

National Child Measurement Programme
Annual Report 2023-24

Dudley, January 2025

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Executive Summary

- Every year the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) measures the Body Mass Index (BMI) of children in the first and last years of primary school. This helps provide information on the numbers of children who have a healthy weight. This report presents the data from the school year 2023/24 in the context of previous years' data.
- Although there have been small improvements in the Borough since the peak in the first year of the Covid pandemic, one in every four Year 6 children were still obese in 2023/24, together with one in every ten children in Reception.
- The more serious problem of obesity among Year 6 children is highlighted by the fact that fewer than six in every ten children in this group were categorised as having a healthy weight in 2023/24.
- Within the Year 6 cohort there was also a difference in the weight distribution between boys and girls. Obesity appears to be a particular problem among boys of this age in Dudley.
- Children from Black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds have, over recent years appeared to have a higher prevalence of excess weight. Although there was some improvement among minority ethnic groups in reception in 2023/24, the new data continues to highlight problems within particular groups. For example, as many as 31% of Black children were recorded as obese, compared to 24% of others.
- The last few years have shown that children in the north-east of the Borough have, in general, been more likely to be obese.
- The pattern in Dudley over the last eight years is consistent with obesity being more common among children living in areas of greater deprivation, and this is particularly true for the Year 6 cohort.
- In proportion, more children live with obesity in Dudley than in England, a pattern repeated over several years. Obesity is also more prevalent among Year 6 children in Dudley than in many local authorities with similar demographic characteristics.



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Introduction

The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) is part of an effort to promote healthy weight by measuring children annually to assess rates of childhood obesity. Obesity in childhood is, in turn, an indicator of excess weight in adults, which can lead to poor health outcomes.

The NCMP began in 2005/06 and, since then, the heights and weights of children in state-maintained schools in both Reception (ages 4-5 years) and Year 6 (ages 10-11) have been used to calculate individuals' weight categories.

Parents of children measured at Dudley schools receive their results via a letter which details their child's weight status and offers further advice and support on how to achieve a healthy weight.

This report is based on the data collected in Dudley over the eight years since 2015/16, including the most recently published data for children in Dudley Borough schools, collected in the academic year 2023/24. The report uses five weight categories, and these are created by

calculating each child's BMI centile¹ and then allocating it to groups as follows:

Underweight

less than or equal to 2%

Healthy weight

more than 2% & less than 85%

Overweight

more than 85% and less than 95%

Living with obesity

more than or equal to 95%

Living with severe obesity

more than or equal to 99.6%

Owing to school closures during the Covid pandemic, data collected in 2020/21 was only a 10% sample and is therefore not included in this report. For England as a whole, details of the NCMP results for 2023/24 can be seen on the NHS Digital webpages².

In this report the phrase 'children living with excess weight' refers to all those who are above a healthy weight (i.e., have a BMI centile of more than 85%). Those referred to as obese, or living with obesity, include children with severe obesity (i.e., all those with a BMI centile of more than 95%).

¹ A child's BMI is expressed as a 'centile' in order to show how their BMI compares with children who took part in national surveys. For example, a child

on the 75th centile is heavier than 75 out of every 100 other children their age.

² [National Child Measurement Programme, England, 2023/24 school year](#)

Trends by Weight Category

The charts below show the trends for children in Reception and Year 6.

Although the trend in the proportion of Reception-age children living with healthy weight has been relatively stable over the eight years since 2015/16, for those in Year 6 the trend has been more variable.

Although, for the second year in a row, the latest annual results show a slight increase in the proportion of Year 6 children living with healthy weight, this was from a low point in 2021-2022, the first academic year after the pandemic.

More generally, the last nine years have seen small increases in the prevalence of obesity and severe obesity.

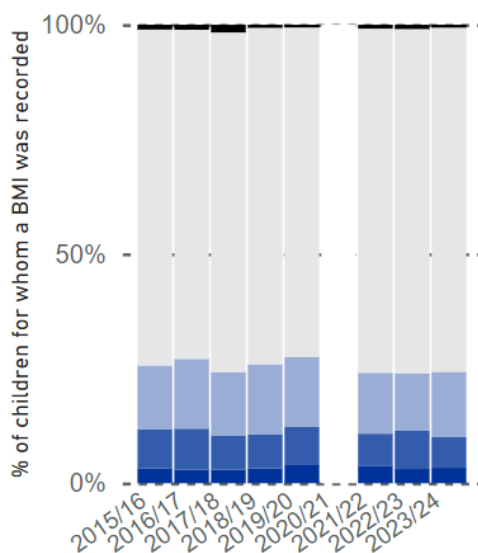
Over nine years, obesity for Year 6 children rose from just over 23% to nearly 25% - the latter being the equivalent of seven children living with obesity in every class of thirty, for example.

