



Department
for Education

Publishing performance measures on school and college websites

Government consultation response

December 2014

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1. Introduction

1.1. The consultation on publishing headline performance measures on school and college websites set out proposals to ensure that all schools and colleges publish performance measures on their websites in a consistent, standard format so that they are easy to interpret and enable parents to compare schools and colleges.

1.2. The consultation also set out our proposals for the standard presentation of the headline measures and our intention to develop a digital application for schools and colleges to download.

2. Summary of responses received and the government's response

2.1. An on-line public consultation on publishing headline performance measures on school and college websites was completed on 4 July 2014. We received 106 written responses to the consultation. A summary of the consultation responses, including the percentage of respondents who raised particular themes in their discussion of the issues, is at Annex A.

2.2. The majority of respondents to the consultation welcomed the proposals to present headline performance measures in a standard format. There was also strong backing for the proposed visual presentation of data to aid understanding of performance. However, many respondents suggested that without some sense of scale or spread to provide some context to the visual presentation, the data could be misleading. Others said that the language used alongside the charts should be clearer.

2.3. Whilst most respondents favoured a data application tool that would remove the burden of annually updating performance data on school and college websites, they also highlighted the difficulties of developing a data application that would be compatible with a wide range of school and college websites.

2.4. In light of the comments received we plan to continue to explore how we can present the headline measures in a way that best meets the needs of parents. We are undertaking further user research before taking a final decision on how this might be achieved. We will inform schools and colleges of any requirement to download a data application or provide a link to performance tables, or any other requirements for their websites, in autumn 2015.

3. Main findings from the consultation

Presentation of headline measures in a standard format

3.1. There was clear support from respondents to the proposal to present headline performance measures in a standard format on school and college websites. Whilst respondents felt that it was essential to keep the format simple, there was a lot of concern that over simplifying the presentation might lose some statistical validity of the data. In particular, respondents felt that small cohorts could make a significant impact on the data and the cohort size should be shown. Respondents also wanted to know what scale and spread was being used for each of the measures.

3.2. We understand the concerns raised in the consultation on this point. We intend to continue with our proposals to present the headline measures in a simple, easy to understand way, but will undertake further work to determine how details such as cohort size and scale can be added to give the data more context. We will continue to explore with a range of intended users how we might add this detail without compromising the aim of providing a clear and simple visual representation of the data.

Visual presentation of the data

3.3. Respondents confirmed that visual data is very powerful and easy to understand and could be the gateway to further exploration of more detailed data. However, respondents again expressed caution that if it is too simple it could be misleading.

3.4. Concerns were also raised about the complexity of the language used alongside the visual presentation. Many felt that the accompanying text could be simpler. Others urged consistency with Ofsted data dashboards and RAISEonline.

3.5. We will continue to refine the presentation of the measures to take into account concerns about misleading data, context, language and the colours used for those with colour blindness.

Development of a data application

3.6. Respondents were in favour of a tool which would remove the need for schools and colleges to manually update performance data themselves. However, many raised concerns that smaller schools might not have the necessary skills to download such a tool and others felt that it would be problematic and expensive to either place the widget on their homepage or one click away from their homepage.

3.7. Schools and colleges felt that placing the data on the homepage would spoil the work they had undertaken to create friendly, welcoming and informative home pages,

resulting in a cluttered look and feel. Others mentioned that the data would not fit in with the corporate colour scheme of their website. Some respondents also said that they outsource their website design and development which means they would have to outsource the downloading of the data application which would lead to extra costs for the school or college.

3.8. Several respondents suggested that schools and colleges should be required to provide a link from their homepage to the performance tables website instead of downloading a data application. This would have the benefit of a prominent link from the homepage that would not be intrusive or expensive whilst providing a link to comprehensive performance data.

3.9. We intend to undertake user research to find out how we can present the performance tables data in a way that reaches more parents. The research will help us understand if a data application can be designed to increase the reach of performance information further.

3.10. The outcome of this research will inform our thinking on the best way to ensure access to clear and easy to understand performance information in the places that users want to find it.

3.11. We will let schools and colleges know what will be required of them in 2016, e.g. downloading a data application, providing a link to performance tables or something else, by autumn 2015.

Requirement to publish headline performance measures on school and college websites

3.12. Local authority maintained schools are already required to publish certain performance measures on their websites and many academies are also required to do this through their funding agreements. All schools and colleges, including academies, free schools and university technical colleges, will be required to publish the new headline performance measures in a consistent, standard format on their websites from 2016. Whilst the majority of respondents to the consultation thought that parents did not have difficulty finding school or college performance, many felt that parents and students sometimes had difficulty understanding the data. Also, where schools and colleges did publish data on their websites it was presented in many different ways, making it difficult for parents and students to compare providers. Whilst the data application will not have a comparison functionality (this will continue to be provided through the performance tables website) requiring schools and colleges to present data in a standard format will help understanding and ensure consistency between providers.

