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Providing information on pupil and school performance

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This paper provides an overview of the changes to Regulations on school information provision, considers some possible implications and discusses approaches elsewhere.

Key Points

- The revised regulations aim to promote greater openness and accountability among schools for pupil outcomes and to ensure that information is clear and accessible for parents;
- The Education (Target-Setting in Schools) Regulations (NI) 2012 revise the performance measures for which schools must set targets, the changes include:
 - At Key Stage 4 and post-16, both selective and non-selective schools are required to set targets for the same performance indicators;
 - A new performance indicator on pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths;
 - Removal of targets on pupils achieving Level 3 at the end of KS1, level 5 at the end of KS2 and level 6 and the end of KS3.
- The Education (School Information and Prospectuses) Regulations (NI) 2012 introduce changes to the performance information that schools must publish;
- The changes include that schools must report the achievement of pupils with FSME separately; achievement data for the previous two years must be published; and a list of all applied and general courses, along with the achievement of pupils in those courses, must be published.
- The evidence supports the use of accountability in promoting positive student outcomes. However, it also highlights a number of potential challenges:
 - Concerns around the use of examination benchmarks;
 - The use of 'raw data' can fail to take account of the prior achievements of pupils and to demonstrate the value schools have added to pupil outcomes;
 - The introduction of new assessment arrangements for Key Stages 1-3;
 - Supporting teachers and principals to use data effectively; and
 - The use of FSME as a proxy for deprivation.
- The literature indicates that NI is broadly in line with OECD countries in terms of the use of examinations and assessments for accountability and in regard to sharing outcomes with external audiences;
- However some features, for example the performance of schools in comparison to others; the use of other indicators of school quality; and the requirement to report data for the previous two years was found in fewer countries.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Schools are required to make information available on a range of areas, and Boards of Governors must set targets annually and publish information on pupils' achievements. The Department has revised the existing regulations on performance and other information regarding schools and pupils to take account of and align with existing policies and targets.

The revised Regulations aim to ensure that parents receive clear and accessible information; to promote greater openness and accountability among schools for pupil outcomes; and to streamline the requirements for schools. This paper provides an overview of the changes, considers some possible implications and discusses approaches elsewhere.

Overview of the Education (Target-Setting in Schools) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

Under the new Regulations Boards of Governors will still have to set targets during the autumn term each year, however the performance measures for which they have to set targets have changed. The key changes include:

- At Key Stage 4 and post-16, both selective and non-selective schools are required to set targets for the same indicators;
- A new performance indicator is introduced on the percentage of Year 12 pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths (and GCSE Gaeilge for pupils educated through the medium of Irish);
- From 2013/14, a new measure on the percentage of pupils achieving at or above the expected level in Using ICT at Key Stages 1-3 will be introduced;
- Removal of targets on the percentage of pupils achieving Level 3 at the end of KS1, level 5 at the end of KS2 and level 6 at the end of KS3 in communication and using mathematics (targets on pupils achieving level 2, level 4 and level 5 respectively are retained).

Overview of the Education (School Information and Prospectuses) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

These Regulations introduce a number of new statutory duties on Boards of Governors, including a requirement to publish the specified information on the school's website; to summarise progress against the school development plan and to publish opportunities for pupils to participate in shared education programmes. There are a number of changes to the performance information that schools are required to publish. These include:

- Schools must report the achievement of pupils with Free School Meal entitlement (FSME) separately;
- The indicators for selective and non-selective schools are now the same;
- Selective schools are no longer required to publish the transfer test results of pupils applying and admitted to the school;
- Achievement data for the previous two years must be published;
- A list of all applied and general courses offered to pupils at Key Stage 4 and post-16, along with the achievement of pupils in those courses, must be published.

Potential challenges for the Regulations

There is clear evidence to support the link between school accountability and student outcomes. Nonetheless, the evidence highlights a number of potential issues for the Regulations. These include:

- **Concerns around the use of examination benchmarks:** a recent report from the House of Commons Education Committee suggested that a reliance on the reporting of GCSE results can incentivise schools to act in certain ways;
- **Limitations of the performance indicators:** the use of raw assessment and examination outcomes can have limitations, for example, failing to take account of prior achievements and to demonstrate the value schools have added to pupil outcomes (plans are in place to introduce a value-added approach based on levels of progression for KS1-3 from 2015/16);
- **Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 assessments:** the introduction of new assessment arrangements in 2012/13 may have implications for the revised Regulations;
- **Supporting teachers and principals to use data effectively:** previous research has identified 'extensive' training needs in regard to the use of data at all levels in education here; and
- **The use of FSME as a proxy for deprivation:** the literature suggests that FSME has limitations as a measure of deprivation.

