

Knowing Your School

A series of briefing notes for school governors from the National Governors' Association produced in association with partners



RAISEonline for Governors of Primary Schools

Briefing Note: 1

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Endorsement from Lord Hill, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools

One of the key jobs of the governing body is to hold the head to account for the performance of the school. To fulfil that role, governors need access to reliable information, know how to interpret it and know the right questions to ask. RAISEonline is a vital source of information and I hope that this useful publication will help you to put it to the best possible use.

The Government is committed to publishing more school data and to giving parents more information. I congratulate the National Governors' Association on producing notes on 'Knowing your school' and I welcome this publication on RAISEonline for primary school governors.

National Governors Association

The National Governors' Association aims to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards in all our schools and improving the effectiveness of their governing bodies. NGA represents governors across England in both maintained schools and Academies. In these notes schools includes Academies.

The NGA is a membership organisation: governing bodies can join at a standard or GOLD rate. To join NGA and receive regular updates, visit the following website:

Website: www.nga.org.uk

Telephone: 0121-237-3780

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RM Education

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RM Beyond Data

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RAISEonline for Primary schools: five key questions for school governors

An effective governing body:

- Has the right people around the table (a diverse set of people with a range of skills, experience and knowledge);
- Understands its role and responsibilities, remaining strategic and providing leadership;
- Has both a good Chair and a professional Clerk who ensure the governing body is well-informed and prioritises its business effectively;
- Has good relationships, particularly with the Headteacher built on trust, honesty and respect;
- Knows the school, and
- Is committed to asking challenging questions and making courageous decisions in the interests of the children and young people in their school and community.

Many governing bodies, even good ones, fail to challenge school leaders effectively. This series of notes aims to make governors more aware of the data that is at their disposal and how best to make use of it, and will also cover how to gather information from parents, staff and students.

What is RAISEonline?

RAISEonline is a secure web-based system that provides schools, local authorities and inspectors with a range of analyses including:

- Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2;
- Progress from Key Stage 1 to 2;
- Absence and exclusions; and
- The characteristics (often referred to as 'context') of pupils.

For each type of analysis, your school is compared to national averages for primary schools. Some analyses also show you where your school sits in the national distribution of schools (e.g. top 20%, bottom 5% etc.). Tests of *statistical significance* are used to highlight results that are atypical. Statistical significance, which is not necessarily synonymous with educational importance, will be covered in more depth in a later briefing note.

What is it for?

The purpose of RAISEonline is twofold. Firstly, it is an important (but by no means the only) source of data for schools to use in retrospective self-evaluation and development planning, to be used alongside other sources such as Fischer Family Trust (FFT) data and the schools' own pupil tracking data. Other sources of data will be explained in future notes.

Secondly, the analyses are used by Ofsted inspectors in their pre-inspection briefings. It is therefore critical that you are able to interpret your school's data from an inspector's perspective and can identify apparent areas of under-performance in order to:

- explain why they occurred; or
- demonstrate that you recognise them and have set out the action you are taking to address them

How do we get access to it?

The data is presented in a range of interactive tables and charts which can be viewed online. To access the system, you need a username and password. Each school has a designated School Administrator who is responsible for generating user names and passwords. Governors can be added as users but, unlike teachers at the school, are unable to view data about individual pupils.

In addition, a set of the key tables and charts have been collated into a single document known as the "summary report". This can also be downloaded from RAISEonline but requires a user name and password to do so. It is this document that inspectors use in their pre-inspection briefings. Although there is a lot of information in the summary report, data for previous years is rather limited. Much more is available, however, in the online system (including summary reports for previous years).

The NGA would not expect all governors to want on-line access, but each governing body should nominate a couple of governors to have access as a minimum. Each year in the autumn term, the school's RAISEonline Summary Report should be presented by a member of the school leadership team to a full Governing Body meeting. The governing body must decide how it will consider and analyse the more detailed data, and may set up a committee to consider this or ensure the monitoring of school performance data is within the remit of another committee, such as curriculum committee.

How often is it updated?

