



Leh Wi Lan Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment 2019



Key facts about pupil learning, teaching and school management in Western Urban District

The UKaid-funded *Leh Wi Lan* programme is supporting the Sierra Leone Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to achieve sustained improvements in girls' education and secondary grade learning outcomes. One part of the *Leh Wi Lan* programme is an annual secondary grade learning assessment (SGLA) survey, conducted to understand and track changes in the school's learning environment, teaching practices and pupil learning achievement. The first SGLA I survey was conducted in 2017, with a follow-up SGLA II survey in 2018, and the latest SGLA III survey in 2019.

This note focuses on Western Urban district and presents evidence on school management, teaching and pupil achievement in Western Urban's secondary schools from the SGLA III. Below are key results from across the secondary school system.



Principal characteristics and school environment are measured

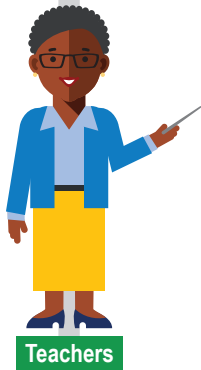
JSS principals have an average of **6 years of experience** as a principal. This is higher than the national average (5 years).

SSS principals have an average of **5 years of experience** as a principal. This is lower than the national average (6 years).



Only **12% of JSS principals are female**. This is higher than the national average (8%).

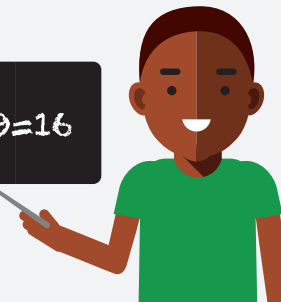
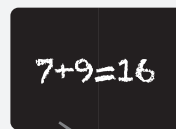
Only **5% of SSS principals are female**. This is lower than the national average (6%).



Teacher characteristics and teaching methods are measured

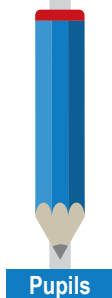
54% of JSS teachers have a higher teaching certificate (HTC). This is higher than the national average (40%).

23% of SSS teachers have an HTC. This is lower than the national average (35%).



Only **14% of JSS teachers are female**. This is higher than the national average (6%).

Only **3% of SSS teachers are female**. This is the same as the national average (3%).



Pupils from JSS2 and SSS2 are assessed using an English and maths test

48% of JSS2 pupils are still at a P6 level or below.

English

36% of SSS2 pupils are still at a P6 level or below.



65% of JSS2 pupils are still at a P6 level or below.

Maths

51% of SSS2 pupils are still at a P6 level or below.



Pupils: What is the level of English and maths skills typically demonstrated by JSS2 and SSS2 pupils in Western Urban?

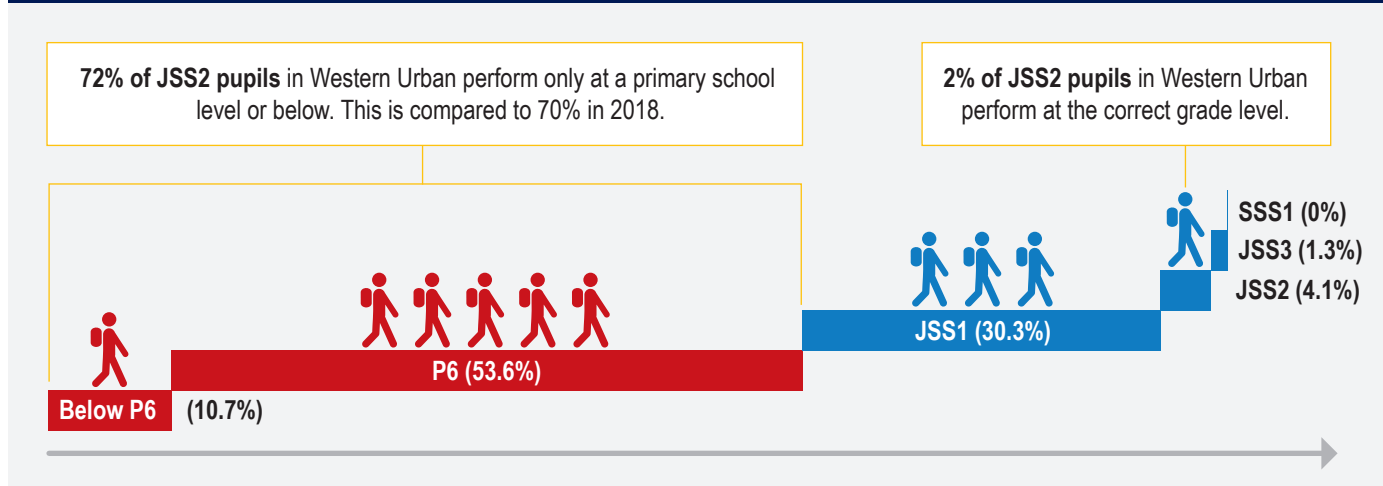
At a JSS2 level, Western Urban is the best performing district for English and Mathematics