Approaches in other jurisdictions

The evidence indicates that Northern Ireland is broadly in line with OECD countries in terms of the use of examinations and assessments for accountability purposes and in regard to sharing results with external audiences.

However, out of 14 OECD countries for which there is available data, student performance for the previous two years was required in just two countries; the performance of schools in comparison to others was reported in seven of 13 countries;

and the use of other indicators of school quality (for example, requiring schools to report on the destinations of school leavers) was found in four of 12 countries.

Examples of approaches elsewhere include the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) in the US. This involves a high-stakes accountability regime whereby schools are required to ensure that all students are proficient in reading and maths by 2013/14. Schools that fail to meet yearly progress targets can face tough sanctions.

In England, league tables were introduced in 1992 to allow for the measurement of the relative performance of schools. In 2004 a contextualised value-added measure was included, aiming to take account of factors such as pupils' socio-economic background. This has been discontinued, and a new performance measure added, the English Baccalaureate, which focuses on a core of academic subjects. In Ireland, schools are not required to publish performance data, but may choose to do so.

Conclusion

The findings in this paper highlight a number of areas that could be given further consideration, including:

- The reliance on the benchmark of five GCSEs at grades A*-C;
- The extent to which the plans for 2015/16 to require schools to publish the percentage of pupils making the expected progress at Key Stages 1-3 will provide a robust picture of the “value-added” by the school, and whether there are plans to measure value-added at Key Stage 4 and post-16;
- The potential implications of the removal of the higher targets on levels of progression at Key Stages 1-3;
- The use of FSME as a proxy for deprivation within the measures;
- The potential implications of the introduction of new assessment arrangements from 2012/13 for Key Stages 1-3. For example, the extent to which the outcomes of the new, moderated assessments will be comparable to the previous approach and the implications for the requirement to publish data for a two year period;
- The requirement for grammar and non-grammar schools to set targets and report on the same indicators;
- The removal of the requirement for Boards of Governors of selective schools to publish the transfer test grades achieved by pupils applying and admitted;
- Potential implications of the requirement to list all applied and general courses and the achievements of students in those subjects – for example, whether it would be possible to identify individual students where the numbers are small;
- How teachers and principals will be supported to use data effectively.

Contents

Key Points 1

Executive Summary.....3

Contents

1 Introduction.....9

2 Overview of The Education (Target-Setting in Schools) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 10

3 Overview of The Education (School Information and Prospectuses) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 11

5 Potential challenges for the Regulations..... 14

6 Value-added measures 17

7 Approaches in other jurisdictions 18

8 Conclusion 22

1 Introduction

Under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 the Department of Education (the Department) has powers to make regulations requiring schools and Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to make available information on a number of areas, including the curriculum, pupils' achievements and educational provision.

Boards of Governors are required to set targets annually and to publish information on pupils' achievements. Schools are also required to report to parents on their child's educational and other achievements, including the outcomes of assessments and examinations.¹

Background and policy context

A central aspect of the Department's main school improvement policy, *Every School a Good School*, is 'embedding a culture of self-evaluation and self-assessment and of using performance and other information to affect improvement.'

The policy highlights the importance of using objective and benchmarked data in promoting self-evaluation and states that parents should have ready access to information on the performance of their children and on the overall performance of the school.² *Count, Read: Succeed* also underlines the importance of using data to promote improvement.³

The Department of Education (the Department) has reviewed the existing Regulations on performance and other information regarding pupils and schools. The review aimed to take account of existing policies and to ensure that the performance indicators align with the Department's targets for improving literacy and numeracy set out in *Count, read: succeed* and the *Programme for Government 2011-15*. The Department states that with the revised regulations it aims to:⁴

- Ensure that parents receive clear, meaningful and easily accessible information;
- Promote greater understanding and interest among the wider community in the work and performance of schools;
- Promote greater openness and accountability of schools for the outcomes achieved by their pupils; and
- Where possible, streamline the requirements and reduce the burden on schools.

