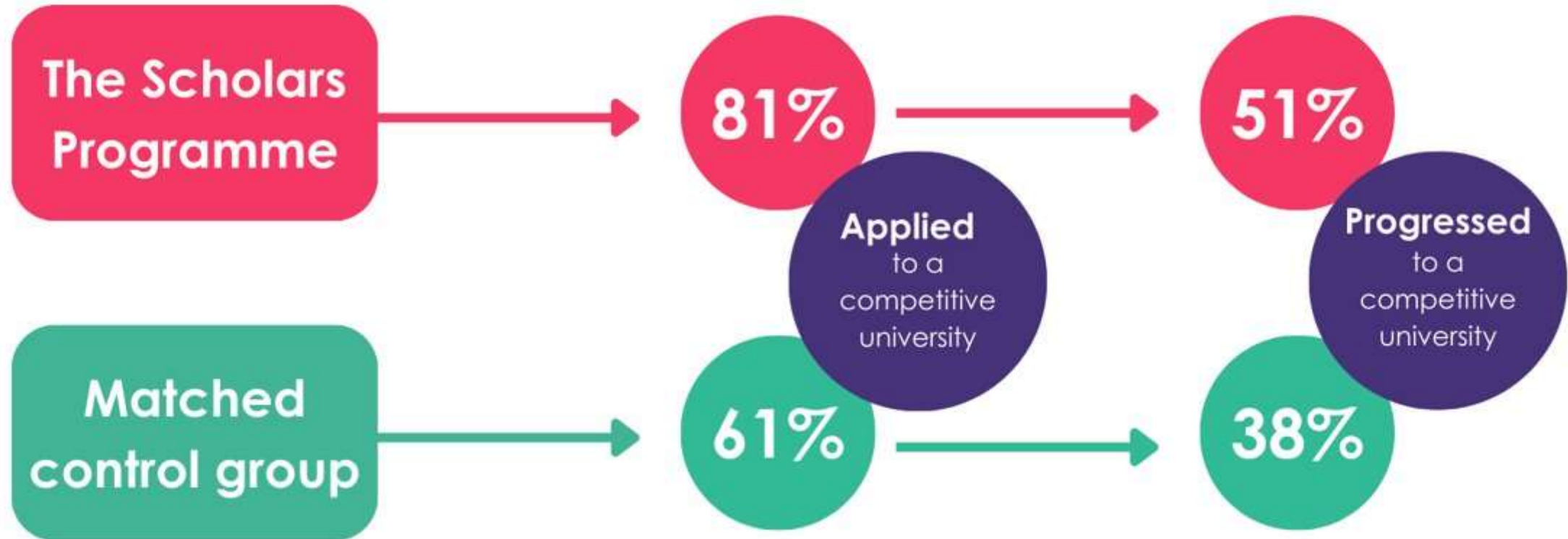
Pupil Name:  School:

Coursebook Designed by: Sandy Averis

**S** **B**

# Programme Impact: Application and progression

Year 12 students who complete The Scholars Programme are significantly more likely to apply to and receive offers from competitive universities compared to peers from similar backgrounds. As a result, they also progress to competitive universities at a higher rate.







Right now, students from the **least advantaged** backgrounds have a **1 in 33** chance of accessing the most competitive universities, compared to **1 in 3** of the **most advantaged**.



This disadvantage doesn't disappear when they enter university.



This affects an individual beyond their time at university and impacts society as a whole.

Disadvantaged students are therefore

**11x**

more likely to **miss out** on **life-changing** higher education.

DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS ARE

**3x**

MORE LIKELY TO MISS OUT ON A 1ST OR 2:1 GRADE AT UNIVERSITY

Graduates from the most competitive universities are more likely to **access professional careers** and have higher rates of **life satisfaction**. On average, they will earn **£10,000** more than their peers.



