



Leh Wi Lan Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment 2019



Key facts about pupil learning, teaching and school management in Bo 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 Bo district and presents evidence on school management, teaching and pupil achievement in Bo's secondary schools from the SGLA III. Below are key results from across the secondary school system.



Principal characteristics and school environment are measured

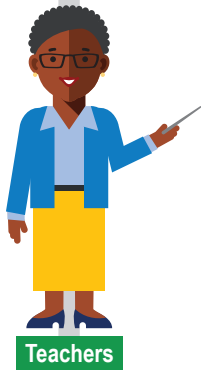
JSS principals have an average of **5 years of experience** as a principal. This is the same as the national average.

SSS principals have an average of **4 years of experience** as a principal. This is lower than the national average (6 years).



Only **6% of JSS head teachers** are female. This is lower than the national average (8%).

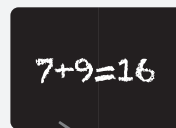
Only **14% of SSS head teachers** are female. This is higher than the national average (6%).



Teacher characteristics and teaching methods are measured

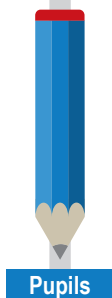
49% of JSS teachers have a **higher teaching certificate (HTC)**. This is higher than the national average (40%).

24% of SSS teachers have an HTC. This is lower than the national average (35%).



Only **12% of JSS teachers** are female. This is higher than the national average (6%).

Only **2% of SSS teachers** are female. This is largely the same as the national average (3%).



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

62% of JSS2 pupils are still at a P6 level or below.

English

32% of SSS2 pupils are still at a P6 level or below.



74% of JSS2 pupils are still at a P6 level or below.

Maths

46% 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 Bo?

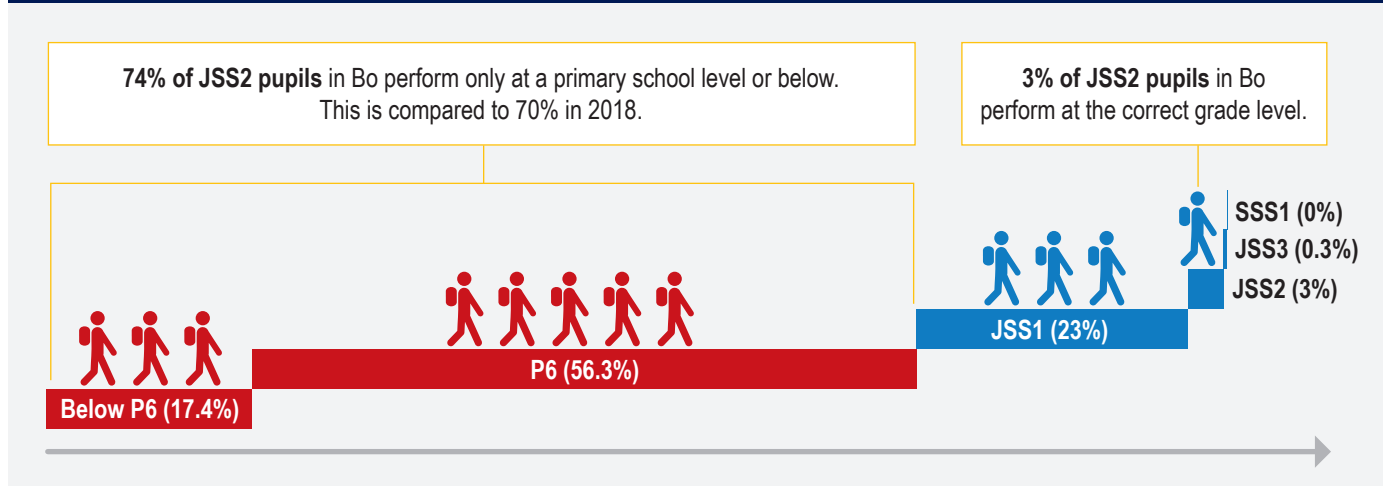
At the SSS2 level, Bo is the best performing district for both English and Mathematics

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.