¹ Department of Education *Consultation on the provision of performance and other information about schools and pupils* Bangor: DE

² Department of Education (2009) *Every School a Good School: a policy for school improvement* Bangor: DE

³ Department of Education (2011) *Count, read: succeed – A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy* Bangor: DE

⁴ Department of Education *Consultation on the provision of performance and other information about schools and pupils* Bangor: DE

Consultation

The Department's consultation on the draft Regulations closed on 21st September 2012 and the intention is that the revised regulations will come into operation in autumn 2012 and apply to any information schools publish for the 2012/13 school year.

2 Overview of The Education (Target-Setting in Schools) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

These regulations replicate a number of provisions from the Education (Target-Setting in Schools) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998 – which are repealed by these new Regulations.

Boards of Governors of all primary and post-primary schools are still required to set targets each year during the autumn term; however the Department has changed the performance measures for which schools have to set targets. By requiring targets to be set the Department aims to contribute to the raising of standards in schools.⁵

Overview of changes to performance indicators

The changes to the performance indicators aim to *'provide greater consistency for parents'* and to align better with ELB/ ESA and Programme for Government targets. Table 1 provides an overview of the main changes, which include:⁶

- At Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 a new measure is to be brought in from 2013/14 relating to the percentage of pupils achieving at or above the expected level in Using ICT;
- At Key Stage 4 and Post-16, all post-primary schools (both selective and non-selective) are now required to set targets for the same indicators;
- A new performance indicator is the percentage of Year 12 pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs A*-C including GCSE English and Maths (and GCSE Gaeilge for pupils educated through Irish).

⁵ Department of Education *Consultation on the provision of performance and other information about schools and pupils* Bangor: Department of Education

⁶ As above

Table 1: Overview of changes to performance indicators for which schools are required to set targets and report achievement

| Status of targets | Key Stage | Details |
|-------------------------|---------------|--|
| Targets retained | 1-3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of pupils achieving level 2 at the end of Key Stage 1; level 4 at the end of KS2; and level 5 at the end of KS3 (or above) in Communication and Using Mathematics |
| | 4 and Post-16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Year 12 pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs grades A*-C (or equivalent) Percentage of Year 14 pupils achieving 2 or more A levels grades A*-E (or equivalent) Percentage of Year 14 pupils achieving 3 or more A levels grades A*-C (or equivalent) |
| Targets added | 1-3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of pupils achieving at or above the expected level in Using ICT at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 (from 2013/14) |
| | 4 and Post-16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Year 12 pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and Maths (and GCSE Gaeilge for pupils educated through the medium of Irish) |
| Targets deleted | 1-3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of pupils achieving level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1; level 5 at the end of KS2; and level 6 at the end of KS3 (or above) in communication and using mathematics |
| | 4 and Post-16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Year 12 pupils achieving 1 or more GCSEs (or equivalent) Percentage of Year 12 pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs A*-G (or equivalent) |

3 Overview of The Education (School Information and Prospectuses) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

These Regulations replicate some of the provisions from the Education (School Information and Prospectuses) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, and continue to require Boards of Governors and ELBs to publish a range of information relating to their educational provision and the achievement of pupils registered at the school.⁷

⁷ Department of Education *Consultation on the provision of performance and other information about schools and pupils* Bangor: Department of Education

Changes to information to be published by Boards of Governors

Boards of Governors continue to be required to publish a school prospectus and annual report each year detailing the exams entered and standards achieved by pupils. Under the new regulations they will be required to **publish the specified information** (see Table 2) **on the school's website** in addition to providing copies for distribution and reference at the school.

There are a number of new statutory duties on Boards of Governors relating to more general information about the school, such as duties to:

- List all courses offered at Key Stage 4 and post-16 and to detail arrangements made with other institutions to facilitate the Entitlement Framework;
- Summarise progress made against the school development plan;
- Set out the dates of any training or school development days on which the school was closed and the main activities that took place;
- Publish details of arrangements for the operation of any waiting list for available places at the school; and
- Publish opportunities for pupils to participate in shared education programmes and activities.

In addition, some duties have been removed, such as the requirement for Boards of Governors of grammar schools to publish the transfer test grades achieved by pupils applying and admitted to the school. The following section considers the changes made in the regulations to the performance information schools are required to supply.

