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### **Consultation on the Provision of Performance and Other Information about Pupils and Schools**

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**Introduction** ATL, as a leading education union, recognises the link between education policy and our members' conditions of employment. Our evidence-based policy making enables us to campaign and negotiate from a position of strength. We champion good practice and achieve better working lives for our members.

We help our members, as their careers develop, through first-rate research, advice, information and legal support. Our 160,000 members – teachers, lecturers, head-teachers and support staff – are empowered to get active locally and nationally. We are affiliated to the TUC, and work with government and employers by lobbying and through social partnership.

In this short submission, ATL urges the Department of Education to consider the significant effect of social segregation on systemic school performance and recommends that note be taken, within the consultation on proposals to determine what Performance and other Information about Pupils and Schools that the effects of social class is taken full account of.

**Background** ATL has long accepted the well established research base – locally, regionally, across the UK and internationally that the principle cause of differential educational performance is attributable to social class and that no other factor is nearly as important. This has long been generally accepted academically, if not acted upon by policymakers, that overall school performance improves with balanced intakes.

Cassen R and Kingdon G (2007) *Tackling Low Educational Achievement* Joseph Rowntree Foundation/LSE concludes:

*“Our evidence as well as that of the DfES and of other researchers is that disadvantaged students and minority ethnic students are likely to attend worse performing schools. This can affect their performance adversely; it does so particularly for students with special educational needs. Anything which gives schools greater opportunities to select their pupils works to the detriment of the disadvantaged; measures which assist fair selection will help them.”*

Coldron J, Tanner E, Finch S, Shipton L, Wolstenholme C, Willis B, Demack S and Stiell B (2008) *Secondary School Admissions* London DCSF concludes:  
*“The theoretical benefits of balanced intakes are considerable but the practical problems arising from the complexity of local contexts are great.”*

Karley K and Bramley G (2005) *Home-ownership, Poverty and Educational Attainment: Individual, School and Neighbourhoods Effects*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive concludes:

*“...if children from middle-class backgrounds attend school with predominantly children from the same background they will do less well than if the school has a social mix. The same applies for children from deprived homes who attend school alongside children in similar circumstances.”*

Sullivan and Whitty (2005) 'Life Chances and Educational Achievement in the UK: A Research and Policy Overview' in *'Maintaining Momentum: promoting social mobility and life chances from early years to adulthood'* Eds Delorenzi, Reed and Robinson London: Institute for Public Policy Research, notes:

*'There is consensus that school composition effects are important and that schools with a high proportion of students of low social status or low prior academic ability are at a disadvantage (Coleman 1966, Henderson et al 1978, Mortimore et al 1988, Rutter et al 1979, Smith and Tomlinson 1989, Summers and Wolfe 1977, Thrupp 1995, Willms 1986)...Levacic and Woods (2002) find the concentration of social disadvantage in a school relative to other local schools has a strong impact on GCSE improvement over time. These school composition effects may be due to the influence of peer groups on aspirations and behaviour, or they may be due to other processes, such as schools with low proportions of 'able' students finding it hard to attract good teachers.'*

We have noted some other significant academic references in Notes below.<sup>1</sup>

**External/internal influences on pupil performance:** Academics coming from a variety of directions have similar findings - economists using econometric methods, school improvement research, even the DfES's own analysis come to the same conclusions. Again, this does not feed into policy formation. Indeed, the logic is that public spending on education may be better directed at other social policy areas, such as Incomes Policy, addressing wage differential, tackling tax evasion, raising the Minimum wage floor, investing in health etc..