RAISEonline is updated several times in the academic year. 2011 Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 data was made available on the 29th September. At this stage, the data is considered **unvalidated**. This means it has not been checked or corrected by schools. Once the process of checking is complete and DFE Performance Tables have been published later in the term, **validated** data will be made available in RAISEonline. In the vast majority of cases, the differences between unvalidated and validated data are minimal.

To be effective, school self-evaluation should be undertaken and any necessary actions put in place in the Autumn term. For that reason, unvalidated data tends to be the most widely used. School users can amend data in RAISEonline in a “school’s own” copy of the database if there are a large number of corrections to be made to the unvalidated data. The system will then recalculate attainment measures which can be viewed in the online reports. However, “school’s own” data can be viewed only by school users, and a “summary report” based on such data is not available.

Key questions you should ask of the data

The analyses in RAISEonline are provided to inform and support discussion about school improvement rather than to make absolute judgments about the effectiveness of any school. The questions you can ask of the wide range of data available in your school are almost inexhaustible. However, we limit ourselves to five key questions for this introductory briefing note:

1. How does attainment and progress at my school compare to national averages and the Government’s floor target?
2. Are we relatively stronger or weaker in English compared to mathematics?
3. Do we have any under-performing groups of pupils, or are there wide gaps in attainment between some groups of pupils?
4. How might the context of our school affect our performance?
5. How does pupil attendance compare to national averages?

Question 1: how does attainment at my school compare to national averages and the Government’s floor target?

There are a number of different measures of pupil attainment and progress in RAISEonline. For a school with Key Stage 2 pupils, the three key measures are:

- The percentage of pupils who achieved level 4 or above in both English and mathematics;
- The percentage of pupils who made expected progress in English between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2; and
- The percentage of pupils who made expected progress in mathematics between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

The majority of pupils are expected to achieve level 4 by the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6). A small proportion of pupils do not achieve level 4 in either English or mathematics, while around a third nationally achieve level 5 or higher.

Similarly, level 2 is the expected level for the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2). The table on the right shows the “expected” path through Key Stages 1 and 2 in light green. High achievers will tend to be on the dark green path. Pupils with the most severe forms of special educational needs will tend to be on the red path.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Level W	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Level 1	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
Level 2	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Level 3	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Yellow
Level 4	Grey	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green
Level 5	Grey	Grey	Grey	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green
Level 6	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Dark Green

It is expected that pupils make at least 2 levels progress between the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2. So, a pupil who achieved level 1 at Key Stage 1 will be considered to have made expected progress if s/he achieved level 3 (or higher) at Key Stage 2. However, a pupil who achieved level 3 at Key Stage 1 is **not** considered to have achieved expected progress if s/he only achieves level 4 at Key Stage 2.

The Government’s “floor target” for primary schools is that at least 60% of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 should have achieved level 4 or above in both English and mathematics. However, a school will only be considered to be below the floor target (and therefore be targeted for intervention) if rates of expected progress are below the national average as well.

It should be noted that the “official list” of schools below the floor target will be produced from validated data later in the Autumn term. However, in the Autumn term you may wish to consider how close your school is to the floor target.

Firstly, check the proportion of pupils who achieved level 4 or higher in English and mathematics¹. In 2011, 74% of pupils reached this standard nationally according to unvalidated data.

	English&Mathematics			Sig
	Cohort	School	National	
All Pupils	53	55	74	Sig-
Gender				
Male	20	60	72	
Female	33	52	77	Sig-

In this example, 55% of pupils at the School achieved level 4 or higher in English and mathematics. This is significantly below the national average of 74% given the number of pupils (53) in the cohort.

Secondly, check the percentages of pupils who achieved expected progress in each of English and mathematics. These can be found in the Expected Progress Summary Report², an example of which is shown below.

	English				Mathematics			
	Cohort	School	National	Sig	Cohort	School	National	Sig
All Pupils	43	84	83		42	95	82	Sig+
Gender								
Male	24	83	81	-	24	92	83	-
Female	19	84	86	-	18	100	82	-

¹ See report KS2.4A in the online system, or Table 4.2.3 of the summary report

² See report KS2.EPRS in the online system, or Table 5.7.1 of the summary report

Although national averages³ for pupils are shown in RAISEonline, national medians for primary schools are used in defining floor targets. In 2010 these were 87% for English and 86% for mathematics.