In Sierra Leone overall, the SGLA III reiterates findings from last year’s survey: pupil learning levels in secondary grades are generally low. There is a wide gulf between pupils’ actual skills and competencies, compared to national curriculum expectations. Sierra Leonean pupil performance on maths scores have declined from 2018 to 2019 – with more students only being able to perform at a P6 level or below.

Western Urban performs above the national average for English and maths, but learning levels are still low. Western Urban experienced a decline in maths scores from 2018 to 2019. Maths results for JSS2 pupils are explored in the diagram below. At an SSS2 level, 37 per cent of pupils could only perform at a P6 level or below in 2018, but in 2019, 51 per cent of pupils could only perform at a P6 level or below.

English scores in Western Urban have a similar pattern of decline from 2018 to 2019. In 2018, 42 per cent of JSS2 pupils and 32 per cent of SSS2 pupils could only perform at a P6 level or below. In 2019, 48 per cent of JSS2 pupils and 36 per cent of SSS2 pupils could only perform at a P6 level or below.

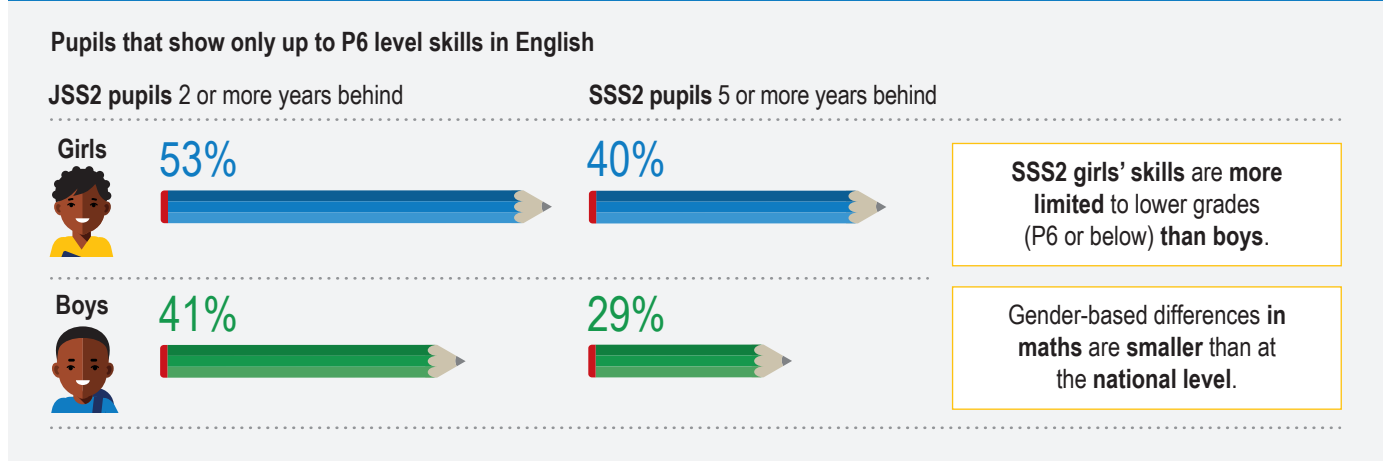
Figure 1: Maths performance by JSS2 pupils in Western Urban