Martin Johnson, ATL's Deputy General Secretary, in a chapter in the International handbook of Urban Education (forthcoming) comments:  
*"School improvement was as much a grass roots movement as a Government policy, but it provided support for two policy themes. First, it supported the contention implied in the earlier reform that autonomous schools could produce better pupil performance. Second, it underpinned the rejection of an apparent determinism which explained pupil failure in terms of social factors, as summed up by the Labour Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett – 'poverty no excuse'. Whilst fatalism and low expectations were, and possibly remain, a feature of some schools, it seemed by the mid-nineties that the pendulum of rhetoric had swung excessively, leading to the title Schools making a difference: let's be realistic (Thrupp, 1999), and '... improvement methods would make a difference. A little difference.' (Johnson, 1999, p.166) Limitations on the utility of the school improvement model became clear (Mortimore, 1998, MacGilchrist this vol.).*

*One was the reliance on high quality leadership and management, when there was continuing concern about that quality which led to the establishment of a National College for School Leadership. The second was the recognition that school improvement placed heavy demands on a workforce already feeling overstretched. Thirdly, improvement research corroborated*

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<sup>1</sup> **Other References:**

- Coleman, JS (1966) *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office)
- Henderson, V., Mieszkowski, P. and Sauvageau, Y. (1978) Peer Group Effects and Education Production Functions, *Journal of Public Economics* 10, pp. 97-106
- Levacic, R. and Woods, P. A. (2002a) Raising School Performance in the League Tables (Part 1): disentangling the effects of social disadvantage, *British Educational Research Journal* 28, 2, pp. 207-26
- Levacic, R. and Woods, P. A. (2002b) Raising School Performance in the League Tables (Part 2): barriers to responsiveness in three disadvantaged schools, *British Educational Research Journal* 28, 2, pp. 227-47
- Mortimore, P., Sammons, P., Stoll, L., Lewis, D. and Ecob, R. (1988) *School Matters* (London., Open Books)
- Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P. and Janet, O. (1979) *Fifteen Thousand Hours* (London., Open Books)
- Smith, D. and Tomlinson, S (1989) *The School Effect: A Study of Multi-Racial Comprehensives* (London, Policy Studies Institute)
- Summers, A. A. and Wolfe, B.L. (1977) Do Schools Make a Difference?, *American Educational Review* 67, pp. 639-52
- Thrupp, M. (1995) The school mix effect: the history of an enduring problem in educational research, policy and practice, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 16, pp. 183-203
- Willms, J. D. (1986) Social Class Segregation and Its Relationship to Pupils' Examination Results in Scotland, *American Sociological Review* 51, pp. 223-41

earlier findings (Coleman et al 1966, Hanushek 1992) and showed that 85% of the variation in pupil performance is due to factors external to the school (Teddlie and Reynolds 2000).

Of the remaining 15%, the classroom effect was shown to be the most substantial. This finding coincided with the determination of the Labour Government elected in 1997 to move to the third phase of reform, a programme to develop the teaching force and the quality of pedagogy.

The DfES (England, 2004) Statistics of Education: Variation in Pupil Progress 2003 is an important ref since

- a) it comes from directly from the Government and
- b) it uses a huge database of pupil performance which is a by-product of the target/performance system. (Forthcoming work by Cassen of LSE will also analyse nearly half a million individual pupil attainment paths).

It found that prior attainment, gender, FSM and English as an Additional Language accounted for 92% of the variance in later attainment in secondary schools. It states 'some of the unexplained [*i.e.* 8%] variance *may* represent differences in school effectiveness'

A more recent report (Guardian, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012) demonstrated that three-quarters of variations in British schools' performance is explained by differences in socio-economic background of its students. The current UK Government is planning to set targets for schools to narrow the performance gap between disadvantaged children and other pupils as a way of promoting social mobility. Whilst the Government is right to identify this as a yawning gap that urgently needs tackling but setting targets for schools will not get to the root of the problem because new research shows that in the UK it is the socio-economic background of a school's pupils that determines performance.

The results from the latest of the influential surveys in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) makes this abundantly clear and is chilling reading.

A special report on the UK<sup>2</sup> says that in Britain "*both the within and between-school impact of socio-economic background on educational attainment are well above the OECD average*".

In fact more of the variation between the performance of different schools is related to their **socio-economic intake** in the UK than in any of 33 other OECD countries except Luxembourg, though the US runs us close, the report finds.

Tables accompanying the report show that in the UK more than three-quarters of variations in schools' performance is explained by differences in socio-economic background of its students. This compares with less than a quarter in Finland and well under a half in Canada – to take two countries with among the best results overall in PISA. This indicates that achieving turnarounds in poor performance will be particularly difficult in the UK where policy-makers

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/46624007.pdf>

imply that most of the variation in performance is down to the competence of the school staff and the school's "effectiveness".

