



Subject:

TARGET SETTING AND BENCHMARKING (PRIMARY)

Circular Number:
2006/15

Date of Issue:
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Target Audience:

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided primary schools;
- Education and Library Boards;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; and
- Teachers' Unions

Summary of Contents:

This Circular contains benchmarking data for 2004/2005 results to assist schools in setting targets for key stage assessment.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

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Governor Awareness:
Essential

Status of Contents:
Advice
Information for schools

Related Documents:
DE Circulars 1998/5 (primary),
"Target-Setting and
Benchmarking"
School Improvement pack
"Target Setting: Guidance for
Primary Schools"

Superseded Documents:
2005/15

Expiry Date:
Not applicable

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Introduction

1. Since September 1998 all schools have been required to set their own targets for improvement, notably in assessment outcomes and against specified indicators of public examination performance. The requirements are set out in Circular 1998/24 'Education (Target Setting in Schools) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998 and reproduced for convenience at Appendix A below. Since 1998 also, the Department has provided schools with data to assist them in the process of benchmarking their own performance and setting targets for improvement. Schools should note that data is not included for categories with less than five schools, where no pupils are involved, or where the numbers are too small to allow valid comparisons.
2. The data has been arranged to allow schools to put their recent performance into context and to compare it with that of schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) and those of a similar size. FSM entitlement has been used to provide an indicator of schools' circumstances. Schools should now use the data to make a realistic evaluation of their current position, determining for themselves the appropriate FSM grouping and the enrolment figures, which will provide their benchmarks. It is not suggested that the data will suit the particular circumstances of every school: schools should set their own targets based on current performance, trends and a rate of improvement which is both challenging and achievable.
3. The primary schools benchmarking booklet is enclosed with this circular.

Comparative Performance Data

4. **Individual schools are not identified in the data.** The tables have been constructed using the following method:
 - schools have been grouped together in two different ways: according to the number of pupils in the school; and according to the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals;

- within each group the school results have been ranked from the lowest performing school to the highest; and
- the data within each table is presented in terms of:
 - lower quartile
 - median
 - upper quartile
 - 95th percentile
- the lower quartile figures in each line of a table are the actual results of the school which was a quarter of the way up the scale, i.e. the results achieved or bettered by 75% of schools in the group;
- the median figures are the actual results of the school in the middle of the scale, i.e. the results achieved or bettered by 50% of schools in the group;
- the upper quartile figures are the actual results of the school three quarters of the way up the scale, i.e. the results achieved or bettered by 25% of schools in the group; and
- the 95th percentile figures are the actual results of the school 95% of the way up the scale, i.e. the results achieved or bettered by the top 5% of schools in the group.

You may also find the following (fictional) example useful in understanding how the benchmarking data has been calculated.

Example

Key Stage One: Percentage of Children achieving Level 2 and above

Schools with 30-39.99% of children entitled to free school meals (100 schools)

	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	95 th Percentile
Subject	20.0	60.0	80.0	90.0

In this example there are 100 schools in the category of 30-39.99% of children entitled to free school meals and when the schools were listed in order of achievement from the lowest performing school to the highest:

Lower Quartile - the results of the 75th best performing school which had 20% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above;

Median - the results of the 50th best performing school which had 60% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above;

Upper Quartile - the results of the 25th best performing school which had 80% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above;

95th Percentile - the results of the 5th best performing school which had 90% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above.

5. Any enquiries about the 2004/05 data or its interpretation should be addressed to **Ms Patricia Wyers or Mr Gavin King, Statistics and Research Branch**, at the address below. The telephone numbers are 028 9127 9252 or 028 9127 9259.
6. Enquiries about other aspects of the Circular should be addressed to **Mrs Julie Craig, Curriculum and Qualifications Branch**, telephone number 028 9127 9565.

Lorraine Finlay

**Lorraine Finlay
Curriculum and Qualifications Branch**

APPENDIX A

Measures of Performance: Primary Schools

The measures of performance in respect of which targets must be set by the Board of Governors of a primary school are as follows:-

- a. the proportion of pupils which should be achieving Level 2 (or above) of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, in English and mathematics (in the case of an Irish speaking school, in Irish and mathematics) at the end of Key Stage 1;
- b. the proportion of pupils which should be achieving Level 3 (or above) of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, in English and mathematics (in the case of an Irish speaking school, in Irish and mathematics) at the end of Key Stage 1;
- c. the proportion of pupils which should be achieving Level 4 (or above) of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, in English and mathematics (in the case of an Irish speaking school, in Irish, English and mathematics) at the end of Key Stage 2; and
- d. the proportion of pupils which should be achieving Level 5 (or above) of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, in English and mathematics (in the case of an Irish speaking school, in Irish, English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.