



BRIEFING PAPER

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Changes to school accountability and 'league tables' in England in 2016

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Summary

Scope of this briefing paper

This briefing paper aims to provide a brief overview of how the Government measures schools performance in England.

It looks at:

- What school performance data is currently measured and reported, and the changes to school league tables in 2016.
- What role data plays in school accountability frameworks and in deciding which schools will be subject to intervention.

It also provides guidance on how to find and interpret local school performance data.

What are school performance tables, or league tables?

The Department for Education (DfE) collects a wide range of performance and pupil data from schools, local authorities and, at key stages 4 and 5, examination boards, in England. It publishes some of this information in school performance tables, or 'league tables' as they are commonly referred to.

What is school performance data used for?

- **Parents:** A survey in May 2016 found that parents think performance data is important for selecting secondary schools, but less so for primary schools.¹
- **Schools and governors:** performance data (both published and unpublished) is used alongside other key information to monitor school effectiveness and pupils' progress.
- **Schools' inspectorate, Ofsted:** Ofsted considers a wide range of evidence, but performance data are taken into account during routine school inspections and during risk assessments.
- **Local authorities and the Department for Education (DfE):** Schools whose performance data suggests they are 'coasting' or failing can be subject to a range of interventions from Regional Schools Commissioners (DfE appointees) or local authorities for maintained schools.

Changes for 2016

In 2016 what is reported at both secondary and primary levels is changing in fundamental ways.

- At key stage 4 (GCSE/ equivalent) two new headline progress measures are being introduced: Progress 8 and Attainment 8. The old headline measure of school performance, 5 A* to C GCSE/

¹ ["Ofsted ratings not key to how parents pick schools, finds survey"](#) in the Times Educational Supplement, 27 May 2016.

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equivalent including English and maths, will not be included in school performance tables.

- At the end of key stage 2 (end of primary) the old national curriculum 'levels' have been scrapped and replaced by four new headline measures:
 - The percentage of pupils achieving the 'expected standard' in English reading, English writing and mathematics.
 - The pupils' average scaled score in English reading and mathematics – a score of 100 will always represent the expected standard, but the actual number of marks scored to achieve this may vary from year to year to account for slight changes to the difficulty of tests and assessments.
 - The percentage of pupils who achieve at a higher standard in English reading, English writing and mathematics.
 - The pupils' average progress in English reading, writing and mathematics.

These reforms are taking place alongside parallel reforms to the school curriculum, exams and assessments. These are covered in two linked House of Commons Library briefing papers.

- [House of Commons Library briefing paper, GCSE, AS and A Level reform.](#)
- [House of Commons Library briefing paper, The school curriculum and SATs in England: Reforms since 2010.](#)

The second of these notes looks at the history of the Government's primary assessment changes in context. It also provides information on sector reaction to the primary curriculum and assessment changes.

1. What data is reported about schools' and pupils' performance?

The table below outlines what school attainment and progress data is reported by the Department for Education (DfE) in England:

What 2015/16 data is reported?	Relates to children aged	Reported at individual school/ college level?
Early Years Foundation Stage profile	Four or five; reception year.	No
Phonics screen (reading skills)	Five or six; year 1	No
Key stage 1 data	Six or seven; year 2	No
Key stage 2 data	10 or 11; year 6	Yes
GCSE/ equivalent attainment, progress and destinations	15 or 16; year 11	Yes
A level/ equivalent attainment, progress and destinations	Pupils in year 13 aged 17 to 18	Yes

1.1 Finding attainment data for particular schools, local authorities and constituencies

The DfE's 'Compare school performance' website allows users to search for performance data for local schools. Data can be filtered by phase of education (primary, secondary, 16 to 18) local authority area, and in many cases, parliamentary constituency:

- [DfE, Compare school performance website](#)

Alongside the performance data this site also includes school/ college level data on the destinations of pupils leaving key stage 4 and key stage 5, pupil absence figures, spending per pupil and information from

the DfE's School Workforce Census on teacher numbers, characteristics, pay and vacancies.

Statistical analysis of school performance by type of school, pupil characteristics and geography can be found on the DfE's statistics web pages:

- [Statistics: early years foundation stage profile](#)
- [Statistics: key stage 1](#)
- [Statistics: key stage 2](#)
- [Statistics: GCSEs \(key stage 4\)](#)
- [Statistics: 16 to 19 attainment](#)

Detailed information on what data is collected and reported, and guidance on interpretation, is also available:

- [DfE document collection, School performance tables: about the data](#)

1.2 Primary and secondary performance data for 2016

Data on the 2016 performance of pupils at the end of primary schooling (key stage 2 data) was published on **15 December 2016**:

- [DfE, National curriculum assessments: key stage 2, 2016 \(revised\), 15 December 2016](#)

In 2016, 53% of pupils included in the measure met the expected standard in *all of* English reading, writing and maths; the percentage of pupils meeting the standard in the individual domains was higher – 66% in reading; 73% in grammar, punctuation and spelling; 70% in maths; and 74% in writing.