The significance of these findings are therefore enormous. In disadvantaged areas a "no excuses" culture is required. This assumption underlies the panoply of accountability instruments, including performance tables, inspection and so on, which are much more onerous than in most other countries. Yet it turns out that the individual school effect is much less here in the UK than in many other, often more successful and equitable countries which make lighter demands in terms of accountability. The UK Government's target-setting plan will only intensify the culture of blame, diverting attention from the social and systemic causes of inequality. It is not self evident that the data-driven Department of Education school performance policy "Every School a Good School" will be any different.

If politicians were serious about their oft-stated concern for the poor – and their claim to want to match the world's best – they would do more to ensure that there is a better mix of pupils within schools, which the OECD has consistently urged. It has found that increasing the social mix within schools boosts the performance of disadvantaged students without any apparent negative effect on overall performance.

Yet education policies have gone in the opposite direction - including the proposals on the Provision of Performance and Other Information about Pupils and Schools - and seem aimed at undermining local school education - blaming too much and supporting too little– exactly the reverse of what the international evidence suggests is needed for equity and excellence.

The infatuation with the private school *idyll* and their vaunted "*maximised autonomy*" could also be misplaced suggests another finding in the PISA UK document. It reports that, when account has been taken of the socio-economic background of pupils, state schools in the UK outperform private schools by a considerable margin. In fact the gap here is much greater than across the OECD as a whole where state schools have only a slight performance advantage over private schools.

Reducing our massive inequities will require jettisoning the notion that each school is expected to pull itself up by its own bootstraps whatever its circumstances and create proper structures for professional development, peer support and succession planning, together with strong social policies promoting equity.

**Equality and Social Balance Works:** Exhaustive new research<sup>3</sup> reviews the epidemiological evidence, finding there is a causal link between income inequality and lack of well being as measured by crime, health and mortality statistics. The links are extraordinarily clear – more inequality leads to more ill health, greater disparity of life expectancy and more crime – all concentrated

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<sup>3</sup> Wilkinson R & Pickett K: The Spirit Level, Penguin, London 2009

at lower ends of the income scale. They also suggest that low levels of illiteracy are internationally associated with low relative income equalities, largely because children feel more of a stake in a society in which they feel valued.

The approach taken by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in their book "The Spirit Level" has been pioneered by ATL in education. It should get a hearing in the current climate, with both Labour and Conservatives flirting with the politics of "general well being". Following through, however, may represent an unwelcome political challenge.

**The Consultation:** Based on the consultation questions, we have set out the responses of ATL as follows:

### **Section 1:**

#### **The education (target-setting in schools) regulations (NI) 2012**

Boards of Governors of primary and post-primary schools have a duty to set targets during the first term of each school year to raise the standards achieved by their pupils in end of key stage assessments and/or public examinations.

#### **Question 1**

**Do you think the Target-Setting Regulations should include any other requirements?**

**Yes**    **No**    **Not sure**    **No view**

**If so, please tell us what requirements you think should also be included:**

**The Target-Setting Regulations should be suspended pending proper research into the impact of target setting on real standards.**

ATL's General Secretary, Dr Mary Bousted, is on public record as saying "You cannot fatten the pig by continually weighing it"

*Use of assessment evidence for accountability is based on the idea that measuring itself leads to improvement Over the last 20 years there is no solid evidence from research or practice that investing in increasingly sophisticated measurement devices drives change. There is no change in the position of schools which are at the bottom of the league tables. (Hayward et.al: 2012)*

*Mansell Warwick*

Research by Tymms & Merrill (2007: 14) suggests that:

*'Standards of reading have remained more or less the same since 1950s' while 'attitudes to reading have declined'. There was a rise following the immediate post-war period Then a slight drop followed by a recovery after the introduction of the National Curriculum*

*In essence standards have remained constant. The tail of under-achievement ... has not improved especially when the focus of effort of schools across the country has been on Level 4s, which is well away from the level of the under-achievers Resources and effort are targeted at those pupils within range of a Level 4 because that is the standard by which the success of schools is judged.*

## Question 2

The Regulations specify the performance measures for which schools are required to set targets each year; the performance measures reflect the targets published by DE in Count, Read: Succeed - A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy. If they wish to do so, schools can continue to set any other targets they find useful.

