

PSA DELIVERY AGREEMENTS

PSA 19 – RAISING STANDARDS IN OUR SCHOOLS

Vision

Our vision is to help every school here to become a good school; to raise overall educational achievement by young people; and to ensure that they are well prepared for life and work in the 21st century, enabling all to achieve their full potential and make a positive contribution to their communities.

While many young people are fortunate to have their aspirations nurtured and supported in schools with a real focus on excellence, there are still far too many pupils who are not reaching their full potential – and still too many schools where performance could be better. That is why quality and standards are at the very heart of our vision for school improvement. We want to do more to raise levels of achievement, especially in literacy and numeracy and ICT.

In line with that vision, we have set the following objectives:

- To improve the overall performance of schools;
- To improve the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT;
- To maintain a particular focus on levels of literacy and numeracy and ICT in those schools which currently have lower than expected levels of achievement and/or which draw their pupils from areas of high socio-economic disadvantage
- To ensure that mainstream pupils leave school with formal qualifications

Measurement

We gather annually data on attainment at critical stages in our education system and can use this to baseline current performance and to gauge progress and levels of improvement. This data will be particularly important in

determining whether our new policy interventions are having the necessary impact and are succeeding in raising educational standards.

Data on attainment levels does, of course, have some limitations but it can and will be supported by other data that relate to the characteristics that we think good schools share (and on which we will shortly be consulting). These include data on attendance rates of pupils which can be seen as a good indicator of whether they and their parents value education and whether they feel stimulated and engaged by the teaching they receive.

Our proposed indicators are set out below. Further detail is contained in the Measurement Annex.

Indicator 1: Progress in implementing revised curriculum

- The revised curriculum has been designed specifically in response to feedback from teachers, pupils, parents and business and to be more enjoyable and more relevant. If its implementation is slowed, then we fail to reduce the numbers of young people who are turned off by their compulsory schooling and who are therefore less likely to achieve their full potential. An important indicator, therefore, is the extent to which we meet the target of full implementation by 2010.

Indicator 2: Increased number and better balance of courses on offer under the Entitlement Framework

- We know that young people are most likely to achieve their full potential when they have access to well taught courses in areas that appeal to them and leave them well placed to enter further/higher education and/or employment. The Entitlement Framework will ensure that young people have access to a greater choice of pathways, with a better balance between traditional, academic courses and the applied courses that employers tell us are needed to meet the needs of business and the local economy. An important indicator therefore is the progress we make in improving the range of courses available

when young people are making subject choices at 14 (usually for GSCE) and at 16 and the balance between general and applied courses.

Indicator 3: Progress in ICT measured by the percentage of pupils attaining expected levels at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3

- We know that aptitude in ICT is important if young people are to be able to access the full curriculum. ICT skills are also increasingly sought by employers in what is an increasingly knowledge-based economy. As it is not necessary to study an ICT qualification at GSCE to demonstrate aptitude, we need to look at other measures, including performance at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

Indicator 4: Proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2.

- While the more normal measure of success in literacy and numeracy is at GSCE level, attainment here reflects learning that has taken place throughout both primary and post-primary schools. If we are focused on raising standards in all schools, we need to have an indicator of progress made in the primary sector

Indicator 5: Proportion of pupils achieving 5 A*-G GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and mathematics by the time they leave school.

- Achievement at grades A* - G at GCSE is considered a pass at that level. An important gauge of progress in tackling poor literacy and numeracy among the working population is the extent to which there is an improvement in the number of pupils reaching this level in English and Maths

Indicator 6: Proportion of pupils achieving at least a level 2 qualification (GSCE A*-C or equivalent) in English and Maths by the time they leave school

- While achievement at grade G and above at GSCE level is considered as a pass, we know that a better performance (ie at grades A*-C) is what is needed to ensure access to further and higher education and to many jobs.

