

Ethnicity and achievement patterns - Ten-Mark Guidance and Model

Teacher-only • holistic classroom guidance aligned to AQA-style demand

Indicative level guidance

Band	Indicative qualities
8-10	Two developed applications to Item A; accurate concepts/data; clear analysis of why subgroup variation and intersecting variables limit inference; sustained reasoning.
4-7	One or two relevant points with some application and analysis; may be uneven or partly descriptive.
1-3	Limited knowledge/application; assertion or description with little analysis.
0	No relevant material.

Indicative model response

One reason for caution is that broad ethnic categories can conceal substantial subgroup variation. Item A refers to differences within broad categories. In the 2022/23 data, Black African pupils averaged 48.7 on Attainment 8, while Black Caribbean pupils averaged 40.0. This means that a claim about “Black pupils” would combine groups with different measured outcomes and could create an ecological fallacy if the average were treated as a characteristic of individuals. The pattern therefore needs to be disaggregated before an explanation is evaluated. A second reason is that other social variables intersect with ethnicity. Item A notes variation by gender and FSM eligibility. For example, White British FSM-eligible pupils averaged 30.9 compared with 48.6 for non-FSM pupils. This suggests that economic disadvantage may alter the pattern within an ethnic group. It does not prove that class causes the difference, but it shows that ethnicity alone does not identify the mechanism. A stronger explanation would compare similar pupils across schools, class positions and other conditions before drawing a causal conclusion.

Developmental exemplars

Approx. level	What improves
C-like	Accurate subgroup evidence and one relevant caution, but reasoning is brief.
B-like	Two developed points with clear item application and a valid intersecting variable.
A-like	Precise concepts, discriminating evidence and qualified causal language throughout.
A*-like	Sustained comparative reasoning, explicit evaluation of measurement/inference and a justified judgement.

These labels are developmental analogues for teaching only, not AQA question-level grade boundaries.