# Our work across the UK



Approx. 800  
schools per  
year



**575 renewal**

**225 new**



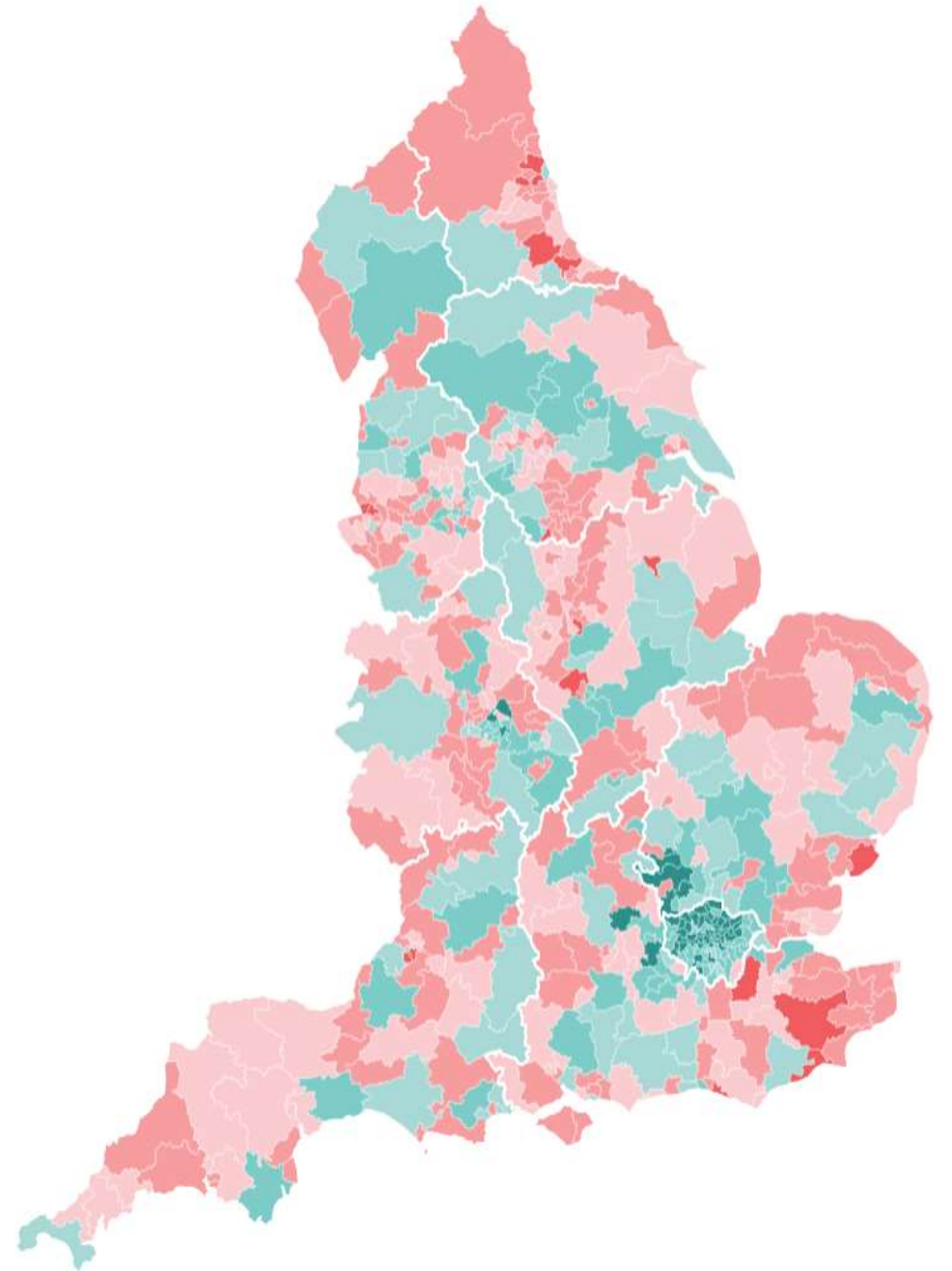
# Our recent approach



*“Reach out and build secure relationships with more schools and colleges – especially those in areas where we have not worked before and social mobility cold spots.”*

# The New Strategy (2026-29)

- Approx. 5,000 new students each year ~ 300 schools
- Place at the forefront of our strategy for growth
- The Brilliant Club, not The Scholars Programme