Although Bo performs above the national average, learning levels here are low too. At a JSS2 level, Bo experienced a decline in maths scores from 2018 to 2019. However, at an SSS2 level, Bo experienced an increase in maths scores from 2018 to 2019. Where 55 per cent of pupils in 2018 performed only at a P6 level or below, in 2019, 46 per cent of pupils performed at a P6 level or below.

English scores in Bo have a similar pattern of decline at a JSS2 level and improvement at an SSS2 level. In 2018, 55 per cent of JSS2 pupils and 41 per cent of SSS2 pupils performed at a P6 level or below. In 2019, 62 per cent of JSS2 pupils and 33 per cent of SSS2 pupils performing at a P6 level or below in 2019.

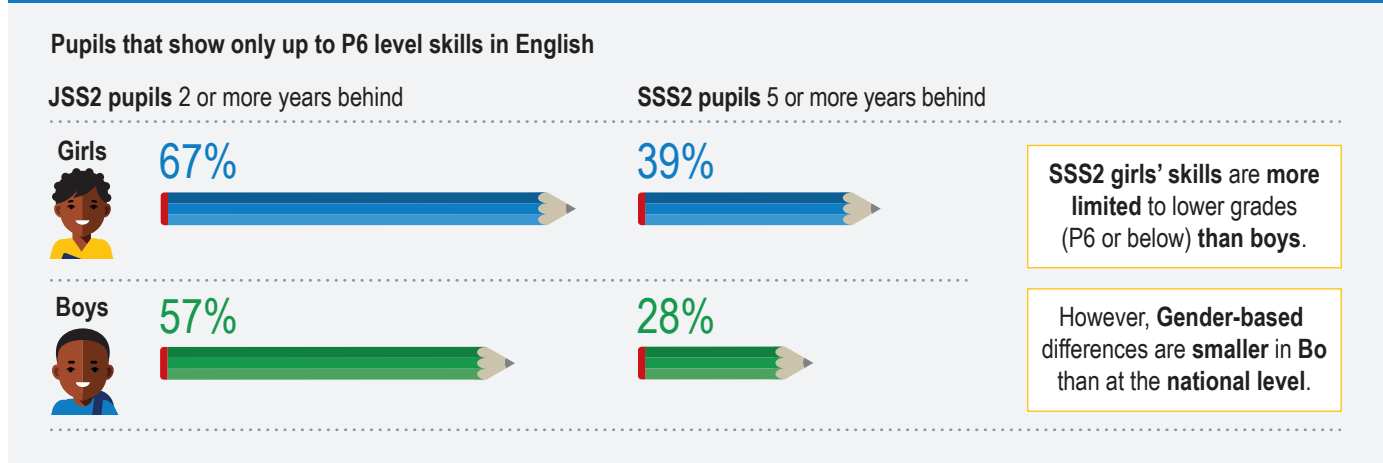
Figure 1: Maths performance by JSS2 pupils in Bo



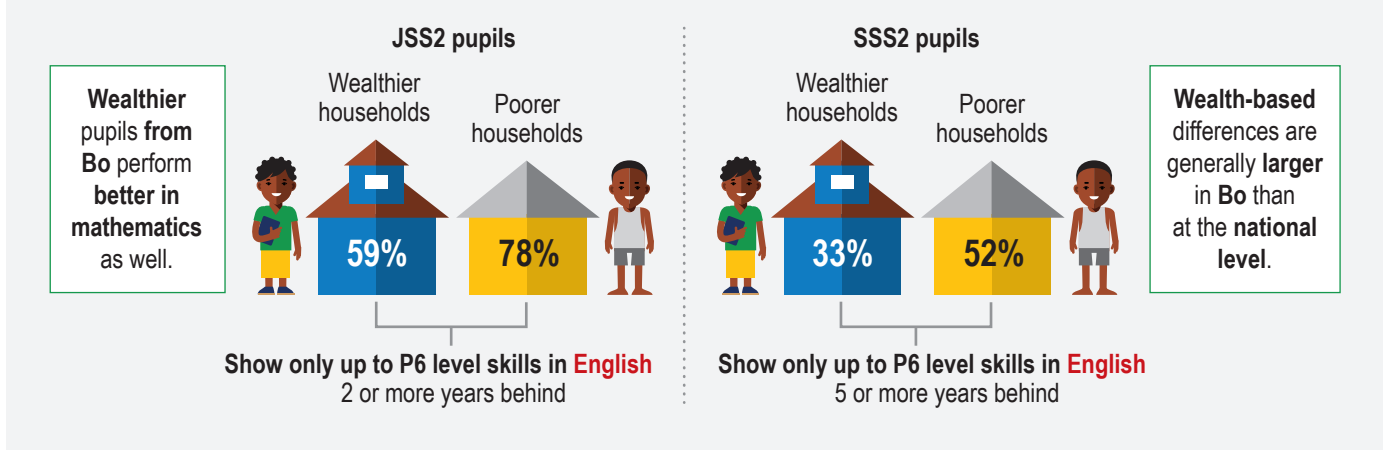
How does learning vary across types of students?