Similarly, over the same period, for Year 6 children the narrower category of severe obesity increased from 5.4% to 6.6%.

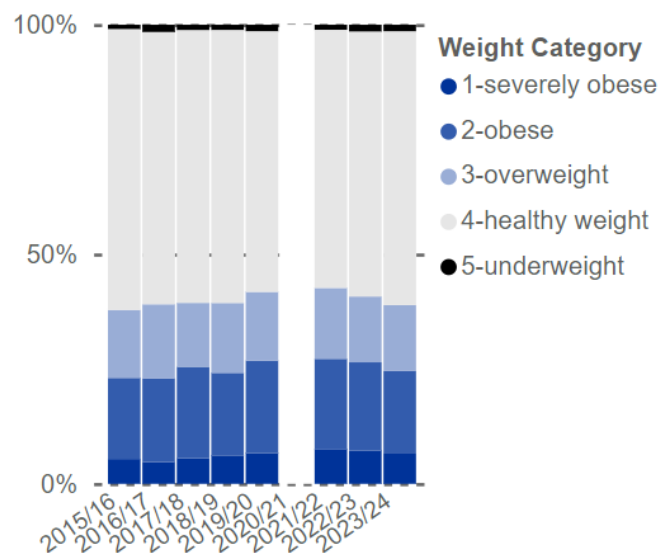
Weight Categories by Year

Dudley, 2015/16 to 2023/24

Reception Children



Year 6 Children



Notes: A new detailed format of local authority level data was introduced in 2015/16 and, as a result, previous years are not included in these charts. Data for 2020-21 is not included as a result of school closures during the pandemic.

Weight Categories by Sex

In 2023/24, the percentages of boys and girls in each weight category were, in general, somewhat similar - a pattern continued from previous years.

For both boys and girls, the proportion of children living with obesity in Year 6 was considerably larger than for their younger counterparts in Reception.

However, perhaps the most marked difference between the sexes for rates

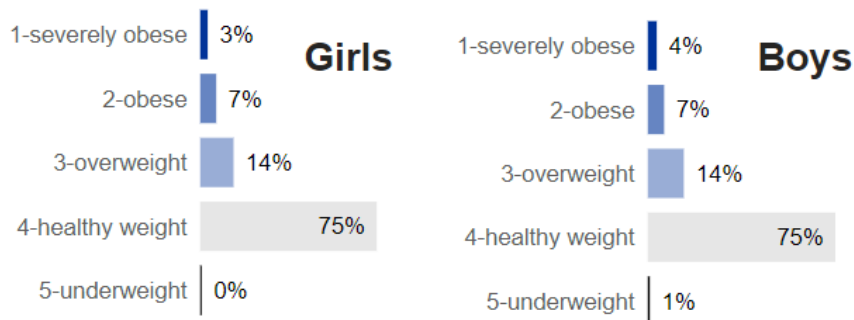
of obesity (including severe obesity) has been in Year 6. Last year this meant that while the obesity rate for girls was 23%, the equivalent for boys was 26%.

This difference between boys and girls in Year 6 is part of a pattern repeated over several years, as can be seen on the next page.

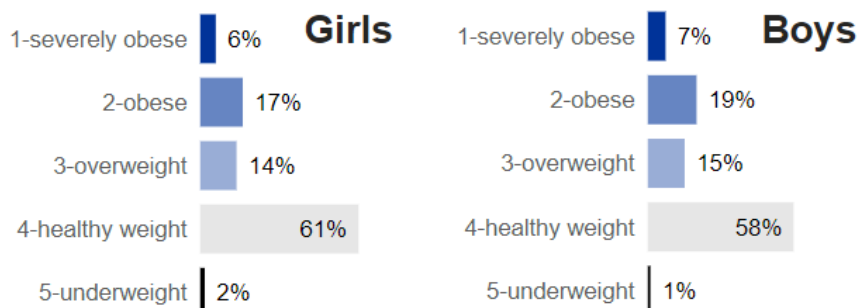
Weight Categories by Sex

Dudley, 2023/24

Reception Children (1,630 girls and 1,734 boys)



Year 6 Children (1,849 girls and 1,926 boys)



Not only did boys seem more likely to be obese, but the changes in obesity rates for both boys and girls possibly suggest a growing difference between the status of children in Reception and Year 6.