Overview of changes to performance information

The main changes in these Regulations relate to the performance information schools are required to publish. Key changes include the following:

- Schools must now report the achievements of pupils entitled to FSM separately;
- The indicators for grammar and non-grammar schools are now the same;
- Achievement data for the previous two years must now be published;
- At Key Stages 1-3 schools must report pupils' achievements in Using ICT.

Table 2: Overview of changes to performance indicators for which schools are required to report achievement

| Status of Indicators | Key Stage | Details |
|----------------------------|---------------|---|
| Indicators retained | 1-3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of pupils achieving level 2 at the end of Key Stage 1; level 4 at the end of KS2; and level 5 at the end of KS3 (or above) in Communication and Using Mathematics |
| | 4 and Post-16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of pupils enrolled in Years 12, 13 and 14 and the number of pupils with special educational needs The number and percentage of Year 12 pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entered for 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalent) Achieving 5 or more GCSEs grades A*-C (or equivalent) Achieving no GCSEs grades A*-G (or equivalent) Percentage of Year 14 pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieving 2 or more A levels grades A*-E (or equivalent) Achieving 3 or more A levels grades A*-C (or equivalent) Information on the destinations of school leavers Alongside achievement of pupils at the school, Boards of Governors required to publish NI averages for the year |
| Indicators added | 1-3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of pupils achieving at or above the expected level in Using ICT at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 (from 2013/14) Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) achieving at or above the expected level (level 4 and above in the final year of Key Stage 2) in each of the cross-curricular skills; Boards of Governors must publish achievement data relating to the previous two years |
| | 4 and Post-16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Year 12 pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieving 5 or more GCSEs A*-C including English and Maths (and GCSE Gaeilge for pupils educated through the medium of Irish), or equivalent⁸ Entitled to FSM who achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths⁹ A list of all applied and general courses offered to pupils at Key Stage 4 and post-16, along with the achievement of pupils in those courses Percentage of school leavers who achieved 5 or more GCSEs at A*-C |

⁸ Where schools enter pupils for alternative courses equal to GCSE Maths/ English they must publish their achievements separately

⁹ Together with the percentage of boys, girls and all pupils in Year 12 entitled to FSM in Northern Ireland who achieved at that level

| Status of Indicators | Key Stage | Details |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
| | | <p>including English and Maths by the time they left school (and NI comparison)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of school leavers entitled to FSM who achieved 5 or more GCSEs grades A*-C including English and Maths (and NI comparison) Boards of Governors must publish achievement data relating to the previous two years |
| Indicators deleted | 1-3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of pupils achieving level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1; level 5 at the end of KS2; and level 6 at the end of KS3 (or above) in communication and using mathematics |
| | 4 and Post-16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number and percentage of Year 12 pupils entered for: 1-4 GCSEs and 7 or more GCSEs (or equivalent) Percentage of Year 12 pupils achieving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 1 and 4 GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent) Between 1 and 4 GCSEs at A*-G 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-G 7 or more GCSEs at A*-C (or equivalent) Percentage of Year 14 pupils in non-grammar schools achieving 1 or more A-levels at grades A*-E (or equivalent) A list of all GCSE and A-levels in which pupils were entered for examinations, along with the achievement of pupils in those exams (and equivalent qualifications) |

5 Potential challenges for the Regulations

OECD asserts that there is much evidence that accountability is associated with better student achievement, and that this is the case for measures aimed at students (such as exams); measures aimed at teachers (such as lesson observation); and for measures aimed at schools (such as assessments used to compare them to other schools).¹⁰

Nonetheless, the evidence highlights a number of potential issues around the requirements set out in the Regulations.