Always check the number of pupils on which percentages are based. Remember that in a year group of 20 pupils, one pupil is equivalent to 5%

The example above shows that 95% of the 42 pupils at the School made expected progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in mathematics, significantly above the national average of 82%

Question 2: do we have any under-performing groups of pupils, or are there wide gaps in attainment between some groups of pupils?

There are a number of reports in RAISEonline which show attainment, progress and absence for different groups of pupils. Even in schools with above average levels of attainment there can be “gaps” in attainment between some groups of pupils. For example, the Government’s White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* sets out to narrow the “gap” between pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and their peers.

Other examples of pupil groups whose attainment you may wish to look at include:

- Boys and girls, particularly in English
- Pupils whose first language is not English
- Minority ethnic pupils
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN), particularly comparing such pupils at your schools to pupils with SEN nationally
- At Key Stage 2, pupils of different ability levels as measured by attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Comparing the attainment of pupil groups is only worthwhile - and valid - if you have a sufficient number of pupils in each group. Fewer than 10 pupils in a single year would be insufficient, and any comparisons based on 10-20 pupils should be interpreted with caution. However, examination of data over a number of years may reveal a persistent pattern of atypical attainment for small pupil groups.

In the example below⁴, the school had 14 pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and 39 pupils who were not eligible in Year 6 in the previous academic year. 79% of the FSM group achieved level 4 or above in English. In RAISEonline, the attainment of the FSM group can be:

³ Averages here refers to the classic (arithmetic) mean

⁴ See report KS2.4A in the online system, or Table 4.2.3 of the summary report.

- Compared to the attainment of other pupils at the school (also 79%); and
- Compared to the attainment other pupils eligible for free school meals nationally (67%).

Free School Meals	English			Sig
	Cohort	School	National	
FSM	14	79	67	-
Non FSM	39	79	84	

This example shows that 79% of the 14 pupils eligible for free school meals at the School achieved level 4 or above in English. This was above the national average for such pupils. Importantly, no "gap" between FSM and non-FSM pupils is apparent on this measure at the School, unlike nationally.

All Pupils	English		
	Cohort	School	National
Gender			
Male	57	91	77
Female	35	94	86

In the example on the left, a slightly larger proportion of girls than boys achieved level 4 or above in English. However, the proportion of boys at the school who achieved this standard was 14 percentage points higher than the national average for boys, as opposed to 8 for girls. Therefore the "gap" between boys and girls at the school is narrower than the national "gap". It will also be noted that, as 1 girl is roughly equivalent to 3 percentage points, had just one of the girls who achieved level 4 not done so then the school "gap" would be zero.

A similar exercise can be performed using expected progress reports⁵, or Key Stage 1 data⁶. Were some groups less likely than others to make expected progress?

Question 3 - how might the context of our school affect our performance?

Decades of research into school effectiveness have shown that some groups of pupils, particularly those from less advantaged backgrounds, tend to achieve less well than other groups. This has led to a range of Government interventions to raise attainment, including City Challenge under the Labour Government or the Pupil Premium under the current Coalition Government.

Economic disadvantage should not excuse low attainment. However, it should be recognised that apparent variations in levels of attainment between schools are

⁵ See report KS2.EPRS in the online system, or Table 5.7.1 of the summary report

⁶ See report KS1.4A and KS1.2A in the online system, or Table 4.1.10 of the summary report

influenced by variations in intakes. Such variations are often caricatured by descriptions of the areas served by schools such as “tough inner-cities” and “leafy suburbs”.

Moreover, even within a school, there may be significant variation (especially in attainment and prevalence of special educational needs) between one year group and the next.

Simply comparing a school’s attainment to the national average will not necessarily identify those schools which are performing extraordinarily well in challenging circumstances. Nor will it identify those schools in more advantaged circumstances which could be doing better.

	Mathematics		
	Cohort	School	National
All Pupils	45	78	80
Free School Meals			
FSM	27	74	67
Non FSM	18	83	83

This example comes from a school serving a disadvantaged area. 27 of the 45 pupils in year 6 (60%) were eligible for free school meals compared to a national average of 18%. The attainment of FSM pupils is above the average for FSM pupils nationally but the overall school average for all pupils is slightly below average.

