Material deprivation is the ‘lack’ of material things that allow children to succeed in the education system. Diet and health comes under this because the working-class children tend to have a poorer diet, due to having less money to buy the healthier foods. Howard says that young people from poorer homes have lower intakes of energy, vitamins and minerals. This affects the children’s health by weakening their immune system and lowering their energy levels. This can lead to absences and difficulties concentrating in class. Meaning they won’t be able to do as well.

Wilkinson claims that children from poorer homes are more likely to have emotional or behavioural problems. He says that, among ten year olds, the lower their social class the higher their levels of hyperactivity, anxiety and conduct disorders, all of these have negative effects on a child’s education. Blanden and Machin found that children from families with lower income were more likely to engage in ‘externalising’ behaviour, for example, fighting. This leads to a disruption in their education. And since the middle-class children have better diet and health, they succeed whereas the working-class children tend not to. Another way that working-class children are deprived is through finance. Children from poorer families have to do without equipment and miss out on experiences (like school trips) that would enhance their educational achievement. Tanner et al found that the costs of items like transport, uniforms, books, computers, calculators and more placed a heavy burden on poorer families. This means that children from poor families may have to have hand-me-downs and cheaper but unfashionable equipment. This could result in the children being isolated and bullied which would lower their self-esteem and cause them not to do so well at school. Smith and Noble add that poverty acts as a barrier in other ways as well, e.g. the inability to afford private schools or tutors to help their children which results in the children going to poorer quality schools. Another reason why the middle-class children do better at school.

While material factors clearly have an effect on the achievement of children in different socio-economic classes, but that fact that some children from poorer families do succeed suggests that material deprivation isn’t the whole explanation, there has to be more to it. The cultural, religious or political values of the family may play a part in sustaining the child’s motivation to do well. Feinstein shows that educated parents make a positive contribution to a child’s achievement, regardless of their income. However, Mortimore and Whitty argue that it is indeed material inequalities that have the greatest effect of the achievement of a child. Robinson argues that tackling child poverty would be the best way to boost achievement.

Cultural capital is the non-financial assets that someone has and it can include education, intellect, speech, dress and physical appearance among other things. It is a theory brought up by Bourdieu who argues that middle-class have more cultural capital and this leads to them being more successful in education as it gives them an advantage. He says that through their socialisation middle-class children acquire the ability to grasp, analyse and express more abstract and complex ideas. They are more likely to develop intellectual interests and an understanding of what you need for success in the education system. This gives the middle-class children an advantage in school, where such abilities are valued more and rewarded with qualifications. The education system is not neutral, it favours and transits middle-class culture. Working-class children find that school devalues their culture as ‘rough’