Concerns around the use of examination benchmarks for accountability

A recent report from the House of Commons Education Committee warned that the accountability system in place in England (similar to the NI Regulations in terms of requiring schools to report on the number of GCSEs achieved by pupils, although

¹⁰ OECD (2007) *School accountability, autonomy, choice and the level of student achievement* OECD Publishing

league tables are published in England) can incentivise schools to act in certain ways in regard to exams.¹¹

The Committee was concerned that the measures drive school behaviour in particular ways. The report suggested that schools try to meet this benchmark by various means, for example by focusing on particular children to try to move them from achieving a grade D to a grade C and being strategic around which pupils are entered for particular exams. The Committee notes that while these efforts may be in the interest of pupils; this is not always the case.¹²

The Committee recommended that accountability measures should be reviewed, particularly with the aim of reducing the dominance of the measure of five GCSES A*-C including English and mathematics, and to increase the credit given to schools for the progress made by children across the ability range.¹³

Limitations of the performance indicators

The literature suggests that using 'raw' data (assessment and examination outcomes) to provide information on school performance can have limitations. For example, such data can fail to take account of the prior achievements of pupils.¹⁴ In some jurisdictions, such as England, value-added indicators are used in an effort to provide a more contextual picture of pupil achievements.

The consultation document on the regulations states that the Department intends to amend them so that from 2015/16, schools will have to publish details on the percentage of pupils making the expected progress between each Key Stage (there is an expectation that they will progress by at least one level between each). This aims to provide a measure of value-added.¹⁵ However, this will only apply to Key Stages 1-3.

Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 assessments

A 2008 report questioned the validity and credibility of Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 assessments, with some highlighting perceptions of high scoring at KS1 and suggesting that post-primary schools do not believe that KS2 assessments are an accurate reflection of pupils' abilities. Some schools were said to purchase commercially available tools (such as NfER) to reassess pupils.¹⁶

¹¹ House of Commons Education Committee (2012) *The administration of examinations for 15-19 year olds in England* [online] Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmeduc/141/14103.htm>

¹² As above

¹³ House of Commons Education Committee (2012) *The administration of examinations for 15-19 year olds in England* [online] Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmeduc/141/14103.htm>

¹⁴ Goldstein, H. (2001) "Using Pupil Performance Data for Judging Schools and Teachers: scope and limitations" *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol 27, No. 4

¹⁵ Department of Education *Consultation on the provision of performance and other information about schools and pupils* Bangor: Department of Education

¹⁶ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2008) *School and pupil performance data* Bangor: DE

Indeed, there has been no compulsory moderation of outcomes of Key Stage 1 and 2 assessments since 2007, and there has never been moderation at Key Stage 3.¹⁷ From 2012/13 new assessment arrangements are being introduced for Communication and Using Mathematics, and for Using ICT from 2013/14. Assessments will be teacher-led and will involve moderation of outcomes.¹⁸ The assessments may involve examples of a pupil's work or assessment tasks. CCEA will moderate a sample of pupil portfolios.¹⁹

Supporting and enabling teachers and principals to use data effectively

Every School a Good School highlights the importance of ensuring that schools are supported in using data effectively to assess the performance and progression of pupils.²⁰

In 2003 the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) developed *Together Towards Improvement* as a resource to support schools in self-evaluation. The process calls for 'rigorous and honest' self-evaluation followed by a commitment to carrying out the appropriate actions. There is a focus on learner outcomes, with performance indicators including the extent to which pupils '*make good progress in line with prior achievement*'; '*achieve in line with relevant benchmarking data*'; and '*attain good standards in literacy and numeracy*'.

However, a 2008 report found that there are 'extensive' training needs at all levels in education here, and particularly within schools, in terms of enabling individuals to make optimum use of the available data to improve standards.²¹ Since that time there have been a number of opportunities for training, including conferences organised by the Regional Training Unit and training by the ELBs.²²

The literature highlights a range of challenges for schools in making effective use of data. These include:²³

- Lack of time, particularly in terms of updating and analysing data;
- Difficulties in applying data to classroom situations;
- Limitations of data (for example, data collected being too narrow or not focusing on individual needs);
- Insufficient comparable data; and
- Having sufficient trust in the data (trusting that it is reliable and timely).

¹⁷ Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report: *Committee for Education, 3rd October 2012* [online] Available at: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2012-2013/October-2012/The-Education-Levels-of-Progression-for-Key-Stages-1-2-and-3-Order-Northern-Ireland-2012-DECCEA-Briefing/>

¹⁸ Information provided by the Department of Education, July 2012

¹⁹ Information provided by the Department of Education, October 2012

²⁰ Department of Education (2009) *Every School a Good School: a policy for school improvement* Bangor: DE

²¹ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2008) *School and pupil performance data* Bangor: DE