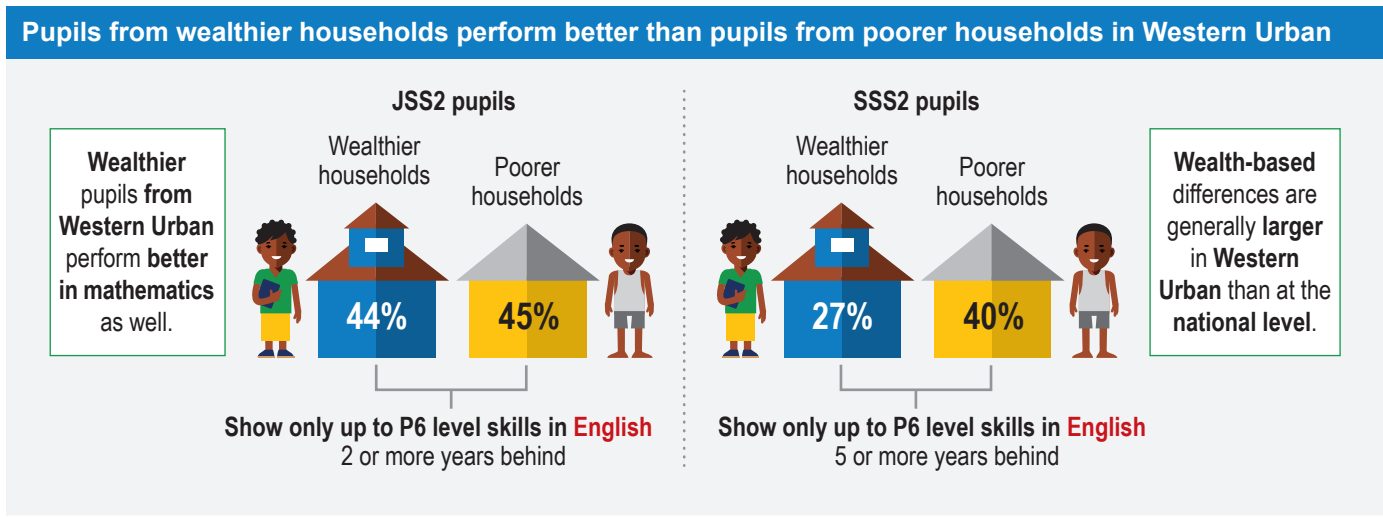


How does learning vary across types of students?

In Western Urban, as in most other districts, we see pupil performance differ based on gender, pupil wealth and the remoteness of the school from the district centre.