Data on the 2016 performance of pupils at the end of compulsory education (key stage 4) is due to be published on **19 January 2017**.

The DfE has already published some provisional KS4 data:

- [DfE, GCSE and equivalent results: 2015 to 2016 \(provisional\), 13 October 2016.](#)

See section 3.2 of this note for analysis of this provisional 2016 KS4 data.

1.3 International data on school performance

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) undertakes a triennial survey of attainment in science, maths and reading in 70+ member and partner countries. This study, which looks at the performance of 15 year olds, is known as the Programme for International Student Assessment, or PISA.

The OECD's full reports and datasets are available online:

- [OECD – PISA data for 2015 and previous years](#)

2015 PISA results

2015 PISA assessment results were published in December 2016. The UK's mean results were above the OECD average in science and reading and average in maths. These results have not changed significantly since either the 2009 or 2012 assessments. Simple ranks (on mean scores) and the range of ranks reflecting the variability of sample estimates are given below:

- 15th in science (12th to 17th)
- 22nd in reading (16th to 27th)
- 27th in maths (21st to 31st)

Further details about how the UK fared and context can be found in an OECD summary:

- [OECD, PISA 2015 country note – United Kingdom](#)

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement carries out regular surveys of maths, science and reading literacy. These are known as TIMSS and PIRLS:

- [Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study \(TIMSS\) results, 2015](#)
- [Progress in International Reading Literacy Study \(PIRLS\) results, 2011.](#)

1.4 Ofsted inspection data

Schools' inspectorate, Ofsted, publishes monthly management information showing the latest inspection grading for maintained schools and academies in England:

- [Ofsted, Monthly management information: Ofsted's school inspections outcomes.](#)

This data can be filtered by local authority, school type, parliamentary constituency, and Ofsted grading.

1.5 Reporting school performance in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Wales

The Welsh Government publishes a wide range of performance and attainment data at school and local authority level:

- [Welsh Government, My local school website](#)

Scotland

Education Scotland publishes school-level data on secondary school leavers' destinations and attainment. For the first time in 2016, the Scottish Government published experimental statistics on primary attainment:

- [Scottish Government, Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels](#)

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Further information on school performance in Scotland can be found on the Parentzone website:

[Education Scotland, Parentzone Scotland: Find a School website](#)

Northern Ireland

The Department of Education in Northern Ireland (DENI) doesn't publish school-level attainment data at primary, GCSE or 'A' level although in past years the press have published rankings based on freedom of information data. DENI does publish aggregate data on school performance and school leavers' highest qualifications:

- [Department of Education, Statistics and research website](#)

2. What is school performance data used for?

2.1 Floor standards

Each year the Government sets minimum floor standards for primary and secondary schools in England. Floor standards do not apply to infant schools, special schools, independent schools, pupil referral units, alternative provision or hospital schools.

In 2016 the primary floor standard is based on the new accountability measures which are summarised in section 3 of this note. Primary schools are above the floor standard if:

- At least 65% of pupils meet the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. achieve that standard in all three subjects) *or*
- The school achieves sufficient progress scores in each of reading, writing and mathematics.²

The published KS2 performance data shows that:

[In 2016] 665 schools are below the new primary school floor standard [...] This represents 5% of the state-funded mainstream schools included in the floor calculations. In 2015, 676 (5%) of schools were below the then floor standard.³

In 2016, secondary floor standards will be based on a new performance measure, *Progress 8*, which is covered in more detail in section 3 of this note. Schools will be below the floor standard if their *Progress 8* score is below -0.5 and the upper band of the confidence interval⁴ for this average is below zero.

In a Statement to Parliament on 19 October 2016, Education Secretary Justine Greening gave assurances that 2016 primary data would not be used in isolation in to make decisions about school intervention:

Because of the changes to primary assessment, I want to be clear that no decisions on intervention will be made on the basis of the 2016 data alone. Regional Schools Commissioners and local authorities will work together with the current leaders of the small minority of primary schools below the floor or coasting to help and support the schools to move forward in a positive direction.⁵

Further information about what interventions schools may be subject to if they are below floor standard or if are other concerns about their performance, can be found in the [DfE's statutory guidance on Schools causing concern](#) (March 2016).

