



**Subject:**

**TARGET SETTING AND BENCHMARKING (POST-PRIMARY)**

**Circular Number:**  
2006/16

**Date of Issue:**  
7 June 2006

**Target Audience:**

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided post-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 post-primary schools in setting targets for key stage assessment and public examination results.

**Enquiries:**

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

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Curriculum and Qualifications Branch  
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**Governor Awareness:**  
Essential

**Status of Contents:**  
Advice  
Information for schools

**Related Documents:**  
DE Circulars  
1998/6 (secondary) "Target-Setting and Benchmarking" and  
School Improvement pack  
"Target Setting: Guidance for  
Secondary Schools"

**Superseded Documents:**  
2005/16

**Expiry Date:**  
Not applicable

**DE Website:**  
<http://www.deni.gov.uk>

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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. The purpose of this circular is to provide schools with new benchmarking data based on the end of key stage assessment and public examination results for 2004/2005. 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 post-primary schools benchmarking booklet will accompany 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
  - 95<sup>th</sup> 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 95<sup>th</sup> 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 Three: Percentage of Children achieving Level 5 and above

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

	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	95 <sup>th</sup> Percentile
Subject	40.0	50.0	60.0	80.0

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 75<sup>th</sup> best performing school which had 40% of pupils achieving Level 5 or above;

Median - the results of the 50<sup>th</sup> best performing school which had 50% of pupils achieving Level 5 or above;

Upper Quartile - the results of the 25<sup>th</sup> best performing school which had 60% of pupils achieving Level 5 or above;

95<sup>th</sup> Percentile - the results of the 5<sup>th</sup> best performing school which had 80% of pupils achieving Level 5 or above.

- Any enquiries about the 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.
- 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  
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## APPENDIX A

### Post Primary Schools

The measures of performance in respect of which targets must be set by the Board of Governors of a secondary school (including grammar school) are as follows:-

- a. the proportion of pupils which should be achieving Level 5 (or above) of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3; and
- b. the proportion of pupils which should be achieving Level 6 (or above) of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3.

### In the case of a secondary school which is not a grammar school:

- a. the proportion of Year 12 pupils which should be achieving:-
  - i. 1 or more GCSEs, or an equivalent qualification;
  - ii. 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\* - G, or equivalent; and
  - iii. 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\* - C, or equivalent.
- b. the proportion of Year 14 pupils which should be achieving 2 or more GCE A levels at grades A – E or equivalent.

### In the case of a grammar school:

- a. the proportion of Year 12 pupils which should be achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\* - C or equivalent; and

- b. the proportion of Year 14 pupils which should be achieving:-
- i. 2 or more GCE A levels at grades A – E or equivalent; and
  - ii. 3 or more GCE A levels at grades A – C or equivalent.