In the case of Year 6 children, there appears to have been a difference between the trend for boys and that for

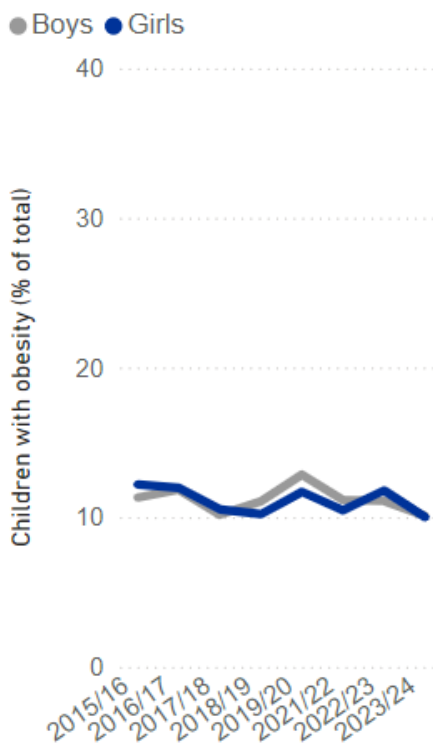
girls. While both groups of Year 6 children show a much higher rate of obesity than for their counterparts in Reception, the difference between boys in the two different year-groups has been much larger than for girls. In particular, much of the peak in obesity levels in 2021/22 was generated by the contribution of boys.

Children Living with Obesity

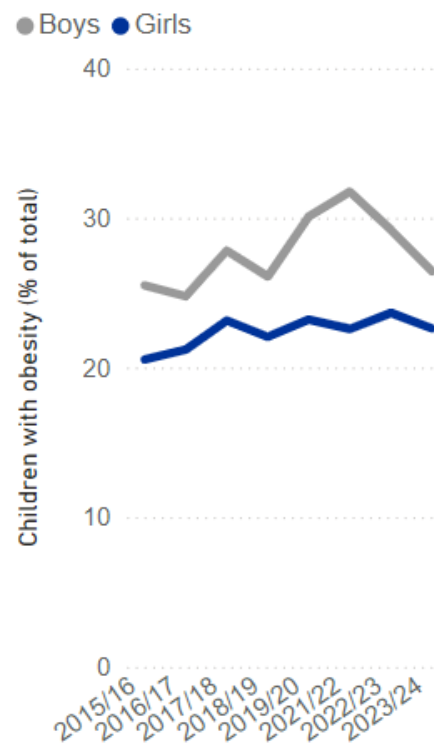
by School Year and Sex

(N.B. 2020/21 data is missing from these charts)

Reception Children



Year 6 Children



Weight Categories by Ethnicity

In this section we consider the patterns of healthy and unhealthy weight in two ways. Firstly, by considering the overall position of children in Dudley Schools from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups together and then, secondly, by considering each of four broad categories of ethnicity - Asian, Black, Mixed and White.

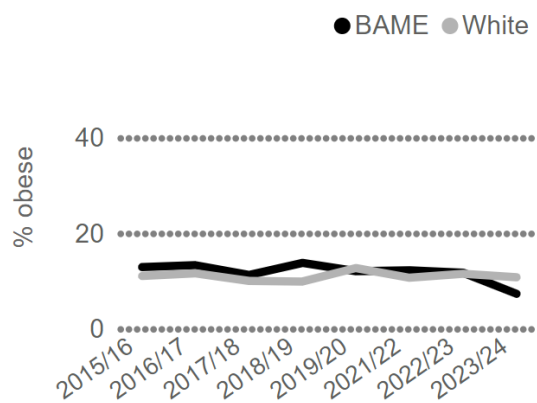
In 2023/24, more than a quarter of children measured in Dudley by the NCMP programme were reported as being from a BAME background³. This represents an increase on previous years.

We have previously reported how, in general, children in Dudley Schools from BAME groups appear to have had a higher prevalence of obesity.

However, in 2023/24 the pattern was slightly different to previous years. The charts below show that, in Year 6, BAME children have consistently reported a higher rate of obesity than those from White groups. But, in the case of the most recent annual data for Reception-age children, a lower rate of obesity was recorded than for White ethnic groups – only the second time this has occurred in eight years.

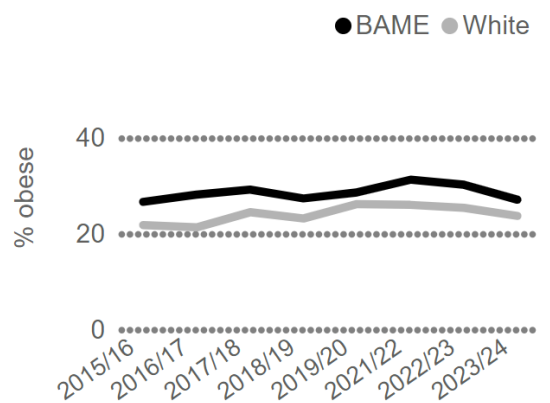
Reception Children Living with Obesity

as a percentage of the total
(N.B. 2020/21 data is missing from this chart)



Year 6 Children Living with Obesity

as a percentage of the total
(N.B. 2020/21 data is missing from this chart)