² At least -5 in English reading, -5 in maths and -7 in English writing.

³ [DfE, SFR 62/2016, National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England, 2016 \(revised\)](#), 15 December 2016.

⁴ Confidence intervals are given to reflect the normal variability in annual results. An upper band below zero means the entire range is below zero and we can be reasonably certain that the negative result is not down to chance.

⁵ [Primary Education: Written statement-HCWS203](#), 19 October 2016.

2.2 'Coasting' schools

The *Education and Adoption Act 2016* created a new formal category of school underperformance: 'coasting'. The Government defines coasting schools as those where "over time, pupils are not fulfilling their potential."⁶ The Government has laid draft regulations that prescribe when a school would meet this definition. The criteria are based entirely on KS2 performance data in the case of primary schools and KS4 performance data in the case of secondary schools.

Primary schools

In 2016, a primary school will be coasting if:

- In 2014 fewer than 85% of pupils achieved level 4 in English reading, English writing and mathematics **and** had below the median percentage of pupils making expected progress in all of English reading, English writing and mathematics; **and**
- In 2015 fewer than 85% of pupils achieved level 4 in English reading, English writing and mathematics **and** had below the median percentage of pupils making expected progress in all of English reading, English writing and mathematics; **and**
- In 2016 fewer than 85% of children achieve the expected standard at the end of primary **and** average progress made by pupils is below -2.5 in English reading or -2.5 in mathematics or -3.5 in English writing

Secondary schools

In 2016, a secondary school will be coasting if:

- In 2014, fewer than 60% of pupils achieved 5 A*-C at GCSE (inc. E&M), and the school has less than the national median percentage of pupils who achieved expected progress in English and in mathematics; **and**
- In 2015, fewer than 60% of pupils achieved 5 A*-C at GCSE (inc. E&M), and the school has less than the national median percentage of pupils who achieved expected progress in English and in mathematics; **and**
- In 2016, the school has a Progress 8 score below -0.25 and the upper band of the 95% confidence interval is below zero.

Where a school has been notified it is considered to be coasting, intervention will depend on whether the school has an adequate plan and capacity to improve. The Secretary of State or RSC has a power (but not a duty) to make an academy order, where the school is a maintained school. For academies, intervention may include warning notices served by the RSC, or some cases 'rebrokerage', i.e., transfer of the academy to a new sponsor.

DfE statutory guidance, [Schools causing concern](#), effective April 2016, provides further information on options available to local authorities, Regional Schools Commissioners and the Secretary of State for Education where schools are deemed to be underperforming.

2.3 Ofsted inspection and risk assessment

All maintained schools and academies in England are subject to inspection and risk assessment from the inspectorate, Ofsted, although

⁶ [Draft Explanatory Memorandum to the \(draft\) Coasting Schools \(England\) Regulations 2016.](#)

there are special arrangements for most schools previously judged as 'outstanding' overall (the highest Ofsted grade) at their last routine inspection.

Ofsted's [School Inspection Handbook](#) sets out what information the inspectorate will consider prior to inspection and during risk assessments:

Ofsted uses risk assessment to ensure that its approach to inspection is proportionate and so that it can focus its efforts where it can have the greatest impact. Risk assessment has two stages:

- Stage one involves an assessment of each school, based on analysis of publicly available data.
- Stage two involves a more in-depth desk-based review of a wider range of available information.

The outcomes of the risk assessment are used differently depending on the previous inspection grade of the school. Ofsted uses a broad range of indicators to select providers for inspection. The risk assessment process normally takes place in time for the start of the third school year after the most recent inspection.

In conducting a risk assessment, Ofsted analyses:

- pupils' academic achievement over time, taking account of both attainment and progress
- pupils' attendance
- the outcomes of any inspections, such as survey inspections, carried out by Ofsted since the last routine inspection
- the views of parents,¹¹ including those shown by Parent View,¹² an online questionnaire for parents
- qualifying complaints¹³ about the school referred to Ofsted by parents
- any other significant concerns that are brought to Ofsted's attention.⁷

During inspection, Ofsted considers a range of evidence, including published and unpublished performance data.

Following the passage of the *Education and Adoption Act 2016* if a maintained school is judged inadequate overall by Ofsted, the Secretary of State is under a duty to make an academy order, to enable it to become a sponsored academy. For academy schools judged inadequate, the *2016 Act* allows the Government to terminate the academy's funding agreement (contract to operate the school) and transfer the school to a new sponsor. Schools judged overall as requiring improvement will usually be subject to monitoring inspections by Ofsted and may also receive other intervention.