²² Information provided by the Department of Education, July 2012

²³ Kirkup, C. et al. (2005) *Schools' use of data in teaching and learning* DfES

The use of FSME as a proxy measure for deprivation

The evidence suggests that Free School Meal Entitlement has limitations as a proxy measure for deprivation, including under-reporting of deprivation, measuring income and not other factors, and the changing eligibility of individual pupils.²⁴

The call for evidence for the Independent Review of the Common Funding Formula asks whether FSME is an appropriate measure for deprivation. The findings of the consultation may therefore be of interest in this regard.²⁵

6 Value-added measures

Value-added measures go further to identify the value a school has added to pupil outcomes by allowing for the measurement of progress made by pupils. There are two main types of value-added measures that can be used in schools.²⁶

- **Simple Value-Added:** Progress made by an individual pupil, or group of pupils, between different stages of education; and
- **Contextual Value-Added (CVA):** Such measures also take into account factors relating to the context of individual pupils when comparing the progress they have made.

Simple Value-Added measures relate to pupils' prior attainment, and do not account for other factors, such as socio-economic background. However, it is important to note that prior attainment has been found to have the greatest influence on differences in the attainment of individual pupils.²⁷

Contextual Value-Added (CVA) measures include a multi-level analysis of a range of factors that can have an effect on educational outcomes such as socio-economic background and age. *Every School a Good School* stated that the Department would introduce a contextual value-added measure to be used alongside other performance data in assessing the performance of schools:²⁸

“The absence of an agreed set of quantitative and contextual value-added measures that would allow more meaningful comparison of performance within, across and between schools is also a weakness in current policy that needs to be addressed.”

However, the Department now states that CVA measures can entrench low expectations for the most disadvantaged pupils and can mask underachievement. It states that the expectation that pupils must progress by at least one level of

²⁴ Hobbs, G. and Vignoles, A. (2007) *Is Free School Meal Status a Valid Proxy for Socio-Economic Status (in Schools Research)?* London: Centre for the Economics of Education and Kounali, D. et al. (2008) *The probity of free school meals as a proxy measure for disadvantage* Education Department, University of Bath

²⁵ CFS Review (2012) *Review of the Common Funding Scheme for Schools: a call for evidence*

²⁶ PwC (2008) *School and pupil performance data* Bangor: DE

²⁷ Mayston, D. (2006) *Educational Value Added and Programme Evaluation* London: Department for Education and Skills

²⁸ Department of Education (2009) *Every School a Good School: a policy for school improvement* Bangor: DE

progression by the end of each Key Stage, and the opportunity to capture the progress made by pupils, will provide a measure of value-added.²⁹

7 Approaches in other jurisdictions

This section of the paper provides an overview of approaches to information provision in other jurisdictions.

International comparison

The following table provides an overview of how Northern Ireland compares to other OECD countries in terms of requiring schools to report on achievement to promote accountability. The shaded boxes highlight the school phases for which the revised Regulations apply.

Table 3: Use of assessments and examinations for accountability in OECD countries

| Approach | School phase | Number of countries |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------|
| National assessments (Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 assessments in NI) | Primary (KS 1-3) | 30 of 35 (86%) |
| | Lower secondary (KS4) | 22 of 34 (65%) |
| | Upper secondary (Post-16) | 11 of 35 (31%) |
| National examinations (GCSE/ A Levels – KS4 and Post-16 in NI) | Primary (KS 1-3) | 4 of 35 (11%) |
| | Lower secondary (KS4) | 15 of 34 (44%) |
| | Upper secondary (Post-16) | 23 of 35 (66%) |

Source: Adapted from OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance 2011 OECD Indicators*

The table shows that the Regulations' requirement for schools to report achievement on assessments at Key Stages 1-3 is in line with the majority of OECD countries. The main purposes of national assessments in these countries are to provide feedback to improve teaching and learning and to highlight the relative performance of students. The two most commonly used subjects are maths and the national language. Science and foreign languages are also commonly covered in national assessments.³⁰

The table also shows that the use of national examinations (A Levels or equivalent in NI) as an accountability measure for the post-16 age group is found in two thirds of

²⁹ Information provided by the Department of Education, July 2012

³⁰ OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance 2011 OECD Indicators* OECD Publishing

countries, while the use of examinations at Key Stage 4 is less common, in line with fewer than half of OECD countries. In the majority of OECD countries, national assessments are used at this stage.