In Bo, 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 smaller in Bo than at the national level



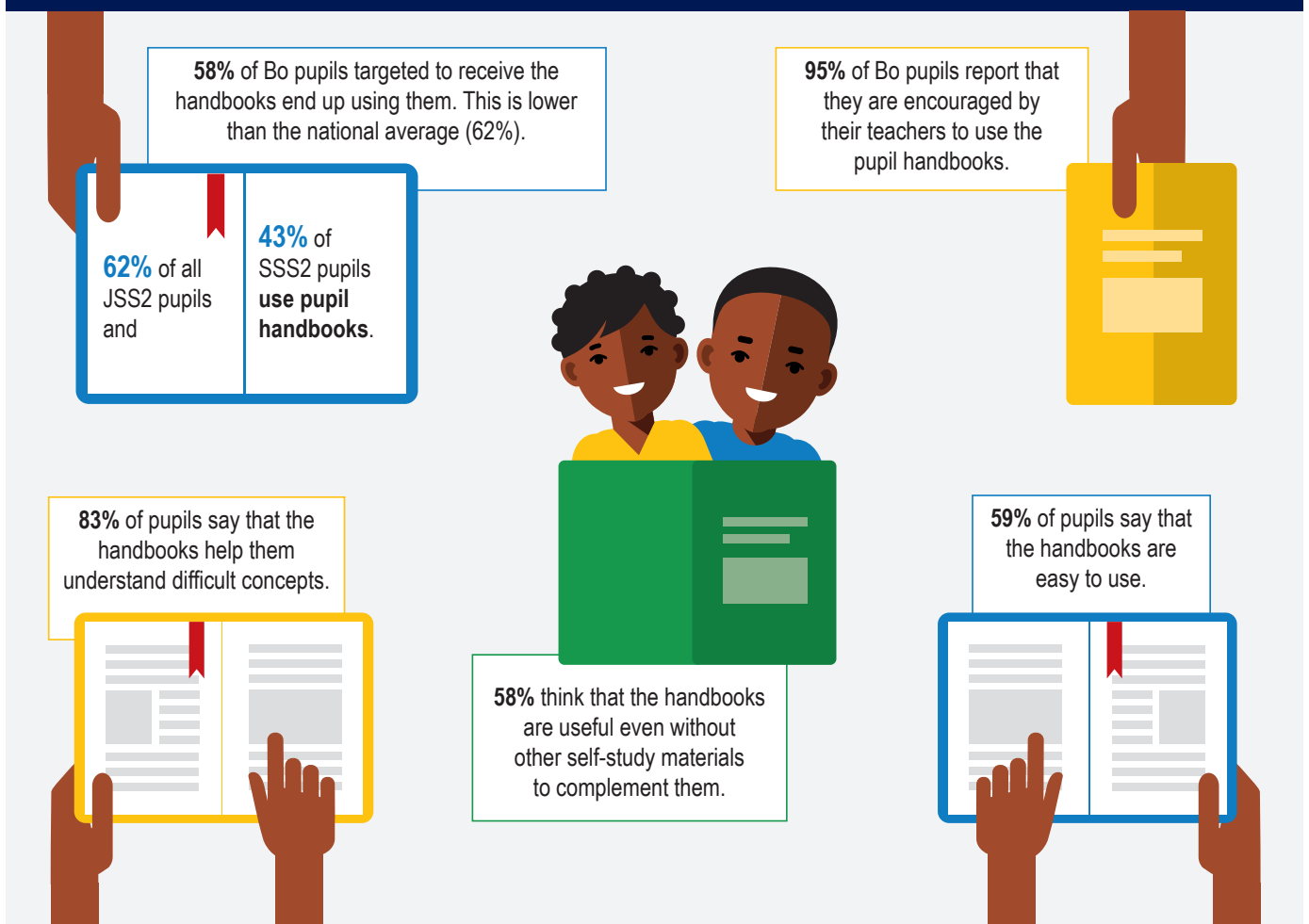
Pupils from wealthier households perform better than pupils from poorer households in Bo