⁷ Ofsted, [School inspection handbook: Handbook for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005](#), August 2016, pp. 5-6

2.4 Parental preferences for school admissions

A survey for the *Times Educational Supplement* reported in May 2016 found that attainment and performance data was much more important to parents choosing secondary schools than at primary level:

- 55% of parents surveyed said that KS2 SATs results were quite unimportant, not important or not a consideration when nominating school preferences for their children. Only 10% thought KS2 SATs results were very important, and a further 35% thought they were quite important.
- 90% of parents said that GCSE or equivalent results were very important or quite important when selecting secondary schools to apply to.⁸

⁸ ["Ofsted ratings not key to how parents pick schools, finds survey"](#) in the Times Educational Supplement, 27 May 2016.

3. Changes to league tables in England in 2016

3.1 New primary accountability arrangements

In early 2014 the Government announced that a new primary accountability system would be introduced from 2016. Full details can be found in a DfE publication, [Primary school accountability in 2016](#).⁹

The main changes are:

- The introduction of a new (higher) expected standard in reading, writing and maths.
- The former system of national curriculum levels is no longer used for any measure.
- Test results are reported as a scaled score with 100 as the expected standard, a range of outcomes from 80 to 120 and pupils with scores of 110 or higher deemed to have a high score and achieved a 'higher standard'.
- A new floor standard and coasting schools definition.
- A new progress measure calculated from Key Stage 2 test/assessment scores compared to Key Stage 1 assessments.
- The progress measure is reported at a school level only based around an average national figure of zero. A positive score means pupils at a school did better than those with similar prior attainment nationally and *vice versa*.

Headline performance measures included in the KS2 school performance tables for 2016 are:

- The percentage of pupils achieving the 'expected standard' in all of English reading, English writing and mathematics.
- The pupils' average 'scaled score' in English reading and mathematics
- The percentage of pupils who achieve at a higher standard in English reading, English writing and mathematics.
- The pupils' average progress in English reading, writing and mathematics.

What do primary performance measures mean?

Pupils meet the expected standard in all of English reading, English writing and mathematics if they have a scaled score of 100 or above in English reading and maths, and if they have been assessed by their teacher as working at the expected standard or above in English writing. The Government has made clear that the expected primary standard in 2016 is higher than it was in previous years.¹⁰

National curriculum levels:
Alphanumeric scale used to describe KS2 performance prior to 2016.

Scaled score: a numerical score achieved by children at the end of KS2 following curriculum reform. 100 is considered the 'secondary ready' standard.

⁹ DfE, [Primary school accountability in 2016](#), December 2016.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 3

Scaled scores are generated from raw scores, i.e., the number of marks a child gets in a particular test. A score of 100 will always represent the expected standard, but the actual number of marks needed to achieve this may vary from year to year to account for slight changes to the difficulty of tests and assessments over time.

As the name suggests, the progress measure is calculated based on the progress a school makes with its pupils between the end of key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2.

3.2 Progress 8 and Attainment 8 for secondary schools in 2016

This year's GCSE league tables will be changed in the most radical way since they were first introduced a quarter of a century ago. Two new headline measures –Progress 8 and Attainment 8 –will be introduced to encourage schools to focus on an 'academic core' of subjects and count every increase in every grade for all pupils. As noted in section 2, above, progress 8 will also be used to judge whether schools fall below the 'floor' target or are classed as 'coasting'; both of which have important implications for schools.

According to the [Department for Education](#):

The new performance measures are designed to encourage schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on an academic core at key stage 4, and reward schools for the teaching of all their pupils, measuring performance across 8 qualifications. Every increase in every grade a pupil achieves will attract additional points in the performance tables.¹¹

In 2016, key stage 4 headline performance measures will also include:

- **% of pupils achieving Ebacc measure:** this is a measure of attainment across core academic subjects. To count for the measure, pupils must achieve A* to C GCSEs or equivalent in each of five domains: English; maths; the sciences; a modern language; and history or geography.
- **% of pupils entering Ebacc measure**
- **% of pupils achieving grade C or better in both English and maths GCSEs**
- **% of pupils staying in education or employment after key stage 4**

How are Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores calculated?

Attainment 8 is a points score calculated from a pupil's best eight grades across three subject-based categories. Progress 8 compares a pupil's Attainment 8 score to the national average for pupils who scored

¹¹ DfE, [Progress 8 and Attainment 8 measure in 2016, 2017, and 2018](#), October 2016, p. 5

the same in English and maths tests at primary school. A school's results are the average across all its eligible pupils. They both take account of each qualification and grade. This is in contrast to the *threshold* measure they replace, 5+ grades A*-C including English & maths, which only counted qualifications up to the point where a pupil passed the threshold. These new measures are broadly supported by the academic community.