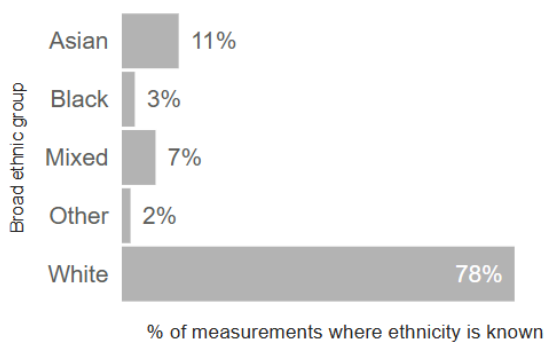
³ This calculation excludes children for which ethnicity is not known.



For the years since 2015/16 combined, the chart below illustrates the distribution of measurements between four broad ethnic groups within the population surveyed by NCMP in Dudley.

Children Measured by NCMP

by ethnic group, Dudley, aggregated over nine years 2015/16 to 2023/24



For each broad ethnic group recorded in the NCMP data, the charts on the following page show how the weight categories are represented.

In the case of the largest group, White, the proportion of children living with obesity has been the lowest of any broad ethnic group – over the eight years represented here.

However, there has been an interesting exception to this pattern among reception aged children in

recent years. For the years NCMP has operated since the pandemic outbreak of 2020, more White children have, in proportion, been categorised as obese than any other broad ethnic group. The fact that this situation is reversed for Year 6 results raises interesting questions about future patterns of relative obesity among ethnic groups in Dudley.

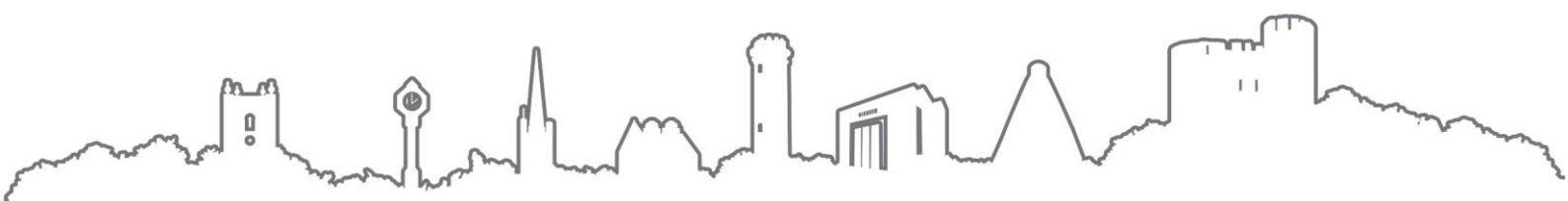
Another potential issue which the data shows is that within the relatively small group of underweight pupils, Asian children may be overrepresented. Indeed, although Asian children have accounted for 11% of all measurements in eight years, they have produced nearly a third of all children categorised as underweight.

The smallest of the broad ethnic groups relates to Black ethnicity, as illustrated by the chart on this page. But this group has contained the largest share living with obesity (in proportion to the size of the group). As many as 26% of Black children were recorded as obese, compared to 18% for others.

Both the relatively high prevalence of obesity among Black children and the proportionately high number of underweight Asian children are findings also found elsewhere⁴.

⁴ [National Child Measurement Programme, England, 2023/24 school year; Changes in the](#)

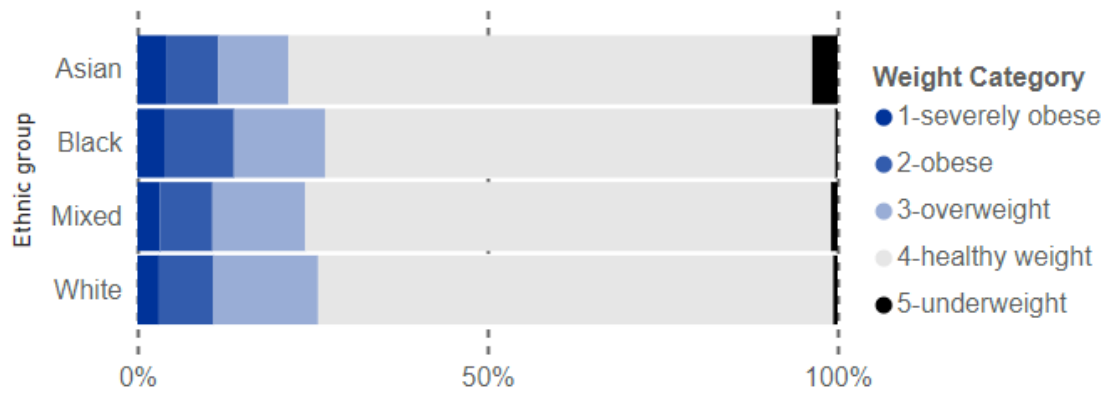
[weight status of children between the first and final years of primary school](#)



