

BIG RISE IN EXAM RESULTS FOR FREE MEAL PUPILS IN HARTLEPOOL

New figures released by a Government education watchdog show that schools where pupils are eligible for free school meals have had a rise in exam results.

Statistics provided by Ofsted show that between 2012 and 2013 some areas in the region have seen big jumps in the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals passing five A* to C grade GCSEs including English and maths.

The figures show that Hartlepool was the top performer in the North-East after a rise of 9.3 per cent from pupils eligible for free school meals who achieved five good GCSE passes.

The total jumped from 26 per cent last year up to 35.3 per cent.

In Darlington there was a rise of 7.8 per cent while Stockton rose by 6.7 per cent.

Across County Durham, which includes the schools in East Durham, there was an increase of just 1.3 per cent, though figures for Sunderland Middlesbrough saw a drop.

The pupil premium – the funding set aside for schools to claim for pupils on free school meals – was introduced by former Education Secretary Michael Gove three years ago.

Chris Simmons, chairman of children’s services for Hartlepool Borough Council, said: “In Hartlepool we are absolutely focused on raising educational standards.

“We have ambitions for all of our youngsters, we want them to perform well in school, and we want to give them the best possible start in life.

“The pupil premium is all about narrowing the gap between the attainment of children considered to be from a background where there is an element of deprivation and those considered to be from better off homes.

“The evidence is that in Hartlepool the gap is narrowing as a result of the effective use of the additional money from schools.

“However it is important we don’t rest on our laurels and become complacent.

“We will continue to make the best possible use of the resources available to us and would urge any parents who think their children may be eligible for free school meals to contact the council on 01429 284188 to ensure their school does not miss out.”

Schools receive £953 for each eligible primary-aged pupil and £900 for each eligible secondary-aged pupil.