Attainment 8 looks at qualification in:

- English and maths (both double weighted)
- Three English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) qualifications apart from English and maths (i.e. science, languages and humanities)
- Three other qualifications including approved non-GCSEs

Grades in each qualification are given points ranging from one for a G, increasing one point for each grade up to eight for an A*. If a pupil does not have enough qualifications in a category they score zero for that 'slot'. The English and maths points are doubled and the points are summed.

Progress 8 looks back at a pupil's English and maths results at the end of primary school to put them in a prior attainment group. The national average Attainment 8 score for this group is then subtracted from the individual's Attainment 8 score and the result is divided by 10. The individual Progress 8 score is only used as a step to calculate the average for a school.

What do Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores mean?

Attainment 8: The maximum a pupil can achieve is 80 points if they get A* in eight qualifications that fit in these categories. One point difference is equivalent to one grade difference in one qualification. Ten points to one grade across all eight subjects.

Progress 8: If a school's score is positive it means their pupils made more progress than pupils with a similar starting point nationally and *vice versa*. Results are centered around zero (the national average) and a score of, say, +0.5 means that on average pupils at that school achieved half grade higher per subject than pupils nationally with the same levels of prior attainment. Results are given as [confidence intervals](#) to help account for the normal variability in annual results not directly linked to a school's performance. Only where the whole interval is above or below zero can we be reasonably certain that a school's results are better or worse than average.

3.3 Provisional key stage 4 data for 2016-analysis

[National and local authority headline measures](#) were published in mid-October 2016.¹² The average Attainment 8 score in state schools was 49.8, up from 48.2 in 2015 (recalculated). This is equivalent to an average grade of C across all eight subjects. The improvement was

¹² DfE, [GCSE and equivalent results: 2015 to 2016 \(provisional\)](#), 13 October 2016

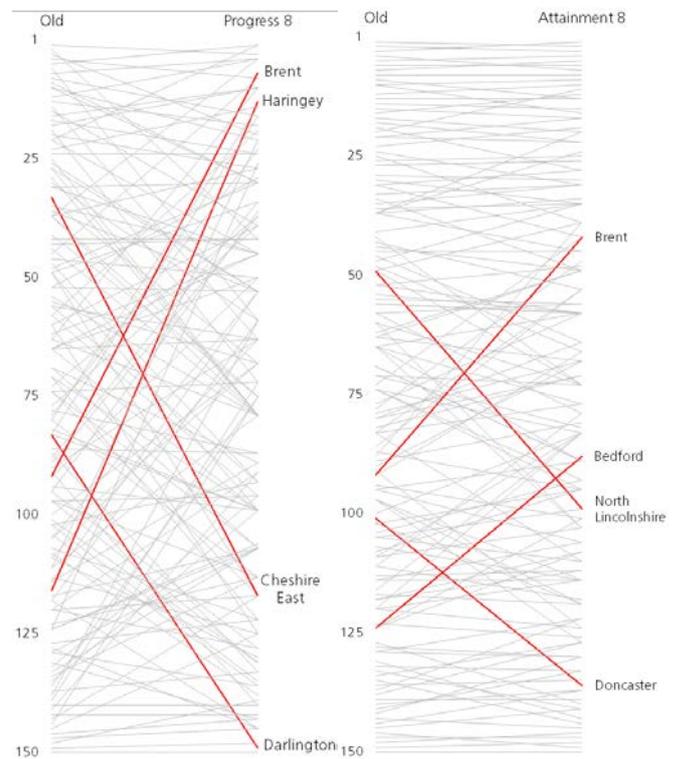
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largely down to 'behavioural change'- more pupils entering more EBacc subjects. Progress 8 results are only relevant when comparing groups of schools, pupils etc. These were included in the [official statistics](#). The charts opposite however look at local authority data, specifically how their rankings have changed on these new measures compared to the old headline measure in 2016. They illustrate general shifts, although some of the larger changes are highlighted.

There was relatively little change from the old headline measure to Attainment 8 for those with the highest and lowest rankings, but much more for those in the middle. There was even greater 'churn' in rankings when the old measure is compared to progress 8. Many saw very large changes in their ranking. Confidence intervals tell us that 46 local authorities were above, 69 below and 35 no different from the national average on this measure.

[Provisional school-level results](#) were published earlier this year giving headline performance data for all secondaries in England. Final league tables with much more performance data are due out in January 2017.

Change in LA rankings (high to low) for old to new headline GCSE measures



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