Indicator 7: Proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving at least a level 2 qualification (GSCE A*-C or equivalent) in English and Maths by the time they leave school

- We know that there is a strong correlation between educational underachievement and social and economic disadvantage. We also know that educational achievement can be a key factor in breaking the poverty cycle. For that reason, our delivery strategy will include a specific focus on targeting underachievement among those children from less well off backgrounds

Indicator 8: Proportion of young people leaving school with no qualifications at GSCE level (or equivalent)

- After 12 years of compulsory schooling, it seems reasonable to expect that, at the very least, every young person (apart from those with the most severe special educational needs) has attained at least some level of recognised qualification

Indicator 9: Performance at GCE A level Grades A-C

- While the main focus of raising standards is on attainment at GCSE/level 2 as this marks the end of compulsory education, we need also to make sure that standards and quality continue to improve at post-16. Achievement in the highest grades at A level is an appropriate indicator of performance and progress at the end of the formal school system

Indicator 10: Increase in participation rate of 16-17 year olds in full-time education or training

- If the curriculum is relevant, standards in schools are high and there is broader access to both academic and vocational pathways, we can reasonably expect more young people to continue their education either at school or through further education colleges or vocational training providers and to see a reduction in the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Indicator 11: Improvements in pupil attendance at school

- We know that pupil attendance is related to the extent to which parents value education and young people enjoy and find relevant what they do at school. We also know that poor attendance can be an early indicator that a young person is less likely to reach his or her full potential educationally and more likely to become disenchanted with education. We therefore need to monitor attendance rates more rigorously to identify scope for earlier intervention where patterns or trends occur.

Delivery Strategy

Our delivery strategy is focused on the development and implementation of new and revised policy interventions that work together to secure improved outcomes for all children and young people. The strategy also supports achievement of PSA 10 (*Helping our children and Young People to achieve through Education*) and PSA 7 (*Making People's Lives Better*). It brings together several key strands, including:

- **Curriculum Reform**
- **A strong focus on standards generally and a specific focus on performance in literacy and numeracy and ICT**
- **A new focus on the role of the education professional in protecting equality of opportunity, raising standards and promoting a culture of achievement and aspiration**

Curriculum Reform

The revised curriculum is a key plank in achieving our goal of raising standards. It has been designed specifically in response to feedback from teachers, pupils, parents and business to be more enjoyable and more relevant to young people. Its design also provides much greater opportunity for teachers, as professionals, to use their professional judgement to determine how best to manage learning and teaching in their classrooms. We know that when young people are well taught by committed professionals with a focus on learning that is relevant and enjoyable as well as rigorous and demanding, then they are most likely to reach their full potential. We also know that, in their earliest years of compulsory schooling, children do best when they are encouraged to play and learn at their own pace. That is why the revised curriculum includes a specific foundation stage designed to meet the needs of children and their teachers in Years 1 and 2.

The starting point on the delivery chain for raising standards in our schools is to ensure that the revised curriculum is rolled out on a planned basis and is supported through training and availability of other resources. ICT will be a significant element in the delivery chain – both as a focus in its own right in the revised curriculum and as an enabler, supporting pupils, teachers and policy-makers. The Department will therefore continue to invest in ensuring that schools have access to modern information and communications technologies for both administration and learning. It will also undertake a review of its empowering schools strategy to ensure that ICT investment is being used to best effect in raising standards and promoting learning and teaching.

Once they get to post-primary school, we know that young people are most likely to achieve their full potential when they have access to well taught courses in areas that appeal to them and leave them well placed to enter further/higher education and/or employment. The Entitlement Framework will ensure that young people have access to a greater choice of pathways, with a better balance between traditional, academic courses and the applied courses

that employers tell us are needed to meet the needs of business and the local economy. We will therefore be working to ensure that schools, either on their own, in collaboration with other schools or in collaboration with Further Education Colleges, offer their pupils a full range of pathways, including both general and applied routes, to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to achieve and the qualifications needed to access the world of work in their chosen career.

A strong focus on standards generally and a specific focus on performance in literacy and numeracy and ICT

We know that, while many schools achieve high standards and perform well, there are others where performance is much lower than might be expected. If we are to be successful in raising educational standards, we need to make sure that schools are capable of delivering improvements and are supported in doing so. We will therefore bring forward a new school improvement policy and revised literacy and numeracy strategy for consultation early in 2008, with a view to having them in place by September 2008.

