



Department
for Education

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Key Stage 4 performance measures for institutions with a focus on professional education and an atypical age of admission

Dear Ed,

Earlier this year our respective teams had a number of discussions about how pre-16 institutions with a focus more on technical and professional education¹ and an atypical age-range have their progress scores reflected in DfE's school and college performance tables and statistical releases. In particular, some colleges had raised concerns with the OSR about the extent to which school and college performance with a Progress 8 score were comparable across different types of institution. You wrote to Stephen Criddle at South Devon College on the matter in March this year.

I am now writing to set out changes DfE will be making to the performance tables and statistical publications from October of this year, having sought views from users of the data, including the Association of Colleges and the Baker Dearing Trust. These relate to institutions with more of a focus on professional education and an atypical age-range, meaning that they do not cover the full five years measured by Progress 8. In the main, this applies to UTCs, Studio Schools and FE colleges providing education for 14-16 year olds.

Since the last publication of results in January 2018, the department has had representations from a range of stakeholders about the challenges that Progress 8 presents to these institutions. While our position remains that Progress 8 is a critical measure and it would not be right to exempt these institutions from the measure, there are steps we can take to make much clearer the special considerations that apply in the case of these institutions, with respect to Progress 8.

We plan, therefore, to strengthen and increase the prominence of the current 'caveat statement' for all schools with an atypical age, with effect from the next publication of performance tables in October 2018. These statements will read:

- *Some schools start educating pupils partway through the five-year period covered by Progress 8, which should be taken into account when comparing their results with schools that start at Key Stage 3. Progress 8 is not the most appropriate performance measure*

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/technical-and-professional-education-revolution-continues>

for university technical colleges, studio schools and some further education colleges. These establishments typically start educating pupils at age 14, with a focus on preparing pupils for their future careers by providing an integrated academic and professional education. Other headline measures, particularly pupil destinations, are more important for these establishments.

There are also a small number of other schools with atypical age ranges included in the key stage 2 performance tables; namely the 123 middle schools that teach pupils across parts of key stage 2 and 3. In addition, upper schools appear in the key stage 4 performance tables but teach pupils across for key stage 4 and only part of key stage 3. Unlike UTC and FE colleges with 14-16 provision, however, these schools do not have a focus on professional education. To recognise their different age range, the statement above will apply to upper schools, and a similar statement will be added to the performance tables pages for middle schools.

Furthermore, to recognise the professional focus on UTCs, studio schools and 14-16 colleges we will, from October, remove the descriptive bandings from the Progress 8 scores on performance tables for these schools. These bandings use colour coding to highlight whether a school is 'below average', 'average' or 'above average' compared to other schools. Removing them, alongside greater prominence of the caveat above, will emphasise that Progress 8 is not the most appropriate measure for these institutions.

Finally, we intend to make changes to the way the Department presents the figures for these schools in relation to the floor and coasting standards. We already have in place a separate intervention regime for these schools, focusing less on Progress 8 and floor standards and instead looking at a more rounded approach to judging their performance starting from Ofsted inspection report. To recognise this from January we will present the headline figures in the statistics for the percentage of schools meeting the floor and coasting standard excluding these schools. We will also publish information around the floor and coasting standards for these institutions to ensure transparency. This is the position for the 2018 results, but it should be noted that the Department is consulting in the autumn on a replacement for the floor and coasting standards for all schools.

These changes will send an important message about the importance of understanding the context and special considerations for these institutions.

Building on these first steps, we will consider what more we can do to increase the focus on destinations as a key indicator of the performance of these institutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ND McIvor', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Neil McIvor
Chief Data Officer and Chief Statistician