



**Subject:**

**SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND TARGET SETTING**

**Circular Number:**  
2010/04

**Date of Issue:**  
June 2010

**Target Audience:**

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided primary and post-primary schools;
- Education & Library Boards;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment;
- Education & Skills Authority Implementation Team;
- Teachers' Unions.

**Summary of Contents:**

This circular sets out the general context for school development planning and provides benchmarking information for target setting.

**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**Superseded Documents:**  
2009/10

**Expiry Date:**  
Not applicable

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

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## **Introduction: Performance of the Education System**

1. All Departments, including the Department of Education, must set performance targets (in Public Service Agreements) as part of their financial settlement for the period 2008 to 2011. The education targets are summarised in Annex 1. Current performance is also shown through the latest available figures (2008/09).
2. These statistics are for the system as a whole and incorporate a wide variation in performance of individual schools. Whereas in some cases gaps in performance can be explained by factors outside the school, especially levels of disadvantage, it is also clear that there are wide gaps in the performance of schools sharing broadly similar characteristics.
3. The figures show that, while progress has been made, there is a pressing need for continued improvement in educational attainment across our system. These targets are for average performance across all schools. Raising standards starts with every pupil in every school and so each and every school needs to play its part through year-on-year improvement. The emphasis is on raising overall performance and narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest achievers, and between the most and least disadvantaged pupils.
4. This circular sets out the annual information for benchmarking to inform the process of target setting by schools. It also provides information on the general context which needs to be considered by schools in revising their School Development Plans.

## **School Improvement**

5. The key policy for raising overall performance and narrowing the gap in achievement is "Every School a Good School: A Policy for School Improvement". This emphasises the point that self-improvement is the responsibility of every school.
6. Self-evaluation, using performance data and other information, leading to sustained self-improvement is at the core of the policy. Effective self-evaluation, and the actions that flow from it, should deliver educational improvement for all pupils.

School-level and pupil-level data will inform self-evaluation, and benchmarking of performance against other schools with similar characteristics. The data will support planning for improvement at pupil, class, year group, key stage and whole-school level. Self-evaluation is an integral part of the school development planning process and the resulting actions and targets are captured in School Development Plans.

### **School Development Planning**

7. Schools must comply with the current legal requirements for School Development Planning, including the obligation to submit a copy of their Plan to the Education and Library Board/CCMS. The Department is reviewing the requirements for school development planning, and will publish revised guidance material on self-evaluation and school development planning in time for the new school year.
8. Schools are required by legislation to set their own targets for improvement, including targets for literacy and numeracy. These must be included in the School Development Plan.

### **Target Setting**

9. Targets need to be challenging, yet achievable. When setting targets schools will wish to take into account a range of factors, including:
  - i) trends in performance by the school over previous years;
  - ii) the prior attainment of each year group;
  - iii) the context within which the school is operating and how it compares to schools in similar circumstances; and
  - iv) the priorities set in the School Development Plan.
10. Annex 2 of this circular provides schools with benchmarking information. The data has been arranged to allow schools to put their recent performance into context and to compare themselves with schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM).
11. DE Circulars 2010/06 and 2009/15 advised schools on the arrangements relating to assessment and reporting requirements. Schools are advised to continue to provide

information to CCEA on their assessment outcomes in Language & Literacy and Mathematics & Numeracy using the existing end-of-key-stage level descriptors. Schools should continue to use these level descriptors when setting their targets pending the introduction of new levels of progression.

12. When a pupil leaves a school, it is a legal requirement for the school they are leaving to transfer a formal record of the pupil's academic achievements and progress; this must be provided to the principal or Board of Governors of the receiving school within 15 days. This should always include the end-of-key stage data, especially for the end of Key Stage 2 (and the end of Key Stage 3 where a pupil is transferring to a Senior High School), as this data is used as part of the funding calculations for post-primary schools.

### **Effective Use of Data – Future Developments**

13. Every School a Good School commits the Department to ensuring that data is more easily accessible by schools, and that they are supported in using it effectively to monitor the performance and progression of individual pupils and classes. To do this the Department will:
  - i) take forward work to develop a contextual value added measure, to be used alongside other performance data in assessing the performance of schools; and
  - ii) require the ELBs/ESA to develop and begin delivering a training programme for governors, principals and teachers to support the effective use of data.
14. In addition, the eSchools data warehouse became operational in September 2009. It will assist schools with self-evaluation and school improvement, enable them to obtain performance information, identify trends, and compare themselves with similar schools. Department Circular 2009/04 gives more information about eSchools.
15. In the meantime, schools are encouraged to use the information in this circular; information in the Department's statistical bulletins; and information held within the school, to assess trends and identify priorities for action.

16. The Education and Training Inspectorate has advised that within schools the gap in achievement can be wide, and schools are therefore encouraged to analyse available data within classes, year groups and key stages to identify where action might be taken to bring about improvement.
  
17. A copy of this circular has been placed on the DE website [<http://www.deni.gov.uk>]. Any enquiries about the 2008/09 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.
  
18. Enquiries about other aspects of this Circular should be addressed to **Mr Chris Hutchinson, Standards and Improvement Team**, telephone number 028 9127 9415.



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## Annex 1

### PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT (PSA) TARGETS

**Target:**

**By 2011, 90% of school leavers achieving GCSE A\* - G (or equivalent) level in English and Maths [PSA 19] (Baseline: School Leavers Survey 2005-06 = 85%)**

Current performance:

In 2008/09, 88% of school leavers achieving GCSE A\* - G (or equivalent) in English and Maths

**Target:**

**By 2011, 68% of students gaining at least 5+ GCSEs A\*-C by the time they leave school. [PSA 19] (Baseline: School Leavers Survey 2005-06 = 64%)**

Current performance:

In 2008/09, 70% of pupils left school with 5 or more GCSEs at Grades A\*-C or equivalent.

**Target:**

**By 2011, 55% of students gaining 5+ GCSEs A\*-C including English and Maths by the time they leave school [PSA 19] (Baseline: School Leavers Survey 2005-06 = 54%)**

Current Performance:

In 2008/09, 58% of school leavers achieved 5 or more GCSEs (A\*-C), including English and mathematics.

**Target:**

**By 2011, at least 30% of FSME students achieving 5+ GCSE A\*-C or equivalent including English and Maths by the time they leave school [PSA 10 and 19] (Baseline: 2005-06 = 26%)**

Current Performance:

In 2008/09, 30% of FSME students achieved 5 or more GCSEs (A\*-C) including English and mathematics.

**Target:**

**By 2011, reduce to 1.5% of year 12 pupils with no qualification at GSCE A\*-G level or equivalent [PSA 19] (Baseline: Summary of Examination Results 2005-06 = 3%)**

Current Performance:

In 2008/09, 1% of pupils left school with no qualifications at GCSE A\*-G or equivalent.

**Target:**

**By 2011, 65% of A level students gaining 3+ A levels at Grades A-C or equivalent in Year 14.** [PSA 19] (Baseline: Summary of Examination Results 2005-06 = 63%)

Current Performance:

In 2008/09, 64% of Year 14 students gained 3 or more A levels at A-C.

**Target:**

**By 2011, increase the participation rate of 16-17 year olds in full-time education or training to 95%** (Baseline: Participation in full-time education and vocational training by 16 and 17 year olds in Northern Ireland 2005/06= 87%)

Current Performance:

In 2008/09, 87% of 16-17 year olds were in full-time education or training.

Figures for 2006/07 and 2007/08 have been revised to 90% and 88% respectively.