**Are there any targets schools should not be required to set?**

Yes No Not sure No view

Schools should NOT be required to set targets at all until the effects of target setting is researched and verified as valid, reliable, worthwhile and meaningful.

According to Goodhart's Law (former chief economist at the Bank of England) *'Performance indicators lose their usefulness when used as objects of policy. If you make a particular performance indicator a policy target, and make the stakes*

*high enough, then the people at the sharp end will do everything they can do improve their score on the indicator without having any impact on the overall quality of whatever the performance indicator is meant to be measuring (sometimes the quality actually gets worse, even though the indicator is rising) ....*

***When used as the sole index of quality, the manipulability of these indicators destroys the relationship between the indicator and the indicated.*** *There is no end to this process, because the people on the ground will always know more about where the loopholes are than those devising the performance indicators. Put bluntly, the clearer you are about what you want, the more likely you are to get it, but the less likely it is to mean anything'. (William, 2001: 2)*

CCEA data shows a steady improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving the required levels in English and Maths but this improvement is not verified by reference to any other objective data.

Also because the targets at each Key Stage have essentially been reduced (no Level 3 target at Key Stage 1; no level 5 target at Key Stage 2; no Level 6 target at KS3) Teacher judgement at each Key Stage has been reduced to a 50/50 choice. The likelihood is that Goodhart's law will kick in more strongly and no amount of cumbersome and costly moderation will convince people that schools aren't manipulating their judgements.

### Are there any other targets schools should be required to set?

Yes

Key Stage 1 teachers should be trained to conduct baseline assessments of Oral Language on entry to school, the key determinant of ability to learn (using for example The Renfrew Bus Story (RBS) which is a short screening assessment of receptive and expressive oral language for young children age 3 years to 6 years 11 months. The RBS was developed as a part of the *Renfrew Language Scales* (Renfrew, 1969) and was standardized on children in the UK.

Each school should set, within its School Development Plan **unpublished** targets

- for fluency in oral language by the end of Key Stage 1
- for fluency in reading by the end of Key Stage 2 (using standardised reading tests)
- for thinking skills and writing by the end of Key Stage 2 (assessed through 'unseen' thinking skills assessments)

### Question 3

Do you have any other comments on the Target-Setting Regulations? If so, please provide them in the space below.

All level-related decisions provide **NO** specific data to help teachers or parents know what a pupil can or cannot do. **The** data is therefore of no **practical** use to the main stakeholders. To arrive at this non-specific decision CCEA proposes that teachers have to set, mark, file, record, store submit 200+ pieces of annotated work per teacher. The process is about policing school accountability not pupil learning.

Draft Advice to Scottish Government (Hayward et al: 2012: 70 asks '*Is this the best use of the limited teacher time available?*'

An OECD –Scotland report -2007, p15) indicates that '**Socio-economic status** is the most important difference between individuals.' *Educational issues must be considered within a broader front which includes issues of social justice, poverty, housing, health and education; and change is based on building the expertise of the profession.*

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## Section 2:

### The education (school information & prospectuses) regulations 2012

#### Question 4

These Regulations specify the information schools are required to publish each year on the achievements of pupils at the school, which reflects the targets schools are required to set and the targets published by DE in Count, read: succeed – A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy.