In the example above, the school might be slightly disappointed that it has fallen short of the national average for the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above in mathematics by just 2 percentage points (equivalent to just one pupil). However, it can be seen that attainment among both the FSM and non-FSM groups at the School was at least as high as national averages for corresponding groups.

Such a situation arises when the composition of the school cohort is substantially different to the “average” school. It can be seen that 27 of the 45 pupils (60%) were eligible for free school meals. This compares to a national average of 18%. If the School had an average proportion of FSM pupils (18% of 45 = 8 pupils) but attainment for both groups remained unchanged, the school’s overall average would have been 82%.

Question 4: are we relatively stronger or weaker in English compared to mathematics?

Just as the attainment of different groups of pupils can vary within a school, so too can attainment in different subjects.

Up to now this guide has focused on “threshold” measures of attainment, which quantify how many pupils “jumped the hurdle”, such as achieving at least level 4 at Key Stage 2, but provides no further information about the extent to which they either cleared it or missed it.

Average point scores are another method of summarising attainment data that take account of the full range of pupil outcomes at a School. Levels achieved in National Curriculum Tests or Teacher Assessments can be converted into “points” using the table on the right.

Level	Points
W	3
1	9
2C	13
2 or 2B	15
2A	17
3	21
4	27
5	33
6	39

A pupil is expected to progress by one level every 2 academic years. In terms of points, the difference between one level and the next is 6 points. As there are 6 terms in 2 academic years, then one point approximates to one term’s progress. This is a useful rule of thumb when interpreting points scores.

In the example below⁷, it can be seen that the average point score (APS) achieved in mathematics at this school in 2011 was higher than the APS achieved in English. In fact, the mathematics APS is 1.3 points above the national average, indicating that the average pupil at this school is over a term further ahead than the average pupil nationally in mathematics.

However, the APS in English is lower at 27.1. Moreover, this pattern has been persistent for the three previous years. If inspected, the school is likely to be asked what it is doing

Year		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
English	Cohort	47	56	56	56	53
	School	28.2	27.8	25.3	26.6	27.1
	National	27.6	27.5	27.2	27.3	27.3
	Difference	0.6	0.3	-1.9	-0.7	-0.2
Mathematics	Cohort	47	56	56	56	53
	School	28.8	27.4	27.3	28.8	28.9
	National	27.3	27.4	27.5	27.4	27.6
	Difference	1.5	0.0	-0.2	1.4	1.3

This example shows trends over time in Key Stage 2 average point scores. This school has tended to achieve higher scores in mathematics than in English.

to improve attainment in English.

⁷ See Report KS2.1Trend in the online system or Table 4.2.11 of the summary report. Equivalent reports displaying Key Stage 1 data are Report KS1.1Trend in the online system and Table 4.1.8 of the summary report.

Question 5: how does pupil attendance compare to national averages?

In RAISEonline a number of analyses are provided that compare pupils' overall absence from your school with:

- The national average for all primary schools; and
- A derived average for “similar” schools based on levels of free school meal eligibility.

This data can be viewed from the School Level Absence and Exclusions report⁸ in RAISEonline. An example is shown below.

	2011		
	School	National average for primary schools	Median trendline for school's FSM level
% Persistent Absentees- absent for 15% or more sessions	1.9	2.1	2.7
% Persistent Absentees- absent for 20% or more sessions	1.6	1.8	2.4
% of sessions missed due to Overall Absence	6.7	5.3	6.1

Absence from this School (6.7%) was above the national average (5.3%). It is also higher than the median for schools in similar circumstances (6.1%), measured by eligibility for free school meals.

The report also shows the proportion of pupils classified as “persistent absentees”. Historically they have been defined as missing at least 20% of possible sessions (half days) during the course of the academic year. In some cases this may be due to a prolonged bout of illness. However, in other cases it arises as a result of frequent, short bouts of absence or truancy.

For 2011 a second, more stringent, measure of persistent absence has been introduced based on missing 15% of sessions.

⁸ See Report Trend_1 in the online system or Table 2.1.1 of the summary report. Absence data for the 2010/11 academic year was not available in RAISEonline at the time of writing (early October 2011) but will be made available later this term.