The new School Improvement Policy will be implemented in September 2008 and this implementation process will involve a number of key players, including:

- The **school** and its leadership team has the primary responsibility for the educational standards achieved by the pupils across all areas of the curriculum; and ensuring that its ethos, its leadership, its organisation, its expectations, its pastoral care, its teaching and its curricular provision motivate the pupils and provide them with the opportunities to succeed.
- The **Education and Skills Authority** will monitor the performance of individual schools, particularly the standards of attainment; challenge schools about their performance; provide the necessary support to schools, especially those which are under-performing; take the actions required to deliver and sustain improved performance in those schools

where it is deemed unsatisfactory; and ensure that there is appropriate training and support for school governors and school leaders.

- The **Department of Education** will monitor and report on the performance of the overall school system; and hold the Chief Executive of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) accountable for the performance of all schools in relation to school improvement.
- The **Education and Training Inspectorate** will promote improvement through the inspection programme and report the outcomes of a school's inspection to the Department, the Board of Governors, the principal and teachers, ESA.

Until such times as ESA is established, the Education and Library Boards will continue to be accountable for the effective use of resources made available for schools and related services.

Implementation will be the subject of regular monitoring and evaluation combined with formal inspections by ETI.

A new focus on the role of the education professional in protecting equality of opportunity, raising standards and promoting a culture of achievement and aspiration

As noted above, and in common with other public services such as health, the successful delivery of education policies lie largely in the hands of professional front-line staff, particularly teachers. If our drive to raise standards is to be successful, we need to make sure that we recognise the role of the professional and provide support, and where necessary challenge, to those fulfilling that role.

We will therefore, in 2008, complete a review of Teacher Education to make sure that our teaching professionals are clear about the standards expected of them and the support available to them. This will include a particular focus on the following:

- The new teacher competence framework

- The role of initial teacher education in ensuring that newly qualified teachers have had the opportunity to learn and practise the skills they need to raise standards and foster a love of learning
- The role of continuing professional development in ensuring that all teachers remain up to date with professional practice and are supported in their work to raise standards
- The role of the school principal as a leader of learning, with consideration being given to how leaders are identified, developed and supported and how they can, in turn, share their learning with, and provide support to, other principals and teachers.

At the same time, we will provide additional support to school governors, making sure that they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities, especially in relation to standards, and feel able to fulfil those responsibilities effectively.

This work will complement a wider review of the school-based workforce, which will consider the contribution of classroom assistants, technicians, administrative support staff and others to the work of the school, with the aim of ensuring an appropriate mix of skills and expertise to help schools meet the increasing challenges they face.

Risk Management Strategy

There are clearly risks associated with any drive to improve school standards and these have been recognised in the DE Corporate Risk register. A copy of the relevant extract is appended.

Accountability and Governance

Responsibility for raising standards in schools rests with the Department of Education (DE) and the Minister of Education is therefore the lead Minister for this PSA. Responsibility for increasing participation rates is shared with the

Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) which is accountable for performance in the further and higher education and vocational training sectors.

DE and DEL recognise the need to work collaboratively to ensure that, together, the education sectors can continue to deliver a high quality education to all young people.

The Education and Training Inspectorate is responsible for inspecting the quality of provision in schools, FE colleges and training providers and its work, including the findings from its inspections and surveys, will be of critical importance in informing the delivery of the proposed policy interventions.

The Assembly Education Committee will also help drive performance by regularly monitoring performance and holding the Department to account for its progress.

Until April 2009, the five Education and Library Boards have overall responsibility for securing the provision of high quality schooling. From 1 April 2009, that responsibility will pass to the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) which will have, in legislation, a statutory duty to raise standards in schools as well as a responsibility to provide support and guidance to help schools in their improvement journey.

School principals and their leadership teams are accountable, in the first instance, to their Boards of Governors for the performance of their school. The governors will, from April 2009, in turn be accountable to ESA for standards and performance.

Consultation

The revised curriculum which is now being phased in was the subject of extensive consultation with teaching professionals, parent, employers and young people themselves. The entitlement framework was also developed informed by that consultation. Legislative changes designed to give effect to

the concept of a minimum entitlement will be consulted on in the normal matter.

The proposed strategy for school improvement, *Every School a Good School*, was developed informed by discussions with teachers and other educational professionals, policy-makers and young people and also by responses received to an initial paper on school improvement circulated as part of a suite of papers setting out the policy direction of the education aspects of the Review of Public Administration. The draft strategy is about to be issued for public consultation and the findings and feedback from that consultation process will inform the final strategy which is expected to be finalised in time for the 2008-09 academic year.