Reporting arrangements

Of 14 countries for which there is available data, every country shared results from national examinations at the lower secondary level with both external audiences and education authorities. In 12 of the 14 countries results from national examinations were shared directly with parents and teachers. Other key features of reporting arrangements at the lower secondary level included:³¹

- The level of performance for the **most recent year** was reported in 10 of 13 countries;
- The performance of schools **relative to other populations of students** was reported in 7 of 13 countries (the new Regulations require schools to report the NI comparison for a number of measures);
- The **relative growth in student achievement over two or more years** was reported in two countries (Boards of Governors here would have to publish achievement data for the previous two years);
- **Other indicators of school quality** were presented together with results from the national examinations in 4 of 12 countries (the Regulations require schools to report other aspects such as school leaver destinations and courses offered);
- Results were reported to be used by education authorities to **sanction or reward** schools in 5 of 13 countries.

Europe

Pupil performance in centrally set examinations and nationally standardised assessments is commonly used in European countries as part of the school evaluation process. However, inspectors and external evaluators tend to be **free to interpret the data without reference to centrally defined benchmarks**. Publishing aggregated student results is typically viewed as a means of strengthening school accountability.³²

In terms of publishing the data, there is a range of policies across European countries; from systematic publication of results (e.g. Sweden and Iceland) to official prohibition of the production of league tables (Belgium, Spain and Slovenia). In some countries (for example Italy and Poland) schools have autonomy in the publication of school results.

³¹ OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance 2011 OECD Indicators* OECD Publishing

³² Eurydice (2012) *Key Data on Education in Europe 2012* Brussels: Eurydice

US: High-stakes accountability

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) brought about significant reform to the education system, setting out a number of measures aiming to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress. The legislation has been controversial, particularly its requirements for all students to be proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013/14 and the tough sanctions for schools deemed to be 'failing'. Key aspects of the legislation include:³³

- **Annual testing:** students required to be tested annually in grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics and a sample of pupils in 4th and 8th grades must participate in national testing to provide a point of comparison for results;
- **Report Cards:** states required to provide annual report cards including attainment data broken down by subgroup and information on the performance of school districts;
- **Academic Progress:** by 2013-14 states must bring all students up to the 'proficient' level on state tests. Individual schools have to meet state 'adequate yearly progress' targets towards this goal.

Performance targets

States are required to hold schools accountable for improving student performance, and must set performance targets that schools are required to meet. States report student achievement annually including which schools did or did not make "adequate yearly progress" targets. The aim of this is to ensure that all schools improve their performance over time.³⁴

There are significant consequences for schools that fail to meet the "adequate yearly progress" targets. Schools that miss the targets for more than one year are deemed to be "in need of improvement" and face an escalating series of interventions, including:³⁵

- Giving students the opportunity to transfer to other public schools;
- Using school funds for extra tutoring;
- Replacing staff;
- Bringing in external consultants to help with school performance;
- Extending the school day or year;
- Restructuring the school;

³³ Education Week: *No Child Left Behind* [online] Available at: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/no-child-left-behind/> and

³⁴ Dillon, E. and Rotheram, A.J. (2007) *States' Evidence: What It Means to Make 'Adequate Yearly Progress' Under NCLB* Washington: Education Sector

³⁵ Dillon, E. and Rotheram, A.J. (2007) *States' Evidence: What It Means to Make 'Adequate Yearly Progress' Under NCLB* Washington: Education Sector

- Closing and reopening the school under new governance.

Views on the Act

A 2007 report on the No Child Left Behind Act found that in most states, student achievement in reading and maths had improved since 2002 and stated that there was evidence of achievement gaps narrowing slightly. However, the report stated that it is very difficult to determine the extent to which these improvements are attributable to the Act rather than to other initiatives and policies.³⁶

A number of criticisms have been levelled at the legislation, for example that it encourages 'teaching to the test' and that too many schools have been labelled as 'failing' as a result.³⁷

In 2010 the Obama administration proposed changes to the legislation to re-target efforts on turning around the worst performing schools, end the identification of satisfactory schools as 'failing' and encourage states to raise standards. However, Congress has not taken action.³⁸ Instead, President Obama has granted waivers to 26 states exempting them from the central requirements of the legislation.³⁹

England – league tables

League tables were introduced in 1992 allowing for the measurement of the relative performance of schools according to pupils' achievements in national exams. Government collects data from schools and this is published in alphabetical order (although the media can list these in order of performance).⁴⁰

League tables for primary schools publish the results of Key Stage 2 tests. At post-primary level league tables are based on three main indicators:

- Pass rates at GCSE;
- Value-added measures; and
- Absences (authorised and unauthorised).