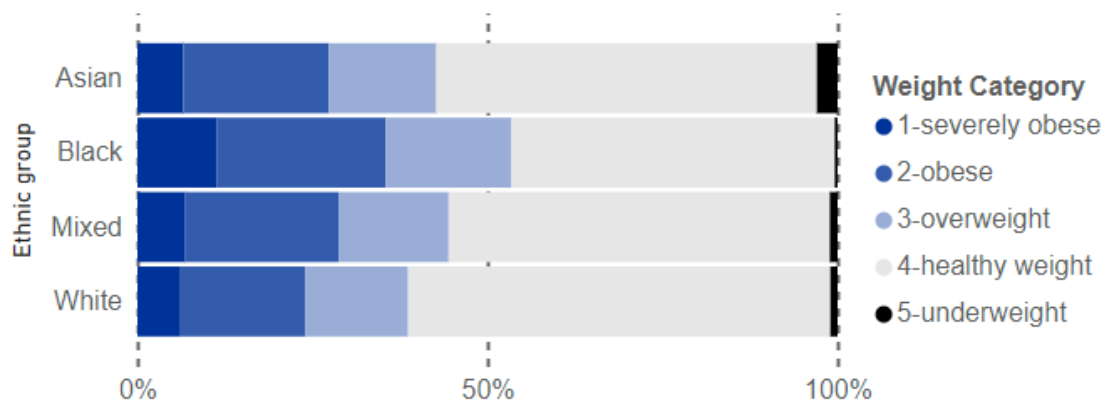
Distribution of Children between Weight Categories

by ethnic group, Dudley, aggregated over eight years 2015/16 to 2023/24

Reception Children



Year 6 Children



Dudley Compared to England

NCMP data shows that, in proportion, Dudley has more children living with obesity than at a national level. For Year 6 children, for example, the rate of obesity among Dudley children has been higher than for England in all the years for which data is available. This is a statistically significant difference⁵.

In England, the arrival of the Covid pandemic saw a growth in the number of children with excess weight, and the largest annual rise in obesity ever recorded⁶. Rates have since fallen back, even if they have stayed relatively high for the Year 6 cohort.

In 2023/24, the proportion of Reception children with obesity in

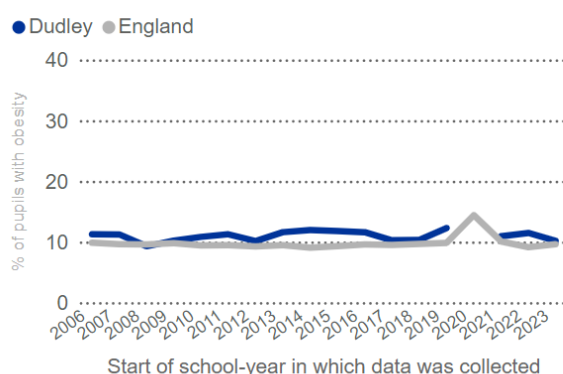
Dudley was similar to that for England (10.2% compared to 9.6%). But the Year 6 cohort saw a greater difference (24.8% and 22.1% respectively).

Despite small improvements in the rates this year, Dudley children are in some cases still at a disadvantage compared to elsewhere in England. In the case of Year 6, for example, Dudley was, in 2023/24, among the worst five of sixteen 'nearest neighbour' authorities, i.e., those areas with similar characteristics⁷. However, by the same measure, the relative position of Reception-aged children in Dudley had improved since the previous year.

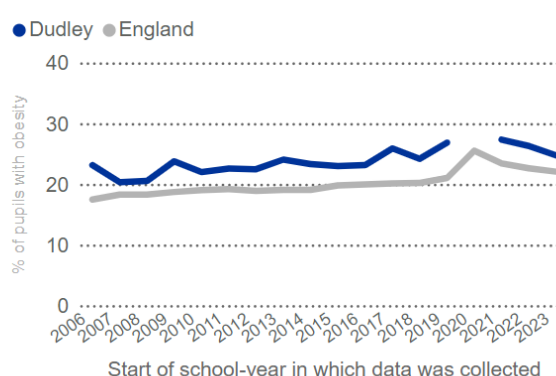
Children with Obesity

Dudley and England, 2006/07 to 2023/24 (data for Dudley in 2020/21 excluded)