The revised literacy and numeracy strategy has also been developed with input from education professionals and will also be issued early in 2008 for public consultation.

PSA 19 MEASUREMENT ANNEX

Target for improvement	Data provider	Proposed measurement	Baseline position	Frequency of reporting
By 2010, the revised curriculum to be in place for every year group in every grant-aided school	ETI and PMB through inspection evidence and local education authority monitoring	Degree of implementation of revised curriculum	In the 2007-08 academic year, the revised curriculum is being phased in to Years 1, 5, 8 and 11	Annually
<p>By 2010, to have improved the balance between general and applied courses so that at least 30% of the courses on offer in post-primary schools are in the applied category</p> <p>By 2010, to have increased the % of schools offering access to at least 24 courses at KS4 and 27 courses at post-16 to [50%]</p>	WELB via annual Entitlement Framework Audit	Increased number and better balance of courses on offer under the Entitlement Framework	<p>Balance between general and applied courses at Key Stage 4 was 65.4% general v 26% applied in 2006-07. The figure for post-16 was 67.6% v 28.8%.</p> <p>12.3% schools were providing access to at least 24 courses at Key Stage 4 in 2006-07. At 16+ where the goal is 27 courses, only 4 schools currently achieve this, (39.8% provide access to 20+ courses)</p> <p>Source: 2006-07 Entitlement</p>	Annually

			Framework Audit).	
From 2010/11 it is expected that pupils at the end of KS2 will be working at a level 4 (based on revised levels of progression to be introduced from 2009/10 school year); and at the end of KS3 will be working at a level 6 (again based on revised levels of progression to be introduced from 2009/10 school year)	CCEA via end of Key Stage assessment results	% pupils attaining expected level in ICT at Key Stages 2 and 3	Baseline information will first be available in the 2009/10 school year	Annually
Target currently being developed.	CCEA via Key Stage assessment results	% pupils attaining expected levels in literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 2	2005/06 78% English 80% Maths	Annually
By 2011, 90% of school leavers achieving at least GCSE A*-G (or equivalent) level in English and Maths	CCEA and DE	% pupils gaining GCSE A*-G (or equivalent) in English and Maths by the time they leave school	School leavers survey 2005/06 84.9%	Annually
By 2011, 68% of students gaining at least a level 2 qualification by the time they leave school By 2011, 55% of students	CCEA and DE	% pupils gaining at least a level 2 qualification(GCSE A*-C) in English and Maths by the time	School leavers survey 2005/06 64.2%	Annually

gaining a level 2 qualification (including GCSE grades A*-C) in English and Maths by the time they leave school		they leave school	School leavers survey 2005/06 53.7%	
By 2011, at least 30% of FSME students who achieve at least a level 2 qualification (5+ GCSE A*-C or equivalent) in English and Maths by the time they leave school	DE	Increased % of FSME pupils gaining at least a level 2 qualification(GCSE A*-C) in English and Maths by the time they leave school	In 2005/06 26.3% of pupils entitled to FSM achieved 5+ GCSE's A*-C including English and Maths. Source: 2005-06 School Leavers' Survey)	Annually
By 2011, at most 1.5% of year 12 pupils with no qualification at GCSE A*-G level or equivalent	DE	Reduced % of young people in Year 12 leaving school with no qualifications at GCSE level or equivalent	Summary of Examination Results 2005/06 3%	Annually
By 2011, 65% of A level students gaining 3+ A levels at grades A-C or equivalent in Year 14	CCEA	% improvement in performance at GCE A level A-C	Summary of Examination Results 2005/06 63.5%	Annually
Participation rate increased to 95% by 2011	DE and DEL	% increase in participation rate of 16-17 year olds in full time	2006/07 Statistical Press Release 92.0%	Annually

		education or training		
By autumn 2008 to develop targets for improvement on the basis of data collected for the 2007/08 school year	DE	Improved pupil attendance rate at primary and post-primary schools	2005/06 Post primary 92% 2005/06 Primary 95% (based on 2004/05 data)	tbc