# Sutton Trust Opportunity Index

Ranks all constituencies in England by:

- school attainment
- access to higher education
- employment status
- earnings of young people eligible for free school meals (FSM) at secondary school

Research brief



## The Opportunity Index

The geography of opportunity and social mobility in England

Erica Holt-White, Carl Cullinane and Rebecca Montacute  
May 2025



### Overview

- The 20 constituencies with the highest ranking for opportunity are in London, with East Ham ranked top. Amongst the top 50 constituencies, all but 8 are in London.
- The highest ranked area outside of London is Birmingham Perry Bar (West Midlands), at position 23. The lowest ranked London borough is Orpington, at 327th.
- Comparing the highest ranked area of East Ham (London) to the lowest ranked area of Newcastle upon Tyne Central and West (North East) shows a 30 percentage point gap in achievement of GCSE grade 5 in English and maths between FSM pupils in both areas.
- FSM pupils from East Ham are over three times more likely to have a degree by age 22, at 35%, compared to those in Newcastle upon Tyne Central and West, at 10%.
- While 18% of FSM pupils from London are in the top 20% of earners at age 28, only 7% of those from the North East are, as are 7% from the North West and 7% from Yorkshire and the Humber.
- FSM pupils from Ruislip Northwood and Pinner are six times more likely to fall in this top 20% of earners compared to those in Leeds East, at 25% compared to 4% respectively.

# Sutton Trust OI Lowest Ranked Constituencies



Rank	Constituency	Region	Attainment 8	A Level APS result	Sustained education/employment after KS4	%age with degree by age 22	Average earnings at age 28 (£)	Sustained employment at age 28
530	Liverpool Walton	North West	23	28	50%	12%	15,683	53%
531	Bootle	North West	27	25	51%	8%	15,679	55%
532	Clacton	East of England	25	25	54%	13%	15,921	50%
533	Newcastle upon Tyne East and Wallsend	North East	31	26	51%	7%	14,121	51%
534	Bristol East	South West	26	21	53%	11%	15,492	56%
535	Stockton North	North East	28	22	56%	14%	14,456	48%
536	Hastings and Rye	South East	24	29	71%	5%	14,828	44%
537	Sheffield Heeley	Yorkshire and The Humber	25	26	63%	10%	13,617	49%
538	Bristol South	South West	26	27	59%	4%	15,576	51%
539	Lincoln	East Midlands	30	24	51%	8%	14,872	49%
540	Sevenoaks	South East	30	27	56%	5%	15,704	42%
541	Mid Leicestershire	East Midlands	28	32	52%	6%	15,834	39%
542	Cramlington and Killingworth	North East	23	28	47%	8%	16,031	53%
<b>Lowest: 543</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne Central and West	North East	28	28	38%	10%	14,158	46%



# Working in Target Areas



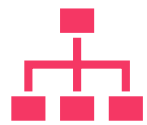
- For the past five years, **~43%** of the students we've worked with go to school in a target area
- By the end of 28-29, we are aiming to increase that figure to **53%**

Securing

Building

Enhancing

# What's Working Well: Leicestershire



Leveraging relationships with secondaries to build presence in primaries (and rewarding recommendations)



Emailing our old schools!



Asking for introductions



Getting out in person



Small, local MATs

# Celebrating our University Partnerships



*Keisha Patel, a PhD student from DMU is teaching pupils at Rushey Mead Academy in Leicester*

“It’s like an experience of what you can pick at university. It’s got me thinking, this is just one subject but there are so many different areas and things at university, it’s quite exciting.”

*Year 9 student*



# A Challenge: Essex

✓ Wanting to increase school presence across the region as it fits our targeting criteria



× Internal logistics of finding local tutors to deliver our programme and universities for graduation events



# A Challenge: Essex



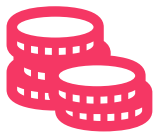
Offering online versions of our programmes



Exploring options with university partners



Keeping targets realistic



Financial travel incentives for tutors



Remembering we can't do it all at once!