Reception Children



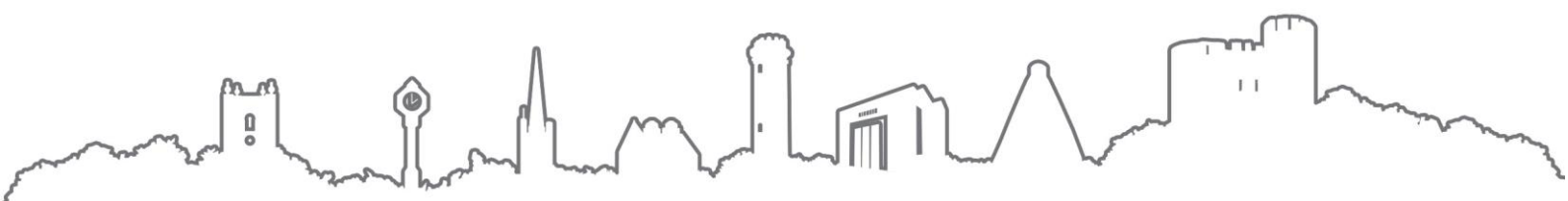
Year 6 Children



⁵ [Fingertips.phe.org.uk](https://www.fingertips.phe.org.uk).

⁶ [Changes in the Prevalence of Child Obesity](#)

⁷ Nearest neighbour authorities are those matched to Dudley by CIPFA. Source: [fingertips.phe.org.uk](https://www.fingertips.phe.org.uk).



Prevalence of Overweight & Obesity: Dudley, West Midlands & England Compared

2023/24, From National Child Measurement Programme Data

RECEPTION CHILDREN	Dudley	West Midlands Region	England	Dudley compared to England	Recent Trend
	Overweight <i>(incl. obesity)</i>	24.2%	23.4%	22.1%	●
Obesity <i>(incl. severe obesity)</i>	10.2%	10.9%	9.6%	●	➡
Severe Obesity	3.2%	3.3%	2.6%	●	➡

YEAR 6 CHILDREN	Dudley	West Midlands Region	England	Dudley compared to England	Recent Trend
	Overweight <i>(incl. obesity)</i>	39.0%	38.4%	35.8%	●
Obesity <i>(incl. severe obesity)</i>	24.8%	24.4%	22.1%	●	➡
Severe Obesity	6.8%	6.5%	5.5%	●	➡

Key: ● = Dudley value worse than England value
 ● = Dudley value similar to England value
 ➡ = Recent trend: No significant change

Source: Office for Health Improvement & Disparities. Public Health Profiles. Accessed 07/01/2025
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk> © Crown copyright 2025



Obesity by Dudley Ward

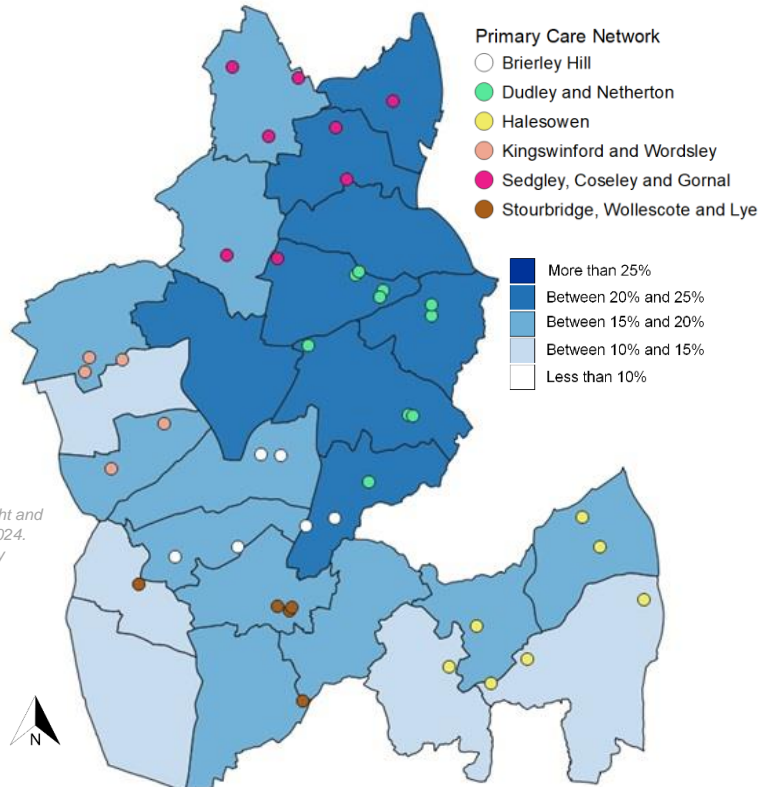
The data continues to show that children living in the north-east of the Borough have, in general, been more likely to be obese.

Over the course of the period since 2015/16, the ward with the highest proportion of children living with obesity has been *Castle and Priory*, with an average of nearly 23% in this category. By contrast, the ward with the lowest percentage has been *Halesowen South* with 12%.