#### Are there any measures of achievement that schools should not be required to report?

Yes    No    Not sure    No view

Schools should not be required to report in Levels on pupil achievement. The reduction of scores to a single figure or grade while attractive to politicians and the public 'as a form of shorthand' in which to report performance masks complex nuances in ability and performance. (Gipps, 1994: 27)

The report of the Expert Panel on National Curriculum in England (DfE 2011 - (professors Mary James, Andrew Pollard, Dylan Wiliam and Dr. Tim Oates) observed that

- We believe that the ways in which 'levels' are currently used to judge pupil progress, and their consequences actually inhibits performance distorts and undermines learning and exacerbates social differentiation, rather than promoting a more inclusive approach
- Summary reporting in the form of grades or levels is too general to unlock parental support for learning, for effective targeting of learning support, or for genuine recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of schools' programmes.
- Assessment to levels is over-burdensome, obscures the genuine strengths and weaknesses in a pupil's attainment, obscures parental understanding of the areas in which they might best support their child's learning, and weakens teachers' clear understanding and identification of pupils' specific weaknesses or misunderstandings
- our notion of a revised model focuses on inclusion, mastery and progress, less in more depth focus on specific elements, rather than a generalised notion of a level.

**Are there any other measures of achievement that schools should be required to report?**

Yes    No    Not sure    No view

**If so, please tell us what measures you think schools should, or should not, be required to report and explain why**

(OECD: (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009: 5)

- Today's labour force has to be equipped with the set of skills and competencies which are suited to the knowledge economies. Most of them are related to knowledge management, which includes processes related to information selection, acquisition, integration, analysis and sharing in socially networked environments.
- Most, if not all, of these competencies, are either supported or enhanced by ICT. For many young people, schools are the only place where such competencies and skills can be learned.
- Accordingly, governments should make an effort to properly identify and conceptualise the set of skills and competencies required so as to incorporate them into the educational standards that every student should be able reach by the end of compulsory schooling ....

**(OECD Looney, 2009: 1)**

- This set of skills and competencies [should] becomes the very core of what teachers and schools should care about, and this can only be done by incorporating them into the national education standards that are enforced and assessed by governments.
- Rather than testing the content of learning, standards could relate to cognitive skills such as problem-solving, communicating and reasoning
- Focusing the assessment on cognitive processes rather than content would leave more scope for teachers to put in place innovative teaching/learning strategies.
- more use might be made of innovative assessment methods e.g. **Queensland (ADD FOOTNOTE)**
- This does, however, assume a high standard of professionalism in teachers and an adequate system of continuing training and knowledge management.

### **Box 3. Japan adapts assessment style to mirror PISA**

Japan is one of the best-performing education systems. However, PISA revealed that while students tended to do very well on tasks that require reproducing subject content, they did much less well on open-ended tasks requiring them to demonstrate their capacity to extrapolate from what they know and apply their knowledge in novel settings. Convincing parents and a general public who are used to certain types of tests is difficult. One policy response in Japan has been to incorporate “PISA-type” open-constructed tasks into the national assessment, coupled with corresponding changes in curriculum and instructional practices. The aim of doing so is to ensure that skills that are considered important become valued in the education system. And indeed, a decade later, PISA outcomes in these areas had improved markedly. Like Japan, Korea has made PISA tasks part of national assessments, incorporating them into university entrance examinations, in order to build the capacity of its students to access, manage, integrate and evaluate written material. In both countries, these are fundamental changes that would have been much harder to imagine, much less achieve, without evidence from PISA.

- Education at a Glance (OECD, 2011: 19 Box 3)

### Section 3:

#### The education (pupil records and reporting) regulations (NI) 2012

These Regulations specify the minimum information schools are required to provide to parents on the achievement of individual pupils through the annual report.

#### Question 1

**Do you agree that this is the minimum that a parent should be entitled to receive in the annual report?**

**Yes    No    Not sure    No view**

Numerical levels in relation to literacy (Communication), numeracy (Using Mathematics) and in Using Information and Communications Technology are not 'accurate, reliable, relevant, timely or easy to understand'. levels are too general to

- obscures the genuine strengths and weaknesses in a pupil's attainment,
- obscures parental understanding of the areas in which they might best support their child's learning, and
- weakens teachers' clear understanding and identification of pupils' specific weaknesses or misunderstandings

A revised model of assessment and reporting needs to focus in more depth focus on specific elements, rather than a generalised notion of a level

Achievement in the other areas of learning which form part of his/her studies should include specific reference to the development of **thinking skills** in those areas.

Progress in personal capabilities should also be included in particular the learning **skills of self management and working with others**

This answer also applies to Question 2 and 3 which follows