3.13. We said in the consultation that we will amend the School Information Regulations to require schools to publish the new headline measures on their websites.

We intend to amend these regulations in April 2016. The regulations will be extended to cover academies, free schools and UTCs. Colleges and 16-19 academies will be required to publish the measures through their funding agreements.

3.14. The new headline performance measures will be based on 2015/16 pupil and student outcomes. Schools and colleges will be required to publish the measures alongside the publication of performance tables.

Special schools

3.15. Respondents from special schools wanted to know if they would be required to publish headline performance measures on their websites. The School Information Regulations, which currently require maintained schools to publish certain performance measures on their websites, include special schools and therefore, where performance information is held for them in performance tables, these schools will be required to publish the headline performance measures on their websites from 2016.

Middle schools

3.16. Many respondents representing middle schools explained that, because their schools spanned the primary and secondary age ranges, the primary headline performance measures do not reflect the attainment and progress of their year 7 and 8 students. Whilst we acknowledge this point, middle schools will, nevertheless, be required to publish the primary headline performance measures on their websites.

Technical and capability issues

3.17. Respondents indicated that there will be a range of technical issues to overcome if a data application is to be developed. We agree that this is likely to be a significant issue and, if user research indicates that a data application solution is the best way forward, we will develop a prototype that will be thoroughly tested with a range of schools and colleges before a data application is fully developed. The data application will also be piloted before it is rolled out to institutions.

3.18. Schools and colleges have understandably been concerned that appropriate support will be available if they encounter difficulties downloading the data application. We intend to provide very clear instructions for downloading the data application and a helpdesk will also be available.

4. Next steps

The indicative timetable for publishing headline performance measures on school and college websites is as follows:

Date	Action
November 2014 – May 2015	User research and proposals for re-development of performance tables
June – October 2015	Data application prototype development and testing ¹
Autumn 2015	Schools and colleges informed of 2016 requirements
January – May 2016	Data application development and testing
April 2016	School Information Regulations and funding agreements changed to come into force in September 2016
September 2016 – January 2017	Data application rolled out to schools and colleges or alternatively a link to revised performance tables supplied.
February 2017	All schools and colleges have a data application or link to performance tables on their websites

¹ If it is agreed that a data application is required.

Annex A: statistical analysis of headline performance measures consultation responses by question

Basic Information

How have respondents responded?		
Response Types	Responses	
On-Line:	78	74%
Off-Line:	0	0%
Paper based:	6	6%
Email:	22	21%
Total:	106	100%

Responses Information		
Information	Responses	
Key Responses:	0	0%
Confidential Responses:	7	7%
Acknowledgements Requested (Sent):	36 (36)	34% (100%)
Future Contact requested:	48	45%

Respondent Information Questions

Please place a 'x' in the box below that best describes you as a respondent.			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Other:	39	37%	37%
Secondary school:	20	19%	19%
Primary school:	19	18%	18%
Academy:	18	17%	17%
Local authority:	5	5%	5%
Sixth form college:	3	3%	3%
Parent:	2	2%	2%
Total:	106	100%	100%

Consultation Questions

1 Do you agree that the headline measures should be presented in a standard way?			
There were 104 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Agree:	87	84%	82%
Disagree:	13	13%	12%
Not sure:	4	4%	4%
Key Indicators:			
There needs to be statistical validity in any standard format	21	20.2 %	19.8 %
Context of a school or college needs to be taken into account	29	27.9 %	27.4 %
It is essential to keep the format simple on school/college websites with a link to more detailed data	6	5.8 %	5.7 %

Show progress from entry to exit	4	3.8 %	3.8 %
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2 Do you agree that there should be a visual presentation of the data to aid understanding?			
There were 100 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Agree:	87	87%	82%
Disagree:	9	9%	8%
Not sure:	4	4%	4%
Key Indicators:			
There should be visual presentation of headline measures	21	21.0 %	19.8 %
there should be scale shown on the visual presentation	7	7.0 %	6.6 %
Link to data displayed on home page	2	2.0 %	1.9 %