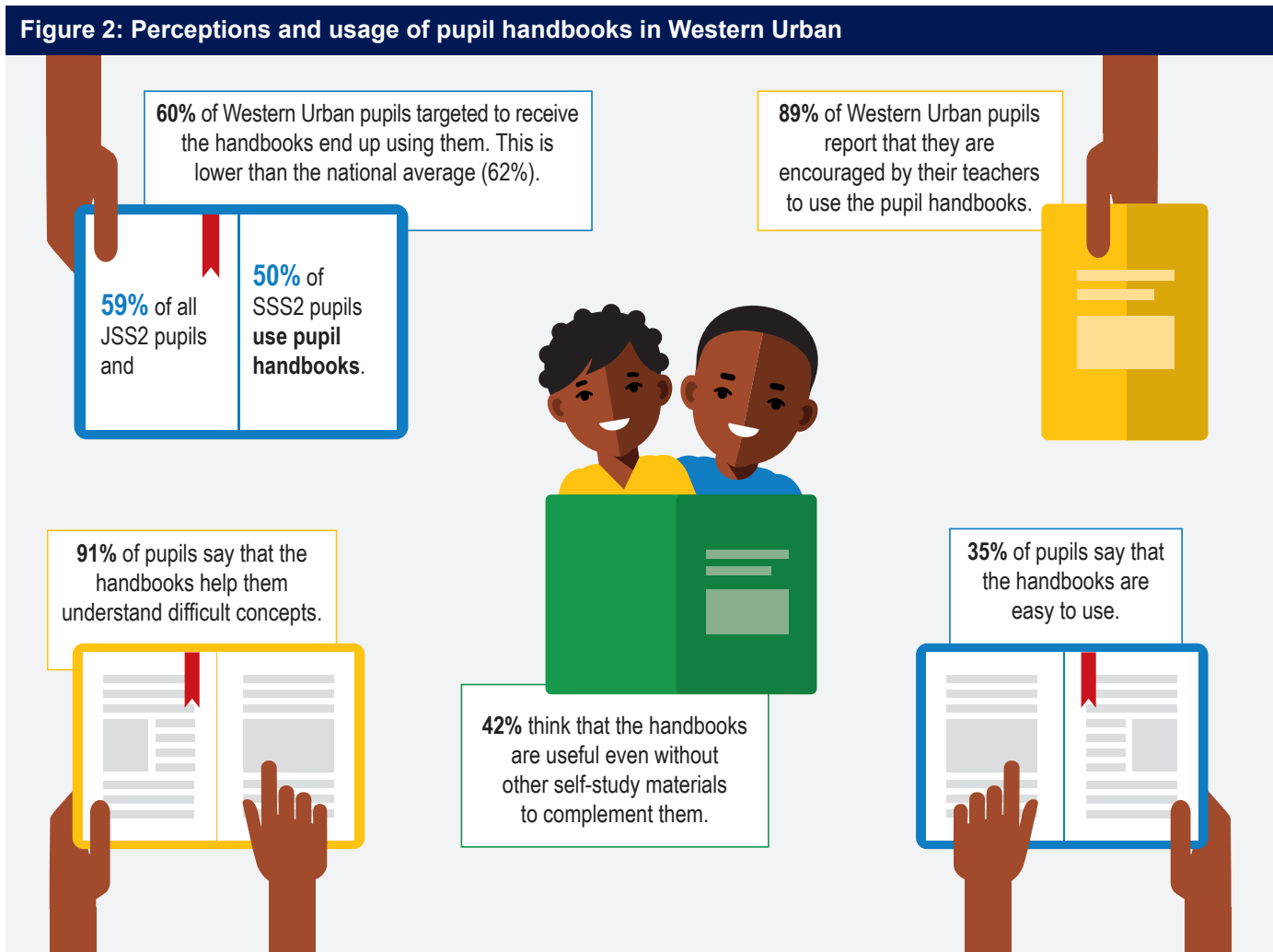
Gender-based differences in English are larger in Western Urban than at the national level





How are pupil handbooks being used to assist learning?

Starting in January 2019, pupil handbooks were distributed throughout the country to JSS and SSS pupils in government-owned and government-assisted schools. These handbooks are meant to complement learning which happens in the classroom. As such, there are JSS2 and SSS2 handbooks for English and JSS2 and SSS2 handbooks for maths. The diagram below captures a snapshot of the uptake of these handbooks based on interviews with pupils in Western Urban.