Initially, the value-added measures (from 1998) used prior attainment, contrasting the performance of pupils at Key Stage 3 with their GCSE results. In 2004 a contextualised value-added measure was introduced, however there were concerns around the robustness of contextualised value-added measures.⁴¹ *The Importance of Teaching* White Paper announced that the contextualised value-added measure would be discontinued.

³⁶ Centre on Education Policy (2007) *Has student achievement increased since No Child Left Behind?* Washington: CEP

³⁷ New York Times: *No Child Left Behind* [online] Available at:

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/n/no_child_left_behind_act/index.html?scp=1&sq=NCLB&st=cse

³⁸ As above

³⁹ New York Times: *'No Child' Law Whittled Down by White House* [online] Available at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/06/education/no-child-left-behind-whittled-down-under-obama.html?pagewanted=all>

⁴⁰ Foley, B. and Goldstein, H. (2012) *Measuring success: league tables in the public sector* London: The British Academy

⁴¹ Foley, B. and Goldstein, H. (2012) *Measuring success: league tables in the public sector* London: The British Academy

The White Paper also announced the introduction of a new performance measure for schools – the English Baccalaureate. The English Baccalaureate was brought in as a new performance measure for schools in the 2010 league tables. Not a qualification in itself, the aim of the Baccalaureate was to highlight the number of pupils attaining GCSEs at grades A*-C across a core of academic subjects - English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language.⁴²

Ireland: school performance data not published

Primary schools

Under the Education Act 1998 schools are required to assess students and report the results to students and their parents. Schools are increasingly expected to analyse the data at whole-school level, compare their performance at school level with national results and in setting and monitoring targets. From 2012 onwards, schools are required to report aggregate standardised test results to the Department (they were not previously required to do so).⁴³

Post-primary

Post-primary schools can use a range of methods of assessment in addition to state examinations. These examinations assess the progress of individual students against the objectives of national curricula.⁴⁴ Performance information is not required to be published in Ireland, although some newspapers publish their own league tables based on the number of students progressing to third level at each school. In addition, schools may choose to publish their results.⁴⁵

8 Conclusion

This research paper has highlighted a range of areas that could be given further consideration, for example:

- The reliance on the benchmark of 5 GCSEs grades A*-C and the potential implications for schools and pupils;
- The extent to which the plans for 2015/16 to require schools to publish the percentage of pupils making the expected progress will provide a robust picture of the “value-added” by the school;

⁴² Department for Education: *The English Baccalaureate* [online] Available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/englishbac/a0075975/the-english-baccalaureate>

⁴³ Eurypedia: *Ireland: Quality assurance in early childhood and school education* [online] Available at:

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Ireland:Quality_Assurance_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education

⁴⁴ As above

⁴⁵ Irish Independent: *Teacher fury at FG plan to publish exam results* [online] Available at:

<http://www.independent.ie/lifestyle/education/features/teacher-fury-over-fg-plan-to-publish-exam-results-2561609.html>

- The potential implications of the removal of the higher targets on levels of progression at Key Stages 1-3;
- The use of FSME as a proxy for deprivation within the measures;
- The potential implications of the introduction of new assessment arrangements from 2012/13 for Key Stages 1-3. This could include:
 - The robustness of the new assessments and the extent to which they will allow accurate comparisons across schools;
 - The potential implications of the introduction of new assessment arrangements from 2012/13 for Key Stages 1-3. For example, the extent to which the outcomes of the new, moderated assessments will be comparable to the previous approach and the implications for the requirement to publish data for a two year period;
- The requirement for grammar and non-grammar schools to set targets and report on the same indicators;
- The removal of the requirement for Boards of Governors of selective schools to publish the transfer test grades achieved by pupils applying and admitted to the school;
- Potential implications of the requirement to list all applied and general courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16 and the achievements of students in those subjects – for example, whether it would be possible to identify individual students where the numbers are small;
- How teachers and principals will be supported to use data effectively.