A full list of wards and rates of obesity among children in 2023/24 is in the [Appendix](#) of this report.

Average Percentage of Children with Obesity

(Showing locations of GP Practices)
By ward, 2015/16 to 2023/24
Excluding 2020/21



Guide to Ward Names



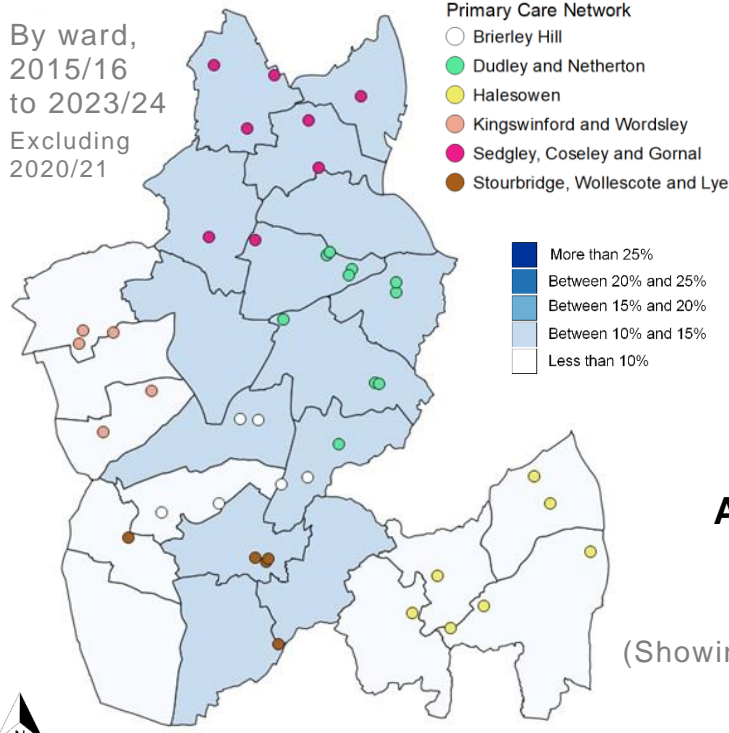
In addition, further interpretation of ward-level results can be found at the fingertips.phe.org.uk website.

The maps on the following page show the distribution of excess weight by year group.

Average Percentage of Reception Children with Obesity

(Showing locations of GP Practices)

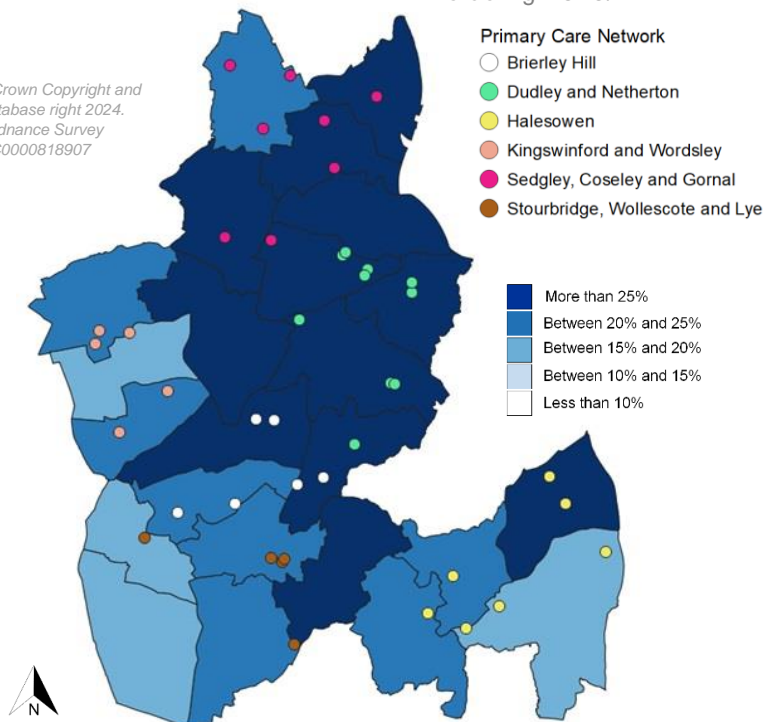
By ward,
2015/16
to 2023/24
Excluding
2020/21



Average Percentage of Year 6 Children with Obesity

(Showing locations of GP Practices)
By ward, 2015/16 to 2023/24
Excluding 2020/21

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Ordnance Survey
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Excess Weight by Deprivation

The charts on this page present the way that children's excess weight has varied by their social circumstances.