How are pupil handbooks being used to assist learning?

Starting this year, pupil handbooks were distributed throughout the country to 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 Bo.

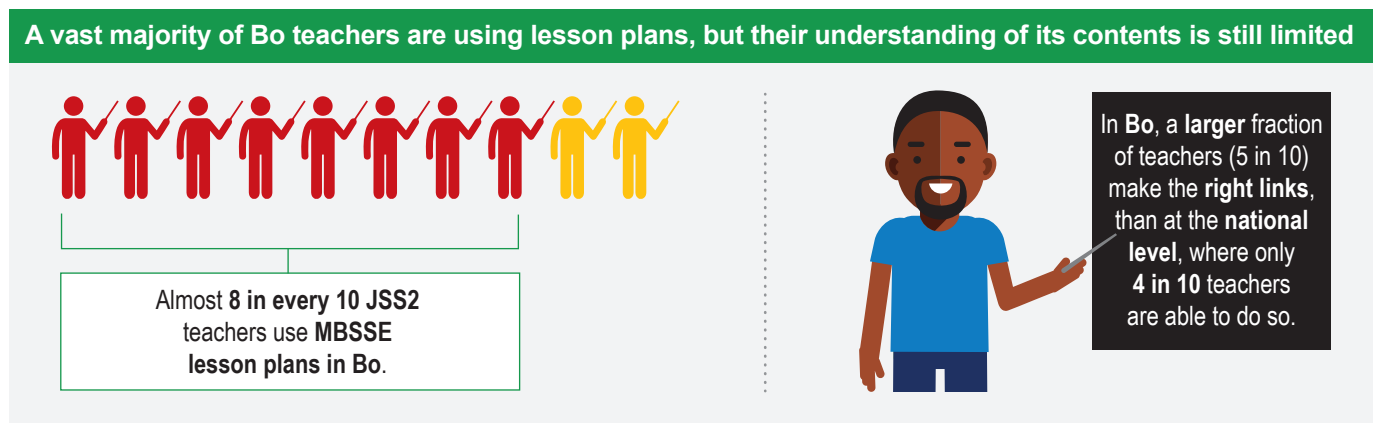
Figure 2: Perceptions and usage of pupil handbooks in Bo



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

Secondary school teachers widely used some form of teaching guide to plan and prepare for their lessons, with a large proportion (76 per cent) of teachers reporting the use of MBSSE lesson plans in Bo. This is slightly higher 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, only 45 per cent of teachers in Bo managed to correctly match a set of learning objectives, taken from the lesson plans from their subject, with the appropriate grade.



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

On average, pupils in secondary schools in Bo got limited instructional time from their teachers: 12 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 (20 for JSS2, and 17 for SSS2). Instructional time in Bo is higher than the national average for JSS (11 hours) but lower than the national average for SSS (13 hours).

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

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

In Bo, principals report that the items most commonly discussed in these staff meetings are teaching methods, teacher salaries as well as school interaction with parents and the community.

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 85 per cent of JSS principals and 96 per cent of SSS principals in Bo 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 Bo, 55 per cent of JSS schools and 60 per cent of SSS schools report an MBSSE inspector visiting in the last term. This is above the national average. School support officers (SSO) visited all JSS schools and 68 per cent of SSS schools in Bo. The SSO visits for SSS schools in Bo are far below the national average (79 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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