3 Do you have any different suggestions for how the data might be presented visually?			
There were 42 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Key Indicators:			
The spread/volume of each measure should be shown	14	33.3 %	13.2 %
Data on other areas such as curriculum offer should be shown	12	28.6 %	11.3 %
Use of Open Source Tools might reduce cost and increase user friendliness	1	2.4 %	0.9 %
Graph or chart would be best.	6	14.3 %	5.7 %
Should also give written explanation of numerical data shown	14	33.3 %	13.2 %
School strengths vs areas to develop	1	2.4 %	0.9 %
Provide link to OFSTED dashboard.	3	7.1 %	2.8 %
Colours used may need rethink	9	21.4 %	8.5 %
Have additional widget identifying best performing schools	2	4.8 %	1.9 %
Useful to have the national average on the graphs.	2	4.8 %	1.9 %

4 Will the examples given above improve understanding and meet the aims set out at the beginning of this document?			
There were 93 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Yes:	48	52%	45%
No:	26	28%	25%
Not Sure:	19	20%	18%
Key Indicators:			
More prominence should be given to the progress 8 measure	2	2.2 %	1.9 %
The illustrative narrative should be consistent	10	10.8 %	9.4 %
Without some context or statistical significance the performance shown will be misleading	30	32.3 %	28.3 %
Measures used not a fair reflection of middle school work	2	2.2 %	1.9 %

5 Where should these measures be available?			
There were 98 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
School and college websites:	82	84%	77%
GOV.UK:	68	69%	64%
BBC website:	29	30%	27%
Other:	16	16%	15%
Key Indicators:			
Data should be available on Gov.uk and school/ college websites	27	27.6 %	25.5 %

6 Do parents experience problems finding school or college performance information and using it to compare one provider to another?			
There were 97 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Yes:	39	40%	37%
Not Sure:	35	36%	33%
No:	23	24%	22%
Key Indicators:			
Current performance tables are unwieldy	8	8.2 %	7.5 %
Parents have trouble interpreting data	22	22.7 %	20.8 %
Comparisons need to be with similar schools	10	10.3 %	9.4 %
Only a small percentage of parents will look or care about this data	8	8.2 %	7.5 %
Need to make sure data is up to date.	5	5.2 %	4.7 %

7 Do you agree that a data application should be developed and installed locally to allow schools and colleges to comply with the requirement to publish headline measures in a standard format on their website?			
There were 96 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Agree:	67	70%	63%
Disagree:	17	18%	16%
Not sure:	12	12%	11%
Key Indicators:			
DfE should require providers to have a signposted page to statutory information within one click from the homepage	8	8.3 %	7.5 %
Needs to be consultation about performance discriptors used	2	2.1 %	1.9 %
No, i do not agree that schools and colleges should put this information on their websites	6	6.3 %	5.7 %
Should be developed nationally if standardised.	4	4.2 %	3.8 %

8 Do you agree that the requirements for the application set out at Annex A are the right ones?
There were 88 responses to this question

Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Agree:	45	51%	42%
Not sure:	22	25%	21%
Disagree:	21	24%	20%
Key Indicators:			
It must clearly state the scale and the number of pupils in the cohort	2	2.3 %	1.9 %
Could include SEN pupils	3	3.4 %	2.8 %
Need to reflect other non-academic or specialised pathways	3	3.4 %	2.8 %
Add list setting our responsibility for each item in list	1	1.1 %	0.9 %
Don't agree with raw attainment as measure of school success.	1	1.1 %	0.9 %

9 Are there any technical issues for your website that you think we should be aware of?			
There were 18 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Key Indicators:			
DfE should liaise with website suppliers for schools	5	27.8 %	4.7 %
Must not conflict with standard web frameworks	12	66.7 %	11.3 %
widget must operate in self-contained way	7	38.9 %	6.6 %

10 Does your school or college have the capability to install a data application ("widget") on its website?			
There were 83 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Not Sure:	37	45%	35%
Yes:	36	43%	34%
No:	10	12%	9%
Key Indicators:			
Domain must be existing bonafide government site	2	2.4 %	1.9 %
Some providers may require technical consultancy	5	6.0 %	4.7 %
There should be government funding for this	7	8.4 %	6.6 %

11 If you are a school or college, would you be willing to pilot the data application before it is rolled out nationally?			
There were 79 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Yes:	36	46%	34%
No:	24	30%	23%
Not Sure:	19	24%	18%
Key Indicators:			
Yes	6	7.6 %	5.7 %

12 Do you think the availability of a data application ("widget"), together with changes to the School Information Regulations and funding agreements, encourage compliance with the requirement to publish headline measures on school and college websites?

There were 97 responses to this question			
Options	Responses		Across Consultation
Yes:	62	64%	58%
Not Sure:	21	22%	20%
No:	14	14%	13%
Key Indicators:			
Independent schools should publish in same way	2	2.1 %	1.9 %



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