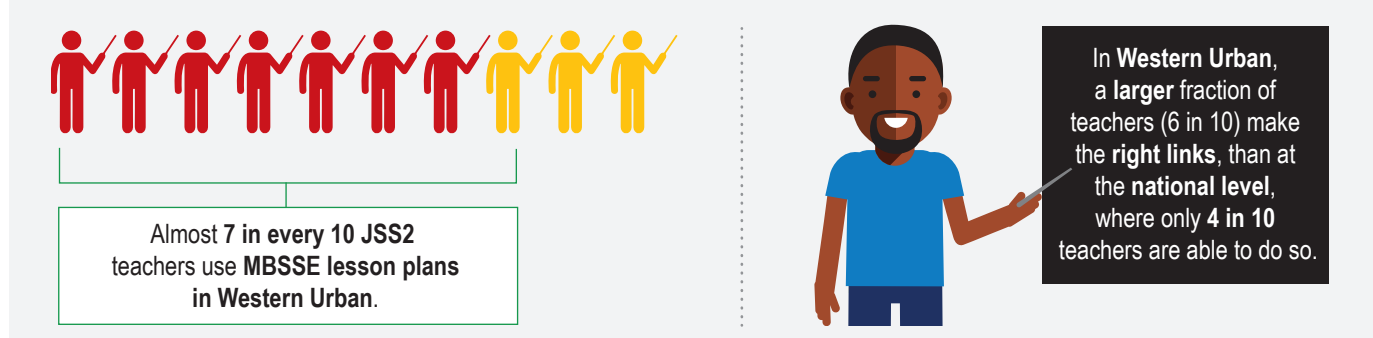


Teachers: How are lesson plans being used by teachers to support learning in Western Urban?

Secondary school teachers widely used some form of teaching guide to plan and prepare for their lessons, with a large percentage (64 per cent) of teachers reporting the use of MBSSE lesson plans in Western Urban. This is however lower than the national level (74 per cent).

Teachers generally reported to understand the use and purpose of lesson plans to facilitate learning, however initial evidence on teachers' understanding of lesson plan content does not support this claim. In practice, almost 60 per cent of teachers in Western Urban managed to correctly match a set of learning objectives, taken from the lesson plans from their subject, with the appropriate grade.

A vast majority of Western Urban teachers are using lesson plans, but their understanding of its contents is still limited



How much instructional time do pupils receive from their teachers in Western Urban?

On average, pupils in secondary schools in Western Urban got limited instructional time from their teachers, less so in JSS (12 hours per week) than SSS (13 hours per week). Teachers did not teach for a large proportion of their time in school, and instructional time in class was also affected by teacher absenteeism, despite quite manageable pupil-teacher ratios (21 for JSS and 23 for SSS). Instructional time in Western Urban is higher than the national average for JSS (11 hours) and the same as the national average for SSS (13 hours).

School management: What leadership practices are used to support the learning environment in Western Urban?

Staff meetings were again reported as an established practice in most schools. Almost all JSS and SSS principals in Western Urban report holding staff meetings the previous term (January to April 2019).

In Western Urban, principals report that the items most commonly discussed in these staff meetings are teaching methods, school administration as well teacher absenteeism or lateness.

Similarly, schools continued to have fairly regular systems of internal lesson observations, which may have a role in the development of teaching in schools. The observers were usually the principal or head of department. Over 73 per cent of JSS principals and 91 per cent of SSS principals in Western Urban confirmed that some form of internal lesson observations was conducted.

The role of external supervisors, particularly SSOs, in visiting schools, observing lessons and discussing advice on lesson plans and teaching methods was also apparent in SGLA III. In Western Urban, 35 per cent of JSS schools and 53 per cent of SSS schools report an MBSSE inspector visiting in the last term. This is above the national average for JSS (37 per cent) and above the average for SSS (52 per cent). School support officers (SSO) visited 77 per cent of JSS schools and 55 per cent of SSS schools in Western Urban. The SSO visits for schools in Western Urban are below the national average for JSS (80 per cent) and SSS (80 per cent).

About the project and contact details

Leh Wi Lan/Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme (SSEIP) is a five-year (2016-2021) UKaid-funded programme aimed at improving English and maths learning achievement in all secondary schools, especially for girls. This briefing note was produced under *Leh Wi Lan's* monitoring, evidence and research workstream as part of the annual secondary grade learning assessment. Any views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of UK Department for International Development, Sierra Leone Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Mott MacDonald or Oxford Policy Management.

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