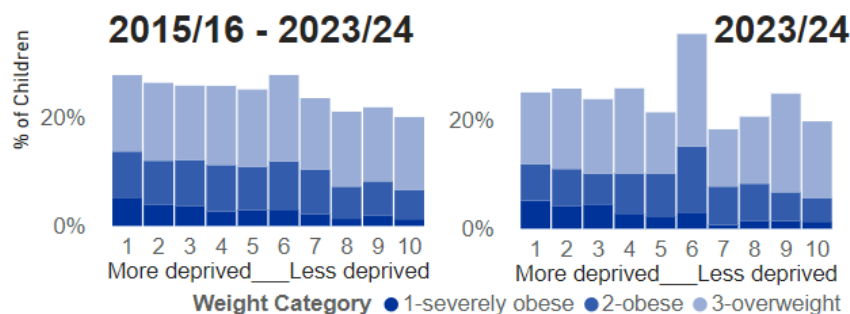
To show this, we have used the postcode of the child's home and the [Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) for each neighbourhood, to allocate a deprivation score to each child. This score is then used to allocate each

child to one of ten equal groups. The charts show how the weight categories vary at each of these ten levels of deprivation. Those in more deprived areas are on the left of each chart.

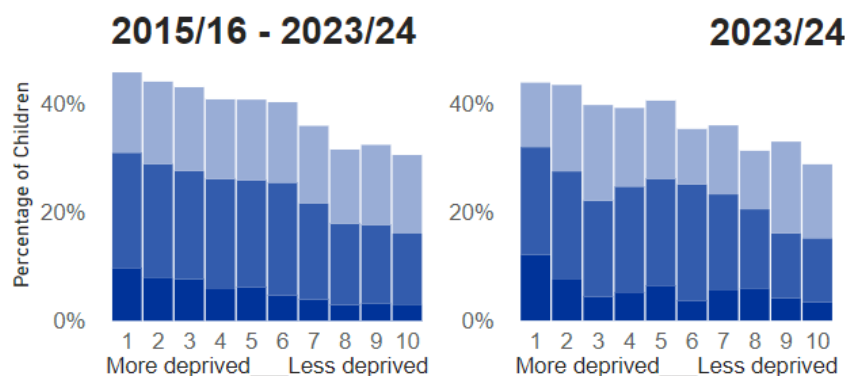
The pattern over an 8-year period (in the charts on the left) is consistent with excess weight being more common in areas of greater deprivation.

Distribution of Children between Weight Categories by deprivation decile, Dudley

Reception Children



Year 6 Children



Conclusions

There are a number of areas of concern highlighted by the data analysed in this report.

In a number of respects, primary school children in Dudley have been shown to be, on average, in a worse position than those in the rest of England. In the case of Reception-aged children, for example, this shows itself in the proportion of children living with severe obesity. In the case of Year 6 children, obesity and severe obesity are both more prevalent in Dudley than in England.

For Year 6 children, the Borough also does not compare particularly well with other parts of the country with similar socio-economic conditions.

Of additional concern are some of the inequalities between groups of children in Dudley: for example, the disproportionate numbers living with obesity among Year 6 boys, the levels of obesity among children from Black ethnic groups, the disparity between Dudley wards, and the rates of obesity and excess weight in more deprived parts of the Borough.

While all of these are reflected to a greater or lesser degree in patterns revealed by NCMP data at a national level, they nevertheless highlight potential areas of local action by agencies in Dudley.



Appendix: Electoral Wards by Percentage of Resident Children Living with Obesity

in 2023/24 (in descending order)

Ward (ranked by obesity)	Reception	Year 6	Total
Quarry Bank & Dudley Wood	17.58	30.05	23.84
Brockmoor & Pensnett	14.59	30.43	22.96
Netherton & Holly Hall	12.14	30.81	20.63
St. Thomas's	10.55	29.95	20.23
Upper Gornal & Woodsetton	9.60	28.57	20.07
Castle & Priory	8.11	28.38	19.16
Brierley Hill & Wordsley South	11.70	26.63	19.12
Kingswinford North & Wall Heath	12.20	23.21	18.56
St. James's	9.82	27.66	18.09
Coseley	12.88	23.13	18.05
Cradley North & Wollescote	10.81	24.06	18.03
Gornal	9.23	25.93	17.74
Amblecote	8.49	25.00	17.65
Wordsley North	7.55	25.21	16.89
Sedgley	5.83	24.03	15.26
Belle Vale	3.85	24.52	15.09
Lye & Stourbridge North	7.94	21.17	14.83
Halesowen North	9.02	20.49	14.75
Kingswinford South	10.62	17.56	14.34
Pedmore & Stourbridge East	10.53	16.96	14.01
Norton	13.98	13.56	13.74
Hayley Green & Cradley South	4.39	19.35	13.01
Wollaston & Stourbridge Town	5.88	17.65	12.22
Halesowen South	4.30	17.59	11.44
Total